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HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR 1827.

ON

THE PROOFS

OF

DIVINE POWER AND WISDOM

DERIVED FROM THE STUDY OF

ASTRONOMY:

AND ON THE

EVIDENCE, DOCTRINES, AND PRECEPTS

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

BY THE

REV. TEMPLE CHEVALLIER, M.A.

LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF CATHARINE HALL.

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1827

TO
THE REVEREND
WILLIAM FRENCH, D.D.

MASTER OF JESUS COLLEGE,

THE FOLLOWING LECTURES
ARE INSCRIBED;
AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT
FOR HIS PUBLIC CHARACTER,

AND

AS A MEMORIAL
OF PRIVATE FRIENDSHIP,

BY
THE AUTHOR.

Substance of certain CLAUSES in the WILL
of the Rev. J. HULSE, M.A. dated July 21,
1777.

He founds a LECTURESHIP in the University of Cambridge.

The *Lecturer* is to be a “Clergyman in the University of Cambridge, of the degree of Master of Arts, and under the age of forty years.” He is to be *elected annually*, “on Christmas-day, or within seven days after, by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, and by the Master of Trinity College, and the Master of Saint John’s College, or any two of them.” In case the Master of Trinity, or the Master of Saint John’s be the Vice-Chancellor, the Greek Professor is to be the third Trustee.

The *duty* of the said Lecturer is “to preach twenty Sermons in the whole year, that is to say, ten Sermons during the months of April, and May, and the two first weeks in June; and likewise ten Sermons during the months of September, and October, and during the two first weeks of November.”

The *place* of preaching, is to be “Saint Mary’s Great Church in Cambridge:” and the *time*, “either on the Friday morning, or else on Sunday afternoon.”

The *subject* of the said Discourses is to be, “the Evidence for Revealed Religion; the truth and excellence of Christianity; Prophecies and Miracles; direct or collateral proofs of the Christian religion, especially the collateral arguments; the more difficult texts or obscure parts of the Holy Scriptures;” or any one or more of these topics, at the discretion of the Preacher. The subject of the said Discourses is *not* to be “any particular sects or controversies amongst Christians themselves; except some

new and dangerous error, either of superstition, or enthusiasm, as of Popery or Methodism, or the like, either in opinion or practice, shall prevail. And in all the said twenty Sermons, such practical observations shall be made, and such useful conclusions added, as may best instruct and edify mankind.”

“The said twenty Sermons are to be every year printed,” at the Preacher’s expence, “and a new Preacher elected, (except in the case of the extraordinary merit of the Preacher, when it may sometimes be thought proper to *continue* the same person for five or, at the most, for six years together, but for no longer term) nor shall he ever afterwards be again elected to the same duty.”



“AN ABSTRACT of the heads or material parts” of the WILL of the Rev. JOHN HULSE, relative to the *two Scholarships*, founded by him in St. John’s College, and by him directed to be added to the conclusion of the foregoing clauses, “so that such Clergyman, or persons, whom the same may concern, may know that there are such endowments, of which they may claim and take the benefit, under the regulations, and with the qualifications, therein mentioned.”


The Scholars are to be “Undergraduates of St. John’s College, who shall be born in the county palatine of Chester.” “Such Scholar is to be elected by the Master and a majority of the senior Fellows of the said College on Christmas-day, or in the first seven days after,” and candidates are to have the preference, in the order, and with the limitations specified in the following extracts.

1. "The son of any Clergyman, who shall at any time officiate as Curate to the Vicar of Sandbach; or next to him the son of any Vicar or Curate, who shall then live and officiate in the parish of Middlewich, as the proper Minister or Curate of Middlewich; or lastly of any Minister or Curate of the Chapel of Witton, or who shall reside and live in the town of Northwich or Witton, or the adjacent townships of Castle Northwich and Winnington, and shall do the duty of the said Chapel as the proper Minister of Witton (all of them in the said county of Chester.)"

2. "And in default of such persons, then the son of any other Clergyman, who (that is which son) shall be born in either of the said parishes of Sandbach or Middlewich, or in the said Chapelry of Middlewich, shall have the preference. And if none shall be admitted, then the son of any other Clergyman shall be preferred, who (that is which son) shall be born in the said county of Chester, and next in any of the four following counties of Stafford, Salop, Derby, or Lancaster; or lastly, elsewhere in any other county or part of England, provided that it shall appear that the Clergyman who is father to such Scholar is not, if living, or, if dead, was not at the time of his death possessed of any spiritual preferment of more than one hundred and forty pounds a year, clear income; or whose income in every respect shall not exceed the clear yearly value of two hundred pounds in the whole."

"But if no son of any Clergyman, so entitled as aforesaid, shall be elected into such Scholarship, the same shall be given to the son of some lay person, whose clear yearly income does not, if living, and, if dead, did not at the time of his death amount to more than two hundred pounds; and such son being born in the counties of Chester, Stafford, Salop, Derby, and Lancaster, the counties in that order having a preference; or lastly, elsewhere in England."

“ And such Scholar, whether the son of a Clergyman, or Layman, to be elected in manner aforesaid, shall continue to enjoy this my benefaction until he shall take, or be of standing to take his first degree of Bachelor of Arts, unless some other person, being the son of some of the officiating ministers at some of the Churches or Chapels before mentioned, and otherwise qualified as aforesaid, and which qualification, had he been a member of the said College at the time the party in possession of the Scholarship has been elected, would have been entitled to the preference, shall be admitted a member of the said College; in which case the Scholar, who shall then be in possession; shall only hold the same for that year; and the other, with a prior right, shall be elected to the same the year following. And I do appoint the Master and senior Fellows of St. John’s College Trustees for the said Scholarships.”



PREFACE.

THE following Discourses were delivered before the University of Cambridge, in the year 1827, at the Lecture founded by the Rev. JOHN HULSE; and are now published, in compliance with the terms of his Will.

The nineteenth Psalm has been adopted as the model for the arrangement of the first twelve Lectures.

The first four treat of some of the more obvious proofs of Divine Power and Wisdom, suggested by the study of Astronomy. It was originally my intention to have added, in the Appendix, an explanation of some of the less familiar circumstances, to which allusion is made in these Lectures. But further consideration shewed, that to carry this into effect would require a treatise of far greater length, than the limited time allowed for publication would permit me to prepare. I have, consequently, been obliged to presume, that the

reader is acquainted with those facts, and with the consequences which flow from the law of gravitation; and have, in most instances, referred to works which treat upon the subjects in question. In the Appendix will be found, a brief notice of the Hindu systems of Chronology, and of a few other points, to which a reference is made in the fourth Lecture.

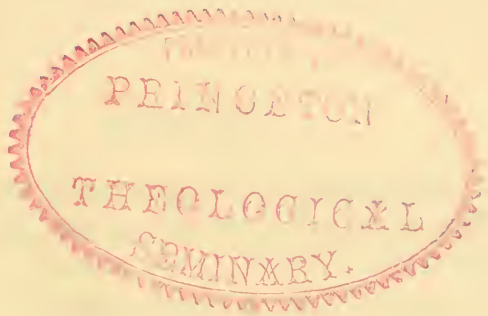
The eight following Lectures treat, in the order of the Psalm, of the advantages of revealed religion, the proofs by which it is established, and the duties it is designed to teach. The remaining eight Lectures are of a miscellaneous nature.

In retiring from the office of Hulsean Lecturer, I may be permitted to join with my predecessors in the hope, that some modification may be made in the arduous duties which are now required. The labour of preparing twenty Lectures for preaching and publication, in the course of a year, is too great to allow the Lecturer sufficient time for care in the composition, and for revising what he has written. If the delivery of the Lectures

be considered a matter of importance, it is far from desirable that it should take place on the Friday morning; a time, when the attendance of the University is generally prevented by other necessary engagements. Neither is it to be expected, that the University pulpit can be appropriated to these Lectures, on the Sunday afternoon, during the great portion of the academical year which they occupy.

It would be presumption in me to suggest the most eligible means of enabling the Lecturer more effectually to fulfil the *spirit* of the Founder's Will: but all, who consider the duties of his office, will acknowledge that some change is necessary, either in the number of Lectures required, or in the time allowed previous to publication.





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TWENTY DISCOURSES

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN THE YEAR 1827.

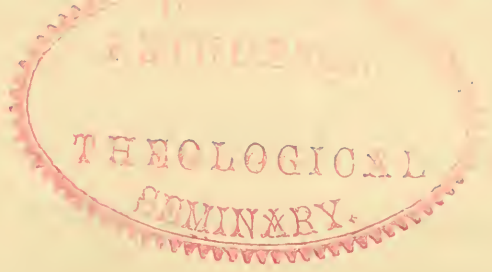
AT

THE LECTURE

Founded by the Rev. JOHN HULSE.

ERRATA.

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| 43 | 24 | <i>dele</i> now | |
| 52 | 21 | twelve | ten |
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| 61 | 19 | one | our |
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| 143 | 2 | depends | depend |
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PART I.



LECTURE I.

THE POWER OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE
HEAVENS.



PSALM XIX. 1—6.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”

THE nineteenth psalm has ever been considered one of the most valuable among the writings of David. While it breathes, throughout, a spirit of the purest devotion, it is replete with sublime ideas, expressed in simple language and arranged in luminous order.

This psalm is naturally divided into three parts. The first relates to that evidence of the existence of the Deity and that knowledge of his attributes, which may be derived from the contemplation of his works. The second expresses the still surer testimony which his word affords, and the peculiar advantages derived from learning and obeying its precepts. And the third contains an earnest prayer to be preserved from sins whether secret or presumptuous; and to be purified both in word and thought by the grace of God, who is our strength and our redeemer.

In the first six verses, the royal prophet displays in most eloquent terms the universal testimony which the material heavens bear to the power and wisdom of their Creator: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." He observes how continually and how generally they proclaim the wisdom that formed them: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language among them: their voice is not heard:"^a yet the intelligence which they convey is universally perceived. Wherever the sun shines forth to rule the day, wherever the moon and the stars govern the night, there is

^a Marginal translation.

displayed a splendid and living testimony to their Creator's name. "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." They pursue their appointed courses in silent order; but in their silence is eloquence. Their influence is not heard but felt. The psalmist then selects one striking instance from the natural world, the apparent course of the sun, as exemplifying the power of God. "In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber," radiant in appearance, and by his presence diffusing cheerfulness and joy; "and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven; and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

In this introductory part of the psalm there is opened a scene of astonishing magnificence, and of great interest. In all ages, and among all nations, the contemplation of the starry heavens has afforded a favourite exercise for the reflecting mind. The most unlearned and unenlightened have gazed with wonder upon so glorious a display of brilliant objects placed far beyond the control of man, and moving serenely through the skies. Uneducated tribes or half cultivated nations, who interpreted the

phænomena according to their own gross conceptions, were still struck with the beauty and manifest utility of the objects of their contemplation. Their rude admiration bore testimony to the glories of the heavens; and was an acknowledgement that He who formed them was supreme in wisdom and in power. And even if, when they saw the sun travelling in his strength, and the whole host of heaven performing their courses, they were seduced to pay to the creature the honour due to the Creator, their homage in its origin was but the perversion of a deep feeling of reverence towards him. As civilization advanced, the study of astronomy acquired fresh interest. When the eye of science was directed towards the heavenly bodies, it began to descry wonders still more and more astonishing as it obtained greater degrees of penetration and discrimination. What at first appeared a confused assemblage of detached bright points, disclosed an order the most beautiful, and a connection the most perfect, that imagination could conceive. The courses of those planets, which had long seemed to wander almost without method over the heavenly spaces, were defined; and in process of time all their motions were subjected to the most rigid calculation. When viewed by the assistance of the telescope, those lucid points

brightened and expanded into worlds. In some of them, the vicissitudes of seasons, and the succession of day and night were made the subject of actual observation. By degrees some were found to be accompanied, in the same manner as our earth is, with secondary planets, to give light to them by night, and to measure their times and seasons. Further research discovered how immensely remote others of the heavenly bodies are: and man gradually became conversant with distances, which lead his mind on to the idea of space without limit.

Whilst men, in all ages, and under different degrees of mental cultivation, have thus turned their attention to the study of the heavens, their researches have led them into two principal errors of very different kinds. Superstition, encouraged by the arts of designing men, invested the stars with an imaginary influence over the affairs of the world. When once the heavens were thus viewed as controlling and indicating terrestrial events, the most ordinary phænomenon became an object of disquietude, and every deviation from the customary aspects of the natural world excited the greatest alarm. The unusual appearance of a comet, or an eclipse of the sun or of the moon, struck dismay into the hearts of nations. And the most frivolous events in the lives of the most obscure indivi-

duals were considered to be governed by the secret but powerful energies of the planetary bodies.

The study of sound philosophy has banished these errors. But the consequent cultivation of abstract science has itself introduced others scarcely less dangerous. The mind long habituated to its peculiar processes of demonstration is apt to feel dissatisfied with conclusions derived from moral evidence; upon which it is still necessary to determine and to act, in matters of the greatest importance. The pride of reason frequently acquires a most pernicious ascendancy over a mind which is accustomed to find the difficulties of science yield to its persevering enquiries. And there seems to be sometimes a fatal tendency, in a philosophizing spirit, gradually to remove from consideration, and at last to deny, the existence of any final cause. Now this is an error against which the student of natural philosophy cannot be too much upon his guard. If scepticism be the fruit of ignorance, the enquiries of an ingenuous mind will soon detect and expose it. If it appear invested with the character of impurity and licentiousness, the very vices and turn of thought, by which it is accompanied, afford sufficient warning of its dangerous nature. But when the insidious poison is infused into

the cup of science; when the hand which prepares it is one which has long led the enquirer through the pleasing intricacies of philosophy, and lifted for him the veil which covers the face of nature; it then comes recommended with such authority, that its most noxious ingredients are eagerly imbibed.

Observation of a very cursory nature shews that this danger is not entirely imaginary. The comprehensive mind, which has successfully endeavoured to understand how all things are ordered “in measure and number and weight,”^b and to explain the mechanical phænomena of the heavens, has not always exhibited that humility which becomes a finite being in contemplating the mightiest works of an omnipotent Creator. They who have followed in the steps of Newton, have not all imitated the modest and humble piety, by which, in this instance, he was distinguished. So far from raising their thoughts from the works of nature to the God who created them, they have regarded all the properties of matter, not as communicated, but as inherent: and have discerned nothing more than a train of necessary consequences, even in the exquisite order of the material world. They have sometimes dared to question the utility of the most obvious contrivances for the use

^b Wisdom xi. 20.

in him, if he meet with those objections, which have been drawn, even from astronomical principles, against revealed religion. Neither the unmeaning surprise of the ignorant, nor the profound research of the philosopher, discovers in the contemplation of the heavens the best instruction which it is intended to convey. From the word of that God who made the heavens we must learn the most important lesson of all. And that word addresses us thus. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work."

In the heavens, as in every other part of the creation, there exist proofs of power and design. And if we stop short in our researches, without extending our thoughts from the wonders of nature to the God of nature, we omit to do that which reason recommends and revelation enjoins.

The ideas, which the study of the heavens most immediately suggests, are those of astonishing power. And in order more clearly to conceive the extent of the Divine power as displayed by the heavens, it will be desirable to notice how clearly we ascend in the study of astronomy from one degree of magnitude to another. There are parts of the creation in which, if we wish to form in our minds any distinct notions of the power which is exerted,

we find ourselves at a loss, for want of some common medium, by which we can compare those works of God with any work of man. When the Almighty, after having formed man of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul,^d He exerted a power which, we are conscious, is incomparably superior to that which we possess. But then it is a power totally distinct from any which we can exert; and therefore is entirely incomprehensible.

But the steps, by which our minds rise from the consideration of things on earth to the wonders of the heavens, afford a scale by which we can, in some degree, compare the extent of the works of God with the field to which the exertions of mankind are limited: and we thus perhaps acquire a more correct, although a very inadequate notion, in this one instance, how far the works of God transcend those of man.

We will first confine our view to the surface of the earth. We look around us, and behold it diversified with woods, and streams, and seas, and mountains; and we cannot fail to observe the absolute insignificance of the most elaborate productions of man compared with the great features of nature. What are the most splendid palaces which human labour can erect, compared

^d Gen. ii. 8.

with the hills, whose foundations the Lord hath laid? What are the most stately vessels, which the ingenuity of man can build and his science direct, compared with the ocean in which they are so frequently swallowed up? But when our contemplations are raised from the earth to the heavens, the scale of comparison is progressively enlarged: we are enabled to rise step by step from the earth which we inhabit to the limits of the planetary system in which we live; and thence to the sensible bounds of the universe.

Let us refer to a few of these gradations; and take notice how they depend one upon the other.

I. Observations of a very obvious nature shew that the earth is nearly of a spherical form: and an approximate value of its magnitude is obtained by measuring a definite portion of its surface. This affords the means of ascertaining, by a process which needs not now to be explained, the distance at which the moon performs her monthly course round the earth, and the much greater distance at which the earth revolves about the sun. A calculation, founded upon further observation of the heavenly bodies, discovers the distance at which the primary planets revolve in their respective orbits. It enables us to ascertain

that many of these bodies are far greater than the globe which we inhabit, and are accompanied with several satellites, which perform around them their regular courses. We are thus led to contemplate the whole solar system. We observe its primary and secondary planets all revolving in the same direction,^e both in their orbits and probably about their own axes, and with little deviation from one plane; all united by the same invisible force; all warmed and illuminated by the same central body; those nearest to the sun moving on in their course unaccompanied with satellites; but those more distant having moons to give light by night, and to be for times and seasons and for days and years. Around one of them are extended stupendous rings, spanning the vault of the heaven, as seen from the surface of the planet, and generally enlightening a part of it by the reflection of the solar rays. We must also consider the numerous comets which have been already observed; moving in free space to distances far greater even than the most remote planet, and again hurried into the immediate vicinity of the sun. We thus contemplate a scheme of vast extent, upon which unity and grandeur of

^e The secondaries of the planet Herschel move in orbits nearly perpendicular to the plane of the ecliptic.

design are evidently impressed. We see all these bodies moving in their respective courses without confusion, all obeying one law impressed upon them by their Creator's act, and still continued by his will.

By thus applying those measures of distance with which we are familiar, we can form a sufficiently distinct idea of the distances and magnitudes of the several parts which compose the system in which we dwell. But how shall we conceive the power necessary originally to launch such stupendous masses in their respective directions; and now to control their motions by a constant although invisible agent? How shall we conceive the wisdom which appointed them a law which shall not be broken; which foresaw and provided for all contingencies arising from their mutual action: and fitted them for the abode of sentient, and probably of rational creatures?

II. But beyond the solar system, in which we are placed, we still observe numerous other bodies. When we lift up our eyes, on a serene night, we behold the stars studded, apparently without order, over the vault of heaven. When the sight is aided by artificial means, new wonders are discovered. Thousands of stars appear which are invisible to the unassisted eye. Many which appear single, are found to be com-

pounded of two or more stars. There are observed collections of apparently luminous matter, which the most powerful telescope cannot distinguish as separate stars: some stars surrounded with a bright atmosphere; others surrounded by systems of planetary bodies: and many evidently revolving about their own axes. Here then are sufficient indications that the stars are bodies not very dissimilar to the sun which illuminates our world. Their light is of the same nature, reflected and refracted by the same laws, and moving with the same velocity as the solar light. But the chasm which we overleap in order to pass from the sun to the fixed stars is inconceivably great, compared with any distances with which we are conversant in considering our own system. It is a fact capable of demonstration, that if we could traverse the realms of space, and reach the nearest of these fixed stars, we should be able to discern the sun only as one of the stars of heaven. And even a luminous globe, the diameter of which was equal to that of the orbit which the earth annually describes about the sun, would at such a distance appear, to eyes constituted as ours are, but as a bright point.

III. But even if we reached one of those heavenly bodies, we should still be far from having approached the boundaries of the crea-

tion. The whole of the starry heavens, clearly visible by the assistance of the best telescopes, in all probability forms comparatively a very small part of the universe. The stars appear to be collected in clusters, or arranged in strata, each composed of perhaps millions of bodies, and every one of these the center of numerous planetary worlds. The starry heavens, which we perceive, are that portion of the works of God which is clustered immediately round ourselves. But as the powers of observation are continually improved, the telescope brings to view successive series of similar groups. If the eye could be placed in the midst of one of them, it would perceive other stars arranged in some new order; while the whole of that which now forms the glorious spectacle of our skies, would be seen, if seen at all, only as a nebulous spot of indistinct whiteness, scarcely discernible amidst the apparent infinity of the heavenly bodies. ^f

These conceptions, magnificent as they are, are not the fruit of an excited imagination; they are the realities of demonstrative science, founded upon accurate observation of the universe around us. Man has been endued by his Creator with mental powers capable of cultivation. He has employed them in the study of

^f See Herschel on the construction of the heavens. *Phil. Trans.* 1785. Art. xii. 1811. Art. xvi.

the wonderful works of God which the universe displays. His own habitation has provided a base which has served him to measure the heavens. He compares his own stature with the magnitude of the earth on which he dwells; the earth with the system in which it is placed; the extent of the system with the distance of the nearest fixed stars: and that distance again serves as an unit of measurement for other distances which observation points out. Still no approach is made to any limit. How extended these wonderful works of the Almighty may be, no man can presume to say. The sphere of creation appears to extend around us indefinitely on all sides; "to have its centre every where, its circumference no where."^s

These are considerations which from their extent almost bewilder our minds. But how should

^s "Tout ce que nous voyons du monde n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n'approche de l'étendue de ses espaces. Nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions, nous n'enfantons que des atomes au prix de la réalité des choses. C'est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part." *Pascal, Pensées. Prem. Partie, Art. iv.* Pascal is said, by Voltaire, to have adopted this idea from Timæus of Locris. The Editor of Pascal's works, 1821, ascribes it to Hermes Trismegistus. The *Pensées* were published in 1669: and the same expression is used in John Clieveland's petition to Oliver Cromwell in 1655. "Rulers within the circle of their government have a claim to that which is said of the Deity: they have their center every where and their circumference nowhere."

they raise our ideas toward their great Creator, when we consider that all these were created from nothing, by a word, by a mere volition of the Deity. "Let them be," said God, and they were. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "For he spake and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast."^h What must be that power which so formed worlds on worlds; worlds, in comparison of which, this earth which we inhabit sinks into utter nothingness. Surely when we thus lift up our thoughts to the heavens, the moon and the stars which he hath ordained, we must feel, if we can ever feel, how stupendous and incomprehensible is that Being who formed them all: "that the heavens" do indeed "declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work."

^h Psalm xxxiii. 6, 9.

LECTURE II.

THE WISDOM OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE HEAVENS.

PSALM XIX. 1—6.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

THE heavens, which declare the glory of God, by displaying his power, also shew forth his wisdom, by affording evident proofs of design.

It is needless to embarrass a discussion of this nature with the consideration of the general question, whether reason and experience enable us to infer the existence of design from any observation of effects. The mind is so constituted, that when we see a number of circumstances, in each of which there is room for

choice, so arranged that a certain effect is produced, we cannot avoid drawing the conclusion that the effect was contemplated. And our conclusion will be more or less forcible, in proportion to the number of independent circumstances which combine in producing the effect. The most superficial observer might discover that an eye would answer the purpose of vision. But when he came to examine its various parts, when he discovered that each of them was placed at the precise distance, and disposed in the exact order, which are necessary in order to produce a beneficial result; and that, if that distance or order were changed, the desired effect would not be produced; when he came to notice the various means employed to move the eye, to protect it from injury, to cleanse it from impurities, to adapt it to vision under different circumstances; he must conclude, with a degree of assurance which leaves no doubt, that the eye was made to see. In this instance, then, as in other instances without number, there is sufficient proof of contrivance. And our conviction that contrivance exists, immediately directs us to a contriver. The arguments of the sophist may bewilder our reasoning powers, but they cannot unsettle this conviction.

There are some branches of natural philo-

sophy, in which the proofs of beneficent design are more obvious than those which the study of astronomy affords: and they are so, principally, for this reason. The objects of which they treat are brought more immediately into contact with ourselves. They are such as we can more readily examine, and compare with other objects of a similar kind. In order to infer design, we must be able to perceive indications of a choice. And this we shall be able to do more clearly, by comparing together a number of instances, in which we can trace a general similarity, with partial variations from a common principle.

If, for instance, we were acquainted with the anatomical structure and with the wants and habits of one animal only, we might, no doubt, argue reasonably and forcibly from an attentive consideration of its frame, and the evident adaptation of suitable means to a beneficial end, that it was the work of an intelligent and benevolent contriver. But such a conclusion will receive additional confirmation, if we can direct our attention to the numerous other animal frames which the study of nature presents to our view: if we observe how the limbs are increased in number, lengthened or contracted, disposed in a varied order, or enveloped with a different covering; how the innate pro-

penalties of animals correspond with their subsequent manner of life; how precisely their bodily frames are adapted to their several ends. In an investigation of this nature, every fresh fact strengthens the argument. But in the study of astronomy we are in a great measure deprived of the assistance which might be derived from direct observation upon instances corresponding with that which we are examining. We doubt not,—we have indeed reason to believe,—that, if our observation could be extended to other worlds and other systems, we should behold fresh instances of our Creator's wisdom and power; new and unheard of modifications of matter; beings perhaps endued with senses of which we have no conception: physical and moral phænomena, which would throw altogether a new light upon much which is now obscure. But all this must, at present, be inferred by means of a less comprehensive analogy, instead of serving as the base of one more extended. At one entrance, therefore, our knowledge and evidence of contrivance, as drawn from the contemplation of the heavens, are quite shut out. From the deficiency of our information, we must often consider the visible world as one great isolated instance; an object, which, because it is considered as a whole, can-

not afford that kind of evidence which results from comparison.

Still we must remember that, although it may be possible to select but few instances, out of the numerous cases which might be supposed, as evidences of a designing agent, yet the whole of the presumption arising from this source lies on one side. There is no pretence whatever for concluding, even if we could not *prove* design, that design exists not. Utter absence of all knowledge upon any subject can but leave the mind in a state of indifference; a state in which the smallest probability on one side should determine the judgment in its favour, unless it were balanced or counteracted by an equal or superior probability on the other side.

These remarks are not made with the intention of diminishing the conviction, which the evidence of design arising from the structure of the material universe must excite: but that we may not be looking for greater and more conclusive evidence than the nature of the case admits: and may feel that any uncertainty may arise, not from the absence of sufficient proof, but from our own inability to discover and appreciate it.

As the first instance of wise design, let us turn our attention to that force which binds

the universe together, the force of gravitation. We know not the precise nature of this force; yet we can measure it by its effects. We can ascertain the law of its variation. We can compute, with great accuracy, its influence upon the heavenly bodies, and upon the waters of the ocean. Consider now, for a moment, how this one force, acting continually upon every atom of matter in the universe, and causing it to tend towards every other atom according to a definite law, becomes the means by which life and vigour are imparted to the material world. It is this which gives stability to the most solid structures, to the most stupendous mountains. It is this which envelopes the earth with the thin veil of her atmosphere, and enables the air to support the vapours and clouds which shade and fructify her surface. It is this which causes the rain to fall upon the pastures of the wilderness, the streams to flow from the hills, and the rivers to pour into the ocean the tribute of their waters. A modification of this force renders the waters buoyant, and makes the sea a pathway for the commerce of the nations which it divides. By this force also, the waters of the rivers are periodically driven backwards towards their sources, and again resume their original course; yielding to an undulation which assists the art and labour of mankind, and re-

freshes crowded cities with the salubrious coolness of its accompanying breeze. The same force guides the moon in her unerring course through the heavens; directs all the planets with their train of smaller globes; and extends, probably, through the universe, further than the most distant observations can reach, uniting and compacting the whole in one entire and connected plan.

Some of these effects are apparently independent of the particular law, by which this force of gravitation varies at different distances. But, as is well known, its law is such, that every material atom is urged towards every other material atom with a force, which diminishes in the same proportion as the square of the distance increases. And in the choice of this particular law, as there is room for design, so we find reason to admire the wisdom with which the selection has been made.

It has, indeed, been attempted to exclude the notion of choice from this law, by representing it as the necessary condition of every force which tends to a center.^a But whoever examines without prejudice the various hypotheses which have been framed with this intention, will agree that all attempts to prove the necessary connec-

^a La Place Exposition du Système du Monde, Liv. IV. ch. xvii. p. 312. edit. 4. See also Gregory's Astronomy, and Robison's Elements of Mech. Phil. vol. I. §. 741.

tion, between the fact of a force tending to a center and its law of variation, have totally failed. Experience indeed appears sufficiently to controvert this theory; for many phenomena in the attraction and repulsion of small particles cannot be explained, except by the variation of a force in a much higher inverse ratio. It is true that the density of particles diffused from a center will diminish as the square of the distance increases: but besides the difficulty of comprehending how the divergence of particles from a center can ever cause a force which tends in the opposite direction, there is no sufficient ground for extending this law of variation to a force which is directed to a center.

There being, then, room for choice in the selection of a peculiar law, by which every atom in the universe should act upon every other atom so as to produce the regulated motions of immense masses, and yet guard against all disorder arising from their mutual action, observe with what wisdom the existing law of nature is selected.

In that law of gravitation two things are remarkable. First, that if spheres of determinate magnitude be composed of elementary atoms, each of which attracts each with a force varying inversely as the square of the distance, these spheres attract one another with forces which

tend to their respective centers and vary in the same law. Secondly, that the mutual effect of any number of smaller bodies, revolving about a much larger central body, is such as to occasion only slight deviations from those which would take place, if the smaller bodies did not influence one another's motions: and that all variations which would endanger the stability of the system are periodical. They increase only to a certain small extent, and then diminish by the same degrees. These two conditions would have been ensured by no other law of variation in the force of gravity.

The first condition, that spheres should attract each other with a force varying in the same law as that by which the elementary particles attracted each other, would it is true have existed, on two suppositions: either that the force increased in the same proportion as the distance increased; or that the force of each particle consisted of two parts: the one increasing in the same proportion as the distance increased, and the other diminishing in the same proportion as the square of the distance increased. But neither of these suppositions would have been consistent with the second condition, by which all danger of derangement, arising from the mutual action of several bodies, is removed.

If the force of gravity had varied in any other inverse law, so that it should diminish as the distance increases, neither of these two conditions would have been answered.

One body indeed, projected in a proper direction and with a determinate velocity, might describe a circle about another body, and about the common center of gravity of the two bodies, whatever be the variation in the law of gravity at different distances. But the mutual action of several such bodies would immediately disturb the regularity of their motions. And however small the deviation might be at first, since there would be in the system itself no tendency to regain its original state, it is clear, that without a continual exertion of an external intelligent power, a series of changes would occur which would terminate in an entire subversion of the system.

Upon the system of nature, on the contrary, stability is impressed by the hand of God. Unwearied research and great sagacity have led men by degrees to measure and to weigh the planetary system: and at every fresh step, some new discovery has been made, which affords fresh grounds for astonishment at the power and wisdom of the Almighty. There was a period in the history of science, when men of the greatest intellect, the most

ardent enquirers into the works of nature, thought that the frame of the material system in which we are placed was not so accurately adjusted, but that it would, from time to time, require correction by the immediate interposition of the Creator's hand^b. Subsequent improvement in abstract science has shewn that this is not the case. The great machine of the solar system is so nicely balanced within itself, that it will continue to perform its majestic revolutions, until it shall seem good to the Almighty to cause it to cease to be. The paths which the planets trace out in their appointed courses undergo slight variations in magnitude and form and position; their motions are sometimes accelerated and sometimes retarded; but these changes are corrected by the very causes which produce them. There is a mean state about which the whole system oscillates^c. Reckoning from this state, all the

^b "While comets move in very eccentric orbs, in all manner of positions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the same way, in orbits concentric, some inconsiderable irregularities excepted, which may have risen from the mutual action of the comets and planets upon one another, and which will be apt to increase till this system wants a reformation." Newton's Optics, B. III. Qu. 31.

^c Bailly expresses this fact with great elegance and precision. "La nature est animée par des forces qui se combattent, par des agens qui tendent à se détruire. S'il y a

variations extend only to a certain limited degree. Having attained that point, they begin to decrease and pass to the opposite extreme: and after a lapse of a greater or less time regain their first position. Now this is far from being a mere speculative truth. It is a fact of exceeding importance to ourselves, as well as to the whole system in which we are placed.

1. The path which the earth describes about the sun is nearly circular. Suppose this to have been originally the form of the orbit, but that the mean distance could have varied in the lapse of ages. The result would, in process of time, have been fatal to all creatures animate and inanimate upon the face of the earth. The consequence might have been slow in its advance: but the evil day must have come: and might have been almost computed, if science could have attained in any degree its present perfection. Conceive, now, the misery of mankind, if they were conscious that such a fatal change was inevitably approaching. If the disturbing power were such as continually to increase the distance of the earth from the sun, in every succeeding year the seasons would

y a un équilibre, elle s'en écarte, et n'y revient que par des oscillations. Tout subsiste, tout dure dans l'ensemble, tout varie dans le détail. Voilà la loi de la nature." *Traité de l'Astron. Indienne—Discours Préliminaire*, p. xxxviii.

return more slowly. The fruits of the earth would gradually become insufficient for the sustenance of its inhabitants. The influence of the sun in diffusing light and heat would continually diminish.^d Cold, such as now benumbs the polar regions of the earth in their dreary winter, would by degrees bind up the rivers and the seas: and all animated beings would eventually be destroyed.

A change equally fatal, but opposite in kind, would take place, if any planet continually approached the sun, although its orbit still retained a nearly circular form.

But against the possibility of any such change the law, which the Creator has given to the material world, effectually provides. The mean distance of each of the planets from the sun does indeed vary; but it varies by such a small quantity as to be quite insensible except by the most accurate observation. And even to this small variation the Creator has set bounds, which shall not be passed.^e

2. But although the *mean* distance of a planet may be secure from change; although,

^d Allowing heat to be occasioned by the action of the solar rays upon the atmosphere, a change of distance would still cause a change of mean temperature, for the number of rays which were incident in a given time would vary.

^e La Grange, Mem. of Berlin, 1776. Méc. Celeste, Part. I. Liv. II. ch. vii. No. 54. 61—ch. viii. No. 65. Woodhouse's Astron. vol. II. ch. XXI.

for instance, the earth from year to year may remain at the same average distance from the sun, it is possible to conceive that the *form* of its annual orbit may be changed. That the eccentricity, as it is called, may vary. That the oval, which it describes, though now a very round oval, may, at some subsequent period, become a very long oval; that the earth may therefore approach nearer and nearer to the sun at a particular part of each revolution, and finally fall into that central body. Such a change also would evidently be fatal to the creatures which are placed upon the earth, and to its fruits.

But the law imposed upon the force, which pervades and connects the universe, forbids such a change. Since the motions of all the bodies in the planetary system are in the same direction, the form of their orbits remains nearly unaltered: and the small change which does take place is, in this instance also, a periodical change.^f

3. The regular succession of the seasons, and consequently the comfort and existence of all beings upon the surface of the earth, depends also upon the inclination of the earth's axis to the plane of its orbit continuing nearly invariable. In order to effect this, the axis of rotation must be a permanent axis. The points terminating

^f *Méc. Celeste*, Part. I. Liv. II. ch. vii. No. 37. 61. Woodhouse's *Astron.* vol. II. ch. xxiii.

the line about which it revolves must be fixed points upon its surface. This happy adaptation, in a case which allowed of infinite variety, affords in itself no inconsiderable presumption of design, if the state of the earth, when originally set in motion, were at all similar to its present state. If, however, it be considered that any argument in favour of design is, in this instance, excluded by the supposition that the earth assumed its present form when in a fluid state, it must be remembered that the very supposition introduces an additional evidence of a beneficial choice. For the same time of rotation, there are two forms, either of which a fluid spheroid might assume. Now, in every instance, the form of the planets differs but little from a sphere: and it may without difficulty be shewn, that this nearly spherical form is much better adapted for the equable diffusion of light and heat over their surfaces, than the far more eccentric form which would also have been compatible with the law of gravitation.

4. Besides, the permanence of the axis in fixed space is not alone sufficient to ensure a permanent inclination of that axis to the plane of the earth's orbit. That plane might itself be altered by the disturbance of the planetary bodies: and very important changes would then take place, by the disturbance of the seasons.

The inclination of the plane of the earth's orbit to that of its equator is at present diminishing. Should that diminution continue unchecked, the variation of the seasons, at present so conducive to our comfort, and indeed so necessary to our existence, would eventually cease. But the law, which has been so wisely selected for the variation of the force of gravity, precludes all liability to permanent alteration in the planetary system, from this cause. The inclination of the orbits of all the planets to a fixed plane, although subject to a slight variation from their mutual action, is restrained within certain limits much too small to occasion any sensible change in the distribution of light and heat^s.

The magnitude, then, of the planetary orbits, their form, and their position, all remain from age to age, unaltered by the mutual action of the bodies which compose the system. There is found a slight variation of the elements, a little play in the various parts of the mighty machine: but, considered as one fabric, it continues the same, retaining the motion which the hand of God impressed upon it at the creation; and proclaiming his power and wisdom.

^s *Méc. Celeste*, Part. 1. Liv. 1. ch. vii. No. 59. 61. Woodhouse's *Astron.* vol. II. ch. xxiii.

Now can this stability exist in the planetary system by chance? Can this result, flowing from the simple law of gravitation, be contemplated with coldness as a necessary consequence of the casual aggregation of inert matter? Shall it not rather incite us to lift up our thoughts to Him who selected this particular modification of the force, which connects so many parts, and regulates so many motions. He it was who “spake the word and they were made: he commanded, and they were created. *He* hath made them fast for ever and ever: *He* hath given them a law which shall not be broken.”^h

But the exquisite provision made in the law of gravity for the continuance of the system would have been made in vain, as far as regards the comfort and even the existence of creatures similar to those which now animate the face of the earth, unless the motions originally impressed upon that globe had been such as to cause it to describe nearly the path which it does describe. Doubtless we must not pretend to limit Omnipotence. The Creator might have peopled this earth with beings capable of existing under circumstances, which would have destroyed all the sentient creatures with which we are acquainted. Those very comets which

^h Ps. cxlviii. 8. according to the translation of “the Great Bible.”

sometimes approach so near the sun, and at other times are removed to so great a distance from him, may perhaps be inhabited by beings of capacity to endure the great changes of light, and probably of heat, to which they are exposed. But the question with respect to the planetary globes, is this. Every analogy points them out as bodies similar to the earth which we inhabit. They are warmed and enlightened by the same sun. They have the same stars spread around them in the same order: they all describe orbits nearly of the same form: thus all revolve about the sun, and probably all about their own axes, in the same direction; and their axes are generally inclined to the plane of their respective orbits.ⁱ They have therefore all similar vicissitudes of seasons, the same alternation of day and night. Now does not this similarity justify the conclusion, that their motions were studiously and purposely made what they are? Had there been no common design in the formation of the globes which compose this system, surely there would have been found the greatest variety in the forms and positions of the orbits; some variation in the direction of so many motions. Neither is it unphilosophical to conclude that the diffusion

ⁱ The axis of the planet Jupiter is nearly perpendicular to the plane of its orbit.

of a nearly equable temperature over the surface of the planets, the distribution of periods of light and darkness, of cold and heat, of summer and winter, which is so necessary in our globe, and is attained in all the planets so simply, yet so beautifully, was intended to be attained, when the universe was created. But this could only be accomplished by a very nice adjustment of the velocity and direction with which each of these vast globes was originally impelled. Here therefore again is evidence of choice, selection, and design.

When, then, we contemplate the system in which we are placed, and consider the wonderful force which connects so many apparently detached masses; when we observe that the same force, which gives stability to objects upon the surface of the earth, confers upon every planetary body its globular form, and guides it with unerring certainty in its rapid course; that, by virtue of the particular law selected for the variation of that force at different distances, masses composed of innumerable attracting particles mutually influence each other by forces which vary in the same law; that the perturbations thus produced never become very considerable; and that all variations, which would, if continued, endanger the stability of the system, are only periodical: we are irre-

sistibly led to the conclusion, that these magnificent works are the production of a designing mind: that He who “made the earth by his power,” hath “established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.”^k

^k Jer. li. 15. x. 12.



LECTURE III.

THE WISDOM OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE HEAVENS
AND UPON THE EARTH.

PSALM XIX. 1—6.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

WHEN we direct our eyes to the celestial regions, and behold the magnificent scene presented to our view: when we consider the bright stars of heaven as what they really are, masses of stupendous magnitude existing in space to which we can assign no limits; we are necessarily led to acknowledge the power of Him who formed them. And when, by further observation, we detect the accurate laws by which the motions of the bodies in our own

system are regulated, and the obviously wise ends to which they are subservient; we are brought to the conclusion that these heavens are the work, not only of infinite power, but of a designing intelligence.

We have already referred to the law of gravity and its consequences as affording proofs of design in conjunction with benevolence. But there are numerous other circumstances, more or less closely connected with astronomy, which enforce the same truth.

1. We may first notice how nicely the vicissitudes of the seasons and the alternation of day and night, are fitted for sustaining the living creatures and fruits of this earth. Seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, cease not; and, were they to cease, the earth would soon become a desert. A small periodical alteration, in the length of the day, and the temperature of the seasons, is found to be not only tolerable, but most conducive to the comfort of our existence. But any material change, much more the suspension of this alternate variation, would speedily be followed by inevitable and total destruction of every living creature, and of every plant that grows. Now we are not at all apt to think of this. The very greatness, the universality of the benefit makes us forgetful of it. Man goes

forth to his work and to his labour upon the earth, and expects with anxiety the hour when evening shall have put a period to his toils. Night comes on, and affords a season of general quiet; allowing precisely the degree of time necessary to recruit his strength, and to restore the face of nature to its original freshness. He that now sows, sows in the confident hope that the seed will spring up, and produce first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear: that the rain from heaven will descend to water it, and the warmth of the summer sun will bring its fruit to maturity: that he will in the autumn put in the sickle, and lay up the produce in his garner as a provision for the winter, which he expects to ensue. But few know, and of those who know fewer still consider, that this delightful change and this confident expectation are parts of an analogy connecting the globe which we inhabit with the system in which it is placed.

The earth, self balanced on her axle, glides on with the other planets in her appointed course through the regions of space, with a rapidity almost inconceivable though unobserved; like some rich vessel, originally launched by the Creator's hand, freighted with all the productions of its various climes, and affording to them all an agreeable and necessary

vicissitude of light and darkness, of heat and cold. That a night of very long duration would be intolerable, and soon destroy both animals and organized beings on the face of the earth, is manifest. And they who have experienced the uninterrupted light of a polar day bear witness to the harassing feelings arising from its continuance, for a time much exceeding the ordinary duration of a day.

2. The planet upon which we live is composed of matter under three principal modifications, solid, fluid, and aerial. Such a distribution is found to be most necessary for the existence of the different beings which are placed upon its surface: but the arrangement depends upon a variety of circumstances, in all of which there is room for choice within certain limits.

The first condition, which may be mentioned, is a certain equable temperature. The variations which take place in different parts of the world, and at different seasons, are not so great as those which may be artificially produced; and far less than those which any considerable alteration of the place occupied by the earth in the solar system would probably occasion. Now, if no alteration be supposed in the other bodies of which the globe is composed, the fluid state, in which the element of water

generally presents itself, depends upon the temperature to which it is exposed. A degree of cold by no means inconceivably greater than is actually experienced, might convert all the seas which cover our globe into a solid mass: and, on the contrary, they might be exposed to such a degree of heat, as, under the ordinary pressure of the atmosphere, would change the whole into an elastic vapour. Who was it, then, that endued the element of water with those qualities which render it generally fluid; the very condition in which it is most useful for the convenience and comfort and existence of the animate and inanimate creation? Who was it that communicated to the fluid that singular property of expanding, when at a certain temperature, both by the addition and the subtraction of heat; a property which in a great measure secures from destruction the living creatures which inhabit the waters, by preserving their deeper parts fluid, even when “the waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen?”^a It was he who “casteth forth his ice like morsels,” who “sendeth out his word and melteth them,” who “causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.”^b

3. Again, how admirably is the relative density of water adapted to the purposes which

^a Job xxxviii. 30.

^b Ps. cxlvii. 18.

it answers in the creation. If that element were specifically lighter than it is, in any considerable degree, every stream would form an insurmountable obstacle to every animal which now traverses it with ease. Accidental immersion would prove almost inevitably fatal. Navigation, which now unites the most distant lands, would have been attended with much greater difficulty; and could never have been carried to its present perfection. Or, if water were relatively much denser than it actually is, who shall assign limits to the devastation which its agitation would occasion? Every one knows how awful are the effects of a storm at sea: how irresistible the impulse of the waves: and, making all allowances for the inertness of a denser fluid, it is easy to see how much more danger would have arisen from the concentrated shock of the billows of such an ocean.

Besides, all the agitations to which the ocean is now exposed, whether arising from the force of winds, or of currents, or from the mighty heaving of its tides, now gradually subside. The friction of the various parts, and the direction of the constant force of gravity, all tend to restore the equilibrium. But it is well known that this might not have been the case. The waters of the seas might have

been so circumstanced that at some time a force should have begun to act upon them, which was counteracted by no steady counterpoize. Such a force, however small in its beginning, would have given rise to oscillations in the fluid, which would gradually have increased until the surface of the highest mountains had been covered; and man and beast swept from the face of the deluged earth. An event like this, however, cannot happen by the action of such forces as are known now to act upon the waters. The equilibrium of the ocean is an equilibrium of stability. If its ordinary form be changed, there are forces which immediately tend to bring it back to the state in which it was, before the disturbance. But, what is very remarkable, the equilibrium of the ocean would not have been stable, had the density of its waters been much greater than it is. Had the density of that fluid exceeded the mean density of the solid nucleus over which it is diffused, its surface might have been balanced; but as soon as its position was disturbed, a succession of undulations would have commenced, quite inconsistent with the present condition of our globe.^c

^c Méc. Celeste—Première Partie, Liv. IV. ch. 2.

Now, can we be contented with ascribing the peculiar density, which the element of water possesses, to a lucky chance? Shall we say that it was only discovered to possess certain properties, of which man and animals have availed themselves? Rather let us acknowledge with Solomon, that it was the Almighty who “strengthened the fountains of the deep,” who “gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment.”^d Rather let us join in the sublime thanksgiving of David, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,—who laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment, the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled: at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set them a bound that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth.”^e

4. There is still another remarkable fact, connected with the density of water, compared with the mean density of the earth. Every part of the earth gives sufficient evidence of

^d Prov. viii. 28, 29.

^e Psalm civ. 1, 9.

having been, at some time, in a state approaching to fluidity. Now, if a globe were composed of a mixture of matter partly in a solid, and partly in a fluid state, and were left to the undisturbed action of its several parts; whether this globe had a rotatory motion or not, the heavier portions would at length be found to occupy the parts nearer to the center. The consequence of such an arrangement would be the formation of a solid nucleus, every part of which was covered with the lighter fluid. No combination of such forces could have produced a globe having its surface diversified with land and water, and therefore fitted for the habitation of beings such as now inhabit the earth. In order to effect this, the force of gravity, generally so indispensable to the formation and continuance of a stable system, must be either suspended, or counteracted by a more powerful agent. What forces were employed to heave up the vast continents from their ocean bed, and rear aloft the summits of the mountains, may be a legitimate subject of speculation. But some such forces there must have been before the earth was "founded," as it is, "upon the seas, and established upon the floods."^f And, whatever secondary means

^f Psalm xxiv. 2. Comp. Psalm xxxiii. 7.

were the instruments of this mighty change, sound philosophy would itself lead to the conclusion that there was a period in the formation of the world, when "GOD said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so."^g

5. A similar adaptation to beneficial purposes is found in the atmosphere which envelopes the earth. It is almost superfluous to dwell upon its obvious uses. It is indispensably necessary for sustaining animal and vegetable life. It supports and conveys the clouds and vapours, which descend upon the earth in rain and dew. It diffuses equably the light of the sun; so that even those parts of objects, which are not directly illuminated, are visible: it renders the change from day to night gradual; accompanied with circumstances of the greatest beauty; and in some parts of the earth it prolongs the duration of the light of day, after the sun has disappeared, in a manner highly conducive to the comfort of the inhabitants. It is the vehicle by which various odours are transmitted to the sense, and sounds are conveyed to the ear, susceptible of such delicate modulation as to be the readiest signs of ideas, and to afford a source of high grati-

^g Gen i. 9.

fication, by their pleasing succession or harmonious combination.

But there are other less obvious, but equally important properties in the air which we breathe; properties which indicate selection and design. Air is an elastic fluid, possessing weight, and capable of being contracted or expanded by a variation in heat or pressure. The peculiar degree of density, which it is found to possess at the surface of the earth, arises from the relation between the attractive force of gravity, and the repulsive force of the particles of which the atmosphere is composed. And this density could not be materially altered without occasioning much inconvenience.

If the density of the air were greatly increased, the light which we receive from the heavenly bodies would be sensibly diminished; and the effects of storms and of all agitations of the atmosphere would be augmented. Consequences still more hurtful would follow from a diminution of the density of the atmosphere, even if the respiration of animals could be carried on.

In the passage of the solar rays through the atmosphere, heat is produced. The air therefore, possessing a sufficient density, is necessary to preserve the temperature of the earth at that degree which is found most

beneficial to its various inhabitants. But there is still another consequence connected with the density and therefore the pressure of the atmosphere. The air is necessary to keep down the sea. Were the atmospheric pressure removed, or greatly diminished, there would be but little, if any, intermediate state of the waters of the ocean between the solid and aeriform state. A far less degree of heat than is now frequently experienced would dissipate all the waters upon the face of the earth.

So connected are all the phænomena of the natural world. So many things conspire to render this globe a residence for living animals, and to make it subservient to their convenience.

6. The proportion which is found between sea and land upon the surface of the earth is another instance of beneficial adaptation to the use of man, and of other creatures. And it is, besides, a benefit arising from a cause which, at first sight, might appear calculated to produce great inconvenience. We might imagine that the interposition of vast oceans between different lands would have been an insurmountable obstacle to any intercourse. Whereas it affords the most commodious means of effecting it. Again, since a great portion of the surface of the earth is covered by sea, the

space adapted to terrestrial animals is proportionally limited. We might perhaps have imagined that a greater surface of land capable of producing the fruits of the earth, would have enabled our planet to support a greater number of living creatures. But besides the consideration of the numerous beings in a state of life and enjoyment, which the ocean contains, not only near its surface, as the earth does, but probably to vast depths, it is easy to perceive that the quantity of sea is not greater than is requisite to secure the fertility of the earth. The ocean is a mighty reservoir: and its contents are in a state of continual circulation. By the wonderful, and hitherto inimitable, property of natural evaporation, which from a salt ocean extracts the most pure and limpid water, the clouds are formed in the atmosphere. These are driven by the winds over the most extensive continents. The rains fall upon the fruits of the earth, and essentially contribute to bring them to maturity. They supply the springs and rivers, which, after having adorned and enriched the earth in their course, return to the ocean from which they were derived. We are not, perhaps, competent to form a just estimate of the precise proportion between sea and land, which would best secure these various purposes. But we are able to see that the

existing proportion serves them all: that a material alteration in that proportion would be attended with much inconvenience, even if it did not prove destructive.

7. The magnitude of the tides, caused by the attraction of the sun and moon upon the waters of the ocean, is another circumstance which deserves particular notice, as affording a strong presumption of design.

The tides, as they at present exist, are eminently beneficial. Perhaps we cannot even conceive any more perfect system of the same nature. This periodical undulation, arising not from any superficial cause, such as the agitation of the winds, disturbs the ocean to its greatest depths, and effectually prevents any stagnation of its waters. Upon the coasts of the ocean, in narrow seas, and especially in rivers, it produces a current which is of the greatest convenience to navigation. By its aid, the mariner is frequently able to direct his course, with nearly as much certainty as if the winds of heaven were, for several hours, invariably favourable to his progress, and again, for a corresponding period, propitious to his return. In order to produce these beneficial effects, many independent parts must be arranged, each within certain small limits. The tides are caused by the gravitation of the sun, the moon, and the earth towards

each other. If the relative magnitudes or the relative distances of these bodies had been different from what they are, the tides must likewise have been different. There appears, for instance, no necessary connection between the force of gravity upon the surface of a planet, and the magnitude and distance of a secondary planet which revolves about it. Now, had the moon been much nearer the earth than it is, the tides produced in the ocean might have been so great, as to have overwhelmed the dry land and all its inhabitants. On the contrary, had the moon been much more distant, the tides would have been too small to be essentially beneficial. Neither, again, does there appear any connection between the distance and mass of a secondary planet, and the time in which the primary planet revolves about its own axis. The earth might have performed its diurnal revolution in the same time that the planet Jupiter does, in about twelve hours: and still might have assumed a form not very different from that which it now possesses. But the tides of its ocean would then have reciprocated with nearly double their present velocity. It would have been, perhaps, impossible to navigate rivers, or to approach those parts of the ocean where local circumstances increase the motions of the tides.

Since then, the magnitudes and relative position of the sun, the moon, and the earth are such as to produce effects upon the ocean acknowledged to be beneficial, when contrary effects might have been produced, we conclude that the effects were foreseen: and that the system affords in this point of view a striking instance of providential adjustment.

8. But, it may be said, if analogy may be relied upon, we have at least some reason to conclude that the secondary planets may be bodies constituted in the same manner as this earth, and their respective primary planets. They may be solid bodies partly covered with a circumambient fluid: and if so, the fluctuations, arising from the difference of the attraction of the primary upon different parts of their surface, must be far greater than the undulations which they could excite upon the fluids of the larger body. For instance, if the moon were composed of parts similar to that of the earth, the force of the earth to disturb its waters would be full ten times as great as that which the moon exerts upon the waters of our ocean.^h How can this danger be obviated? By a relation the most wonderful, may we not say the most unexpected, that can be conceived.

^h Newton, Principia, vol. III. Prop. 38.

All the secondary planets,ⁱ upon which observations have successfully been made to establish the fact of their rotation, are found to revolve upon their own axes, in the very same time in which they perform their revolution about their respective primaries. The consequence of this correspondence is, that they always turn the same part of their surface towards the primary planet; and therefore that the general form of the fluids upon their surfaces will not be periodically altered. The secondary planets will be elongated in the direction of the diameter which passes through the center of the primary; but no succession of changes will take place similar to the reciprocations of the tides upon the earth. It is said, indeed, that this equality would arise simply from physical causes. That, if the angular motion of a satellite about its axis had been very nearly equal to its mean angular motion in its path about the primary, the attraction of its primary might have made the two motions coincide. And it is proved that, after the secondaries had acquired the form which, as fluid bodies, they would assume by the attraction of their primaries, on the supposition

ⁱ The Moon; all the satellites of Jupiter; and one of Saturn. See Newton, *Principia*, vol. III. Prop. 38. Dan. Bernouilli, *Traité sur le flux et reflux de la mer*. ch. iii. §. 5. Brinkley's *Astron.* §. 125, 130.

that the same face is turned towards them, the large secular variations which effect the revolutions of the primary bodies would be communicated to the secondaries; so that the equality between the time of their revolution and the time of their rotation would still subsist^k. But, allowing this to be the case, the only question would be, with what degree of accuracy a particular design was originally effected; whether it were accomplished entirely, or only partially by the adjustment of the initial angular velocity. All the primary planets revolve about their axes; and no general proportion is observed between their diurnal and annual revolutions.¹ Why is this apparent absence of order suddenly changed in all the secondaries? Of all possible periods which could have been selected for a satellite, that which would permit the attraction of its primary to reduce its angular motion about its axis to an equality with the motion in its orbit, lies within very small limits. Had the initial angular velocity been greater or less than those contained within such limits, the observed equality never could have taken

^k *Mécanique Celeste*, Part I. Liv. v. ch. ii.

¹ The two large planets Saturn and Jupiter revolve about their axes nearly in the same time, 12 hours, although their periods are very different. And all the other planets inferior to them probably revolve in about 24 hours.

place. Yet this nice adjustment is found, not in one or two satellites only, but in many; and probably extends to all the secondary bodies of the system.

Shall we then consider it to be improbable in the highest degree,^m that the Creator of the universe should give such a degree of motion, as would obviate a great inconvenience, if an analogy not very forced may be relied upon? Shall we not rather recognize, in this adaptation, the proofs of wise and beneficent design?

9. Another circumstance, which has always been considered as affording a strong presumption of contrivance and design in the constitution of the system which we inhabit, is the fact, that the central body only is luminous. There seems to be no intelligible reason why, if a number of bodies be made to revolve about their common center of gravity, the largest alone should be capable of illuminating and warming the rest. But it is evident that the present frame of the solar system is precisely fitted for diffusing light and heat equably throughout the system; and that the same purpose could not have been effected, had any

^m Il serait contre toute vraisemblance de supposer qu'à l'origine ces deux mouvemens ont été parfaitement égaux. Exposit. du Système du Monde, Liv. iv. ch. xiv.

one of the planets been luminous and the sun opaque.

10. Before we conclude this part of our enquiry, we must briefly allude to one other circumstance in the planetary system, which most strongly suggests the agency of a designing mind. I mean the rings which surround the planet Saturn. In order that these rings may revolve about the planet in such a manner as never to fall upon its surface, there is required a very nice adjustment of forces, both to originate, and to continue the motion. It cannot be conceived that they were gradually formed by the aggregation of matter endued with gravity. For until they were fully formed they could not be supported.ⁿ It cannot be conceived that they were set in motion by one force only. For a single impulse applied at any point of one of the rings, would have brought it into contact with the planet; unless either the same impulse were impressed upon the planet, or an equal and opposite impulse were given at the same time to the ring. Again, in all the other parts of the system, regularity of form, within certain limits, is necessary in order to preserve the equilibrium of the different fluids upon the surface of

ⁿ See Vince's Sermons on the Proofs of a Deity derived from Astronomy, p. 126, &c.

the planetary bodies. And such regularity is found to exist. In these rings, on the contrary, considerable irregularity of form is necessary; for had the rings been perfectly regular, although their motion might have commenced, it would have been disturbed by the action of the other planetary bodies, and they would in time have fallen upon the surface of the planet. And in this instance, where irregularity of form is wanted, there it is found.^o Their figure being thus irregular, and the plane in which they move being coincident with that of the planet's equator, and also with the orbits of six of its seven satellites, the motion although so delicately balanced, is not liable to be disturbed by the mutual action of the other bodies in the system. It is impossible to contemplate these various adjustments, without the fullest conviction that herein is displayed the design of God.

11. An accurate numerical relation^p is also found between the positions, and consequently between the mean motions, of the three principal

^o *Méc. Céleste*, Part. I. Liv. III. ch. vi. § 46.

^p The relation is such that the mean motion of the first, together with twice the mean motion of the third, is equal to three times the mean motion of the second: and the mean longitude of the first, together with twice the mean longitude of the third exceeds three times the mean longitude of the second by half the circumference. *Méc. Celeste*, Part. I. Liv. II. ch. viii. §. 66.

satellites of the planet Jupiter, which it is impossible to account for without design. Although we may not be able to shew what the ultimate intention of such a relation is, we may perceive one beneficial consequence derived from it; that the surface of the planet during the night is always illuminated by the reflected light of, at least, one of its satellites. And the most hardy advocates for the effects of chance could never advance an assertion so utterly improbable as that this relation could have taken place without design, even to such a degree of accuracy as would permit the mutual action of the bodies to establish the relation exactly. Neither has observation hitherto detected such a periodical inequality as would subsist, if the initial motions had sensibly varied from the present.

The consideration of circumstances such as these can leave no doubt upon a reasonable mind that the heavens and the earth display the *wisdom* of their Creator by affording explicit evidence of design. The study of the works of nature leads us to acknowledge, that the Lord “created the heavens,” that it is “God himself that formed the earth and made it: *he* hath established it, he created it not in vain: *he* formed it to be inhabited.”^q

^q Isaiah xlv. 18.

LECTURE IV.

CONSIDERATION OF THE OBJECTIONS TO NATURAL
AND REVEALED RELIGION, WHICH HAVE BEEN
DRAWN FROM ASTRONOMICAL PRINCIPLES.



PSALM XIX. 1—6.

The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech ; and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun ; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it ; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

THE conclusion has already been drawn, from circumstances connected with the study of astronomy, that the material heavens were framed by a Being of the greatest power and of consummate wisdom. It might appear almost incredible, that so obvious a consequence should ever have been denied. And yet there have been found those, who have attempted, by continually removing the point at which Divine interference

was necessary, to insinuate at least the possibility that the whole scheme of the universe is nothing more than the necessary consequence of properties inherent in matter: that, consequently, the heavens do not declare the glory of God, nor does the firmament shew his handy work.

I. 1. Among other hypotheses far too visionary to deserve mention, the theory, by which one celebrated philosopher attempted to account for the motions of the planets and satellites, is well known. Buffon conceived that a comet grazed the surface of the sun, and drove from it torrents of liquid matter, which, uniting in several masses by the mutual gravitation of their particles, assumed a spherical form, and became planets and satellites. He thus attempted to remove the necessity of the interference of the Divine counsel to direct, and of the Divine arm to set in motion, the bodies which compose one system.

There are, however, circumstances in the planetary motions entirely irreconcilable with this supposition. Planets so formed might have moved in orbits, which deviated little from one plane: and all their motions about the sun might have been in the same direction. But the uniformity which is found to exist in the direction of their rotation about their axes, and in the motions of their satellites would be entirely

unaccounted for, or must be regarded only as the effect of a fortunate chance. Besides, such planets must move in very eccentric orbits. If they did not return so as to fall at once upon the surface of the sun, they must at least approach very near to the central body in some part of every revolution. The single fact, that the orbits of all the planets are nearly circular, is a full confutation of this theory.

But even allowing, for a moment, the hypothesis to be true, it will by no means exclude the consideration of a designing Creator, in the formation of the solar system. It evidently presupposes the existence of organized matter, endowed with the power of gravitation. It presupposes also that the comet which, by its shock, is supposed to have detached the masses of the planets, had an angular motion about the sun, although in an orbit of great eccentricity. For had its motion arisen only from the attraction of the central body, it would have fallen directly into the sun instead of grazing its surface. Here, then, we must recur to an original projectile force: the very difficulty which the hypothesis proposes to elude.

2. Another hypothesis has since been framed, more elaborate, and more consistent with the observed facts; but still insufficient for the purpose for which it is invented.

According to the supposition of La Place,^a all the matter of the universe, as well as that which composes the solar system, existed once in a highly attenuated nebulous form. By the mutual gravitation of its particles, it was collected about several centers; and one of these aggregations became the body of the sun, encompassed with an atmosphere, which extended at least as far as the present limits of its planetary system. It is contended that the several nebulous masses, of which the universe would thus be composed, might each have acquired a rotatory motion, under certain restrictions,^b without the action of any other force than the mutual gravitation of their particles: and that the matter of the solar system thus acquired a motion about an axis. According to this theory, therefore, we are to imagine the sun to have been once a body of greater density towards the center, surrounded by matter very rare; the

^a Exposition du Systeme du Monde, Liv. v. ch. vi.

^b If several particles be diffused over a finite space, and then be set in motion from a state of rest by the action of their mutual gravity; they will be accumulated either about one center or about several centers. If they are accumulated about one center, the system will have no rotatory motion. But if they are collected about different centers, each mass might have a rotatory motion, provided the motions of different parts were in different directions, and the sum of the areas described by the radius vectors of all the bodies projected upon any plane was always equal to nothing. See La Place, Exp. Liv. v. ch. vi. p. 433.

whole revolving with a uniform angular motion. We are next to conceive that the nebulous atmosphere, diffused round the central nucleus which formed the body of the sun, was condensed, and left at its successive limits, in the plane of its equator, zones of matter. These, at the instant of their separation, would be moving with such a velocity, that the gravitation to the common center was precisely equal to the centrifugal force of rotation: and they would therefore still continue to revolve with a nearly uniform angular motion. It is further supposed that these zones would generally be separated into various parts, and by the mutual gravitation of their particles be collected into spherical bodies, which would each have a rotation about its own axis in the same direction with its motion round the sun; since the linear velocity of the parts at the greatest distance from the center would be greater than that of the parts nearer to it.^c To account for the

^c The linear velocity of the particles further distant from the center would be greater than that of the particles nearer to the center, from another cause. The particles more distant from the center, which had approached nearer to it from the effects of friction and condensation so as to form the outer portion of a ring, would always have described about the common center of gravity areas proportional to the times; the whole force being directed to that fixed center. Consequently, their linear velocity would have increased as they approached nearer to the center. Whereas the velocity of the

formation of the satellites and of the ring which encompasses the planet Saturn, it is supposed that each planetary mass was also surrounded by a nebulous vortex, which by its condensation formed the secondary bodies, in the same manner as the primary planets were themselves formed: and that the rings of the planet Saturn are the only instances, in which the many conditions, requisite for the stability of the concentric zones, happened to be preserved.

Thus it is imagined that the motions of all the planets in their orbits and about their own axes in the same direction, and nearly in the same plane, the motions of the satellites in the same direction, and the nearly circular form of all their orbits, may have been derived from one common cause: while the irregular position and eccentric forms of the orbits which the comets describe indicate that they are not bodies originally comprized in the planetary system, but extraneous masses brought within the sphere of the sun's action.

To this theory, which seems to have been laboured with great care,^d and requires some

the particles which moved from the parts nearer to the center to form the inner part of the rings would be diminished from the same cause. La Place, Exposition, p. 434.

^d In the 2d edition it is merely announced in a few lines, pp. 345.

attention to comprehend, there appear to be insuperable objections.

It is difficult to conceive, although not impossible, that an uniform rotatory motion about an axis should have been originally acquired by systems formed by the collection of matter, at first diffused over a great, but finite extent, and then collected by their mutual gravitation into several masses, upon the supposition that each particle began to move from a state of rest.

Again, it is not easy to imagine that zones of matter, originally accumulated about a common center, and endued with a rotatory motion, would ever be detached from the central mass.

If the planetary bodies were so detached, there is still not found such a relation, between the time of rotation of the central bodies and the periodic times of the bodies which revolve about them respectively, as appears necessary to satisfy the conditions of the hypothesis.

Without entering into any lengthened calculation, the general effect which an alteration

pp. 345, 346. In the 4th edition it is much enlarged, pp. 431—439: and the author expresses his regret and astonishment that Newton should have concluded the existence of a Supreme Cause from the regulated order of the planetary motions. He demands “peut-on encore affirmer que la conservation du système planétaire entre dans les vues de l’auteur de la nature ?” p. 443.

in the magnitude of a revolving mass would have upon the time of its rotation, is easily seen. It is well known that expansion of a revolving body, provided the relative arrangement of its particles were not altered, would retard its angular motion; and contraction accelerate it.^e Suppose, for instance, the matter which composes the earth to be expanded, by a mutual repulsion of its particles, into a sphere, the diameter of which was equal to that of the moon's orbit. If the relative density of the different parts of the mass were not altered, its diurnal revolution would then be performed in little less than ten years.^f The velocity, therefore, of the equator would be nearly a hundred and thirty times less than that of the moon. Consequently the moon could never have acquired its present motion by having once formed a portion of such a mass.

Considerations of the same nature will lead to a conclusion still more obvious in the case

^e In any revolving system, affected only by the mutual action of its particles, the product of each particle multiplied into the area described round the center of gravity by its radius vector projected upon any plane, and therefore upon a plane perpendicular to the axis of rotation passing through the center of gravity, is constant. If therefore, from any cause, the distance of particles from that center be increased, the areas described by each, and consequently the angular velocity of the system, is diminished; and vice versâ.

^f See note (A) in the Appendix.

of the planet Saturn. That planet revolves about its own axis nearly in the same time in which the ring performs a revolution.^s Now, if the matter of the planet had ever been in such a state of expansion, that its surface at the equator coincided with the ring, and the whole mass revolved then with the angular velocity which the ring has, the subsequent condensation must have *increased* its angular velocity, and therefore caused the planet to revolve about its axis in a much *less* time than the ring itself.

Again, the whole theory must fail, if it does not solve all the phenomena. And the motions of the satellites of the planet Herschel, being in planes nearly perpendicular to the plane of the ecliptic, are not in the direction which such a cause could have produced.

There is also one fact too obvious to be overlooked. If the planets have all been formed of luminous matter, how is it that they are all opake? If they have become dark, how is it that the central body only retains the power of emitting light and heat? Such an arrangement is quite inexplicable,

^s Méc. Celeste, Part I. Liv. III. §. 45. Exposit. du Système du Monde, Liv. IV. ch. viii. Brinkley's Astron. §. 152. Woodhouse's Astron. Vol. I. ch. xxix. Herschel, Phil. Trans. 1790. Art. xxiii.

even upon the supposition of their common origin, except by the express appointment of a designing Creator.

The celebrity of the proposer of this theory gives it an importance, which it otherwise would not possess. But even supposing it were possible to prove that all the phænomena of the solar system and of the other heavenly bodies flowed from one general principle, that "attraction alone is sufficient to explain all the motions of the universe,"^h and that "the stability of the system is also a consequence of the laws of motion,"ⁱ it by no means follows that the material heavens are not the work of an intelligent Agent.^k

The very diffusion of matter endued with innate gravity, which this hypothesis supposes, itself implies the action of a Divine Power.¹

^h "Ainsi l'attraction seule suffit pour expliquer tous les mouvemens de cet univers." La Place, Exposition du Système du Monde, Liv. V. ch. vi. p. 433.

ⁱ "Si les conjectures que je viens de proposer sur l'origine du système planétaire sont fondées, la stabilité de ce système est encore une suite des lois du mouvement." Id. p. 442.

^k "It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent: for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power: for it is the order according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the *law* does nothing, is nothing." Paley, Natural Theology, ch. 1. §. vii.

¹ See Bentley's 7th Boyle's Lecture.

By the supposition, there must have been a time when these particles were first endued with gravitation, or when they were restrained from obeying its impulse. Now, whenever that change took place, whenever they either began to gravitate, or were abandoned to their mutual gravitation,^m there must have been the agency, mediate or immediate, of some supreme Cause. “If there be innate gravity, it is impossible now for the matter of the earth, and all the planets and stars, to fly up from them, and become evenly spread throughout all the heavens, without a supernatural power. And certainly that which can never be hereafter without a supernatural power could never be heretofore without the same power.”ⁿ

An hypothesis like that which we have been considering might supply the instruments by which it may have pleased the Almighty to execute his will; but can never account for the wisdom which is apparent. All the marks of design in the adaptation of wise means to beneficial purposes remain the same, whether the supposition be well founded or not. The questions will still remain unanswered, Why is matter endued with gravitation?

^m La Place speaks of “un système de molécules primitivement en repos, et abandonnées à leur attraction mutuelle.” Exposition du Système du Monde, p. 433. 4th edit.

ⁿ Newton’s third Letter to Bentley.

Why does the force of gravitation vary precisely in the law which alone ensures the stability of the system? How is it that so many complicated and separate adjustments all conspire to produce one plan of inconceivable grandeur, able to sustain itself unchanged from age to age?

All these are inexplicable until “we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”^o

II. But besides those who have endeavoured to remove from their consideration the interference of a supreme Intelligence, as manifested in the wise fabric of the universe, there are others who have attempted to draw from astronomical principles an argument against the probability of a Divine revelation. To a well ordered mind, the contemplation of the wonders, which the heavens display, is calculated to suggest the most sublime notions of their great Creator, to inspire feelings of the deepest humility and thankfulness. When we compare man and his works with the glories of the heavens, when we regard him as the heir of immortality, made capable of intellectual improvement, subject to a dispensation of mercy,

^o Heb. xi. 3.

and assisted continually with the influence of God's holy Spirit, we must feel unbounded astonishment and gratitude to the Almighty who has done so great things for man. We must join in the sentiments so eloquently expressed by David; "O Lord, when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."^p

Some however have regarded the heavens with very different feelings. Struck with the magnitude of the universe compared with the works and dwellings of man, they have urged the improbability, that a being so insignificant in the general scale of the universe should be so favoured, as to have an express revelation made to him of the will of the most High. And they have dwelt upon the arrogance of man who, among all the various creatures which we have reason to believe people innumerable worlds, conceives himself to be selected as the peculiar care of God.

But surely to reason thus, is to reason both

^p Psalm viii. 3, 5.

presumptuously and unwisely. Who shall say, except he should be enlightened with wisdom from above, by what laws of moral government it may have pleased the Creator to govern the universe? Who shall say that this world *alone* has been favoured with a divine communication? We presume not to draw aside the veil which separates us from the dealings of the Almighty. But any reasoning must be entirely inconclusive, which rests upon an assertion itself incapable of proof.

Besides, such reasoning controverts every analogy which can be drawn from the things which we see. The eyes of the Lord are over all his works. The most minute parts are laboured with the same scrupulous accuracy as the most extensive. Objects too small for the unassisted human sight are finished with the same care, provided for with the same wisdom, as those which to us appear the most important. It is plain, from mere observation, that all distinction of small and great respects created beings only. In the works of God no such distinction exists. And when we conclude that man may be overlooked, or treated with less attention, because he occupies a relatively small portion of the visible universe, we reason from the affections of our own minds to the dealings of Him who "fainteth not, nei-

ther is weary :”^q we confound the feebleness of man with the unlimited power of God.

III. A further objection has been sometimes brought, not against revelation in general, but against the particular revelation with which man has been favoured. From astronomical principles conclusions have been drawn respecting the antiquity of the world, which it is pretended are incompatible with the Mosaic history.

1. The much controverted question respecting the antiquity of Chinese astronomy, however curious in an historical and scientific point of view, is but slightly connected with the truth of the Jewish records. The annals of the Chinese empire record, among many others, two astronomical phænomena: the one a conjunction of five of the planets, said to have been observed two thousand five hundred years before the commencement of the Christian æra: the other an eclipse of the sun, said to have been also observed about two thousand years before the same period. The truth of each of these observations is extremely doubtful.^r But even if they were actually made, the period to which

^q Isaiah xl. 28.

^r See Montucla, *Histoire des Mathématiques*: Part. I. Liv. iv. §. 3. Delambre, *Astron. Ancienne*, Liv. ii. ch. i.

the earliest of them refers is still many years subsequent to the deluge, according to the chronology of the Septuagint. The difficulty is therefore reduced to that of reconciling the differences in point of chronology between that version of the Scriptures and the present copies of the original: a difficulty which, however embarrassing, by no means affects the main truth of the sacred history.^s

2. There are, however, other pretensions, founded upon astronomical calculations, which if true, are directly opposed to the Scriptures. Among the nations of the East there are chronological systems which suppose a knowledge of astronomy in ages of a most profound antiquity.^t The observations upon which the computations are founded have been acquiesced in, both by those, who have been anxious to establish their own fanciful theories respecting the progress of science among the human race, and by those, who gladly embrace every opportunity of impugning the certainty of our holy religion.

^s The æra of the flood according to the common copies of the Septuagint is 3028 B.C.: according to Grabe, 3246.: according to Penon, 3617. See Note on Nare's 5th Bampton Lecture, p. 221.

^t The Surya Siddhanta, one of the most celebrated systems of Astronomy, purports to have been written by divine inspiration at least two million of years before the Christian æra. See Appendix, Note (B).

The exceeding absurdities, to which their statements, relative to the supposed antiquity of the world, lead, and the gross fictions with which they are united, are themselves sufficient to shew how unfounded the supposition is. But it is to be regretted, that the want of accurate information, and of a sufficient acquaintance with the works of Indian writers, for some time prevented a complete investigation of the precise nature of their claim. That want has been recently supplied. The original documents, upon which the claims of the Hindus to so remote an antiquity are founded, have been examined with care; and their errors detected. One individual, especially, lately brought to the task unwearied diligence and great sagacity; and succeeded, not only in proving how unfounded the claims of the Hindus are, but in discovering, as well by historical testimony as by internal evidence, the very time at which the fraud was introduced. This he effected, by the application of a very intelligible and convincing method of reasoning, followed out into detail by a deduction of numerous particular instances, which all lead to a similar result.

The method by which this author^u proves

^u Bentley, Historical view of Hindu Astronomy, 1825. See also two papers by the same author on the antiquity of the Surya Siddhanta in the 6th and 8th vol. of the Asiatic Researches.

the comparatively recent date of the extravagant pretensions made by Hindu astronomers is simply this. In European astronomy, the mean motions of the heavenly bodies are computed from a comparison of observations, made at a distant period, with those recently taken. The unavoidable errors of observation will be thus spread uniformly over the whole intervening time: and the mean motions will be obtained with considerable accuracy. A still further degree of precision is obtained by introducing corrections first pointed out by the theory of gravitation, and confirmed by subsequent observation. Now it appears that the Hindus, in the formation of their artificial systems, proceed upon a different principle. They *assume* a given position of the heavenly bodies at a very distant epoch; and then compute such mean motions as *would* give the position of the bodies at the time for which the tables were computed. If the epoch be sufficiently remote, and the assumed configuration approximately correct, the mean motions thus computed will differ by a very small quantity from the true mean motions, or from the mean motions which are presumed to be accurately determined by the European method. But the error which arises from this source affords the means of computing the very time when it was first committed. The

motions will have been assumed so that the computed place nearly agreed with the observed place at the time when the tables were constructed. But, if the tables be erroneous, the coincidence will no longer exist, when the computation is made for any other æra. And the amount of the accumulated error will be greater in proportion as the time is more remote. By noticing, therefore, the difference between the places of the heavenly bodies as computed by the European and Hindu methods, for different epochs, if the results indicate a continually increasing error both before and after a particular period, the time at which the tables were computed will be approximately obtained. For it will be the time at which the positions computed by the tables agree most nearly with the true positions previously known.

The antiquity of the system may also be discovered, if the total error at any given time be known, and also the error in the mean annual motions which are assigned respectively to the heavenly bodies.

The degree of accuracy which is thus attainable will evidently vary with the number of independent calculations, and with the reliance which can be placed upon our own tables. But when many such calculations agree in pointing out the same time, a degree of cer-

tainty is obtained, from which no reasonable mind can withhold its assent.

This principle being applied to the tables of the Hindus, which have been appealed to, as establishing the great antiquity of their astronomy, and the consequent authority of their own claim to immense antiquity, it has been shewn that none of their artificial systems are ancient; the earliest extending only to the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian æra: and that the dawn of astronomy in India can be traced back only to about fourteen centuries before the coming of Christ.

The same conclusion has been drawn respecting the date of a different method of computation.

In the calculation of eclipses of the sun, as now practised in India by the Brahmins, who appear generally ignorant of the principles upon which their computation is founded, it is necessary to add a certain correction for precession. And this correction is such, that it would have been nothing about five hundred years after the Christian æra. From this circumstance alone it was concluded that the peculiar method of calculation was introduced at that period.^x

^x Montucla, *Histoire des Mathématiques*, Part II. Liv. III. §. 3. See Le Gentil, *Voyage dans les mers des Indes*: and *Mem. de l'Academie*, 1772.

But, whether the astronomical computations of the Hindus are derived, as is pretended, from real observations made full three thousand years before the Christian æra, or not, the chronological system founded upon them is evidently artificial. The very inspection of them is sufficient to satisfy the enquirer, that they are the production of an ingenious but fanciful people, well skilled in numerical computation, and undeterred by periods of any length. That the ages of the world, marked by great natural catastrophes,^y should be arranged in periods according to a fixed numerical law—that the length of human life should at the end of each be diminished in a determinate ratio—to say nothing of the corresponding alteration of the moral character of mankind in every age, and the various degrees of illumination which are supposed to have been præternaturally imparted, are suppositions so evidently imaginary that to mention them is to confute them. When it is further considered that the Hindus are beyond all others skilful in committing the most notorious forgeries to give a colour to their fanciful schemes,

^y Les Indiens disent que chacun de leur âges a fini par un deluge. See Bailly, *Astronomie Indienne et Orientale*. Discours Prelim. p. cii. ciii. Sir W. Jones on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India: *Asiat. Researches*, Vol. I.

the degree of importance, which has sometimes been attached to their pretensions, will be found far greater than they really deserve.

It is, besides, very remarkable, that the same astronomical systems, which have been held forth as opposing the Mosaic chronology, actually confirm it. The date ascribed to the commencement of their age, called the Kali Yuga, in their more modern systems of astronomy, has been shewn, with as much accuracy as the subject allows, to be that which the Septuagint version of the Scriptures ascribes to the general deluge: and is the same which was used by the Arabians, and also adopted in the celebrated astronomical tables constructed by order of Alphonsus king of Seville.² In the system of chronology also which existed among the Hindus two hundred years before Christ, their history was divided into astronomical periods, at the beginning of which they *then* placed the creation of the world. And the

² See Bailly, *Astron. Indienne: Discours Prelim. Part II.* p. cxxvi. Upon this point Montucla thus expresses himself: "Il resterait à déterminer lesquels des Indiens ou des Hébreux sont les originaux ou les copistes. Si nous croyons à l'inspiration des livres saints, nous ne devons pas être embarrassés. Mais dans ce siècle philosophique, qui oserait, sans se vouer au ridicule, appuyer sur une pareille raison?" *Hist. des Math.* Part II. Liv. III. Vol. I. p. 428

first of these periods extended nearly to the time of the deluge ;^a when all traditional knowledge would have as it were a fresh point from which it would spring.

3. Since the Hindu system of chronology engaged the attention of philosophers, there have been discovered, among the remains of antiquity in Egypt, astronomical representations, which have been appealed to as furnishing proofs of an antiquity incompatible with the Mosaic history. Four sculptures exist, upon which are found, together with other figures, those of all the zodiacal constellations. And attempts have been made to ascertain the period at which they were constructed, by discovering the position which is assigned to the equinoctial points. The uncertainty, however, which hitherto prevails upon the subject, is sufficiently manifest from the fact, that while some have ascribed an antiquity of fifteen thousand years to two of the sculptures, others have concluded that the same sculptures were not intended to represent the zodiac at all ; but are a calendar in hieroglyphical characters, for the seven hundred and eighth year of Rome, only about fifty years before the commencement of the Christian æra.^b

^a Bentley on Hindu Astronomy, §. 5. p. 76.

^b See Bentley, Appendix to Hindu Astronomy, No. III.

Any results, however, which have been obtained afford too slender a foundation for any certain conclusion: and it is sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that they who have hitherto examined these representations with the greatest care, deduce from them a degree of antiquity, which, however extraordinary as an historical fact, is by no means inconsistent with the chronology of the sacred writings.^c

IV. It is pleasing to turn from these instances, in which man's misplaced ingenuity has been employed, either in questioning the evidence of design afforded in the material world, or in proposing difficulties against revealed religion, to those eminent men who, from the same premises, have drawn conclusions widely different. Happily the union of an ardent love for the promotion of science with feelings of piety and reverence to God is far from uncommon. The modesty of true science has been shewn in the readiness with which minds of the greatest sagacity have at once acknowledged their ignorance, and recognized the plain indications of a designing intelligence. No conclusion can be more rational, and few were ever expressed more majestically, than that which Newton draws at the conclusion of his

^c See Appendix, Note (E).

great work. “This most elegant frame of the sun and planets and comets could not originate except by the wisdom and authority of an intelligent and powerful Being. And if the fixed stars be centers of similar systems, the construction, which indicates unity of design, will imply also unity of dominion.”^d

One of the most simple, but striking, and even touching instances of the union of science with piety is incidentally found in the life of Horrox,^e a youth of our own country, and also a member of our own body; whose short life gave promise of the greatest advancement in science. The visible transit of the planet Venus over the sun’s disk is a phænomenon which very rarely occurs. Between two successive instances more than a century generally elapses: and an opportunity of observing it from a given point of the earth’s surface is still more rare. The observation is also of such great importance in determining the elements of the planet’s orbit, and the dimensions of the solar system, that on the last two occasions expeditions were expressly sent from various parts of Europe

^d “Elegantissima hæcce solis, planetarum, et cometarum compages non nisi consilio et dominio entis intelligentis et potentis oriri potuit. Et si stellæ fixæ sint centra similibus systematum, hæc omnia simili consilio constructa suberunt Unius dominio.” Scholium Generale.

^e See Appendix, Note (F).

to the most distant regions of the globe, in order to observe the transit.^f

A phenomenon so rare, requiring at least an approximate calculation of the time of its occurrence, and the assistance of sufficient instruments, was observed by no human eye from the creation of the world to the middle of the seventeenth century of the Christian æra.^g Horrox,^h a young man but twenty-one years of age, residing in a remote district of this country, and almost deprived of the assistance of books and instruments, discovered that the imperfect tables of the planetary motions then in use gave reason to anticipate a visible transit of the planet. His superior knowledge enabled him to compute more correctly the time at which it would take place: and he made his preparations with all the anxiety which so new and important an observation was calculated to excite in an ardent mind. On the day before the transit was expected, he began to observe; and he resumed his labours on the morrow. But the very hour, when his calculations led him to expect the visible appearance of the planet upon the sun's disk, was also the hour appointed for the public worship of God on the sabbath day. The delay of a few minutes might deprive him

^f See Appendix, Note (G).

^g 1639.


^h See Appendix, Note (H).

of the means of observing the transit. If its very commencement were not noticed, clouds might intervene: the sun was about to set: and nearly a century and half would elapse before another opportunity would occur. Notwithstanding all this, Horrox twice suspended his observations, and twice repaired to the house of God. When his duty was thus paid, and he returned to his chamber, the second time, his love of science was gratified with full success. His eyes were the first which ever witnessed the phænomenon, which his sagacity had predicted.

Other minds might have been endued with sufficient ingenuity and patience to discover and observe so rare an occurrence. Others might have deduced the scientific information, and might have recorded the results, as he did, almost to the last hour of his life, for the benefit of others. But where shall we seek for a mind so animated at once with philosophical enquiry and religious feeling?

How the young Horrox closed his days is not recorded, and must remain unknown. It is related only that he was cut off in early youth, immediately after he had prepared for publication the narrative of his observation: that he died probably by some sudden cause: and it is to be believed not unprepared. It was but a few days before his death that he ex-

pressed his intention of visiting his friend, "unless any peculiar cause should prevent him:" and on the day preceding that which he had so appointed, he finished his mortal career. But however we may regret the early termination of a life from which so much was to be expected, the evident strength of his religious principles forbids us to regard his fate as premature. His name will be preserved in the register of those men, who afforded the brightest promise of excellence to their own time, and exhibit the fairest models for the imitation of future ages.



PART II.

LECTURE V.

THE PERFECTION OF THE LAW OF GOD.

PSALM XIX. 7.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

IN the introductory part of this psalm, David dwells upon the evidence of creative power and wisdom suggested by the splendid phænomena of the natural world. In the second part, which we are now to consider, he advances a series of most important propositions, all bearing reference to the will of God, as revealed in his word. By a mode of speech not unusual, especially in the poetical parts of the Holy Scriptures, he employs several terms, which all refer to the same thing. He denominates the written word of God

“the law of the Lord,”^a because it contains the whole doctrine established by God for the regulation of man’s life; “his testimony,” because it is set forth as a witness between God and man, both of the promises which are made on the one part, and of the duties which are enjoined on the other; “his statutes,” and “his commandments,” because they are imposed upon mankind by the supreme authority of God; “his fear,” because it teaches man to worship God with a holy reverence;^b and “his judgments,” because they declare his will now, and will be made the rule of final judgment hereafter.

Without dwelling, then, upon any nice distinctions in the different meanings of the terms employed, we may refer them all to that written book of life, which we profess to receive as the sole standard of our faith and practice.

I. The first assertion is this;

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting” or restoring “the soul.”

Whoever is previously convinced of the existence of God, and has endeavoured to study his attributes, may say with truth that all the works and words of the Lord are perfect, that is, that they are fully adapted to the purposes for which they are intended, because they pro-

^a Psalm i. 2. cxix. 70. Jer. viii. 8. Mal. ii. 6.

^b Comp. Gen. xxxi. 53. Heb. Psalm lxxvi. 11.

ceed from a Being who is perfection itself. But the manner, in which the Psalmist introduces the present assertion, implies more than this. It plainly is designed to point out a contrast, between the demonstration of God's wisdom and power as derived from the study even of his most magnificent works, and that which is obtained from the diligent perusal of his holy word. It indicates a degree of fulness and completeness in the one, which the other can never possess.

This difference is in itself sufficiently apparent. The contemplation of the Creator's works must lead every intelligent mind to acknowledge his existence; and will afford some faint conception of his wisdom and power. "The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."^c Still, between the God of heaven and man upon earth, there can be discovered by observation alone no such relation as will enable us to act agreeably to his will.^d We

^c Rom. i. 20.

^d "Wherefore we conclude that sacred Theology, which in our idiom we term Divinity, is grounded only upon the word and oracle of God, and not upon the light of nature: for it is written, *cœli enarrant gloriam Dei*, but it is not written, *cœli enarrant voluntatem Dei*. But of that it is said *ad legem et testimonium: si non fecerint secundum verbum istud.*" Bacon, de Augment. Scientiarum, Lib. ix. Cap. 1.

might know that there is a God; for that fact is demonstrated by every object which we behold; by every breath which we draw. We might conclude that his power was far greater than that of any created being; for his material works display a series of regularly organized bodies, extending as far as our observation can be carried. And an analogy which cannot be resisted leads us still further. We have no reason whatever to limit the works of God precisely at the point, to which our sight, aided by artificial means, is able to penetrate into the infinity of space: and we cannot avoid concluding the wonders of creation to be so great, that all which man can ever discover forms a comparatively small portion of the Universe. We might conclude also, from the same source, that God was every where present; for to whatever point our attention is directed, there we meet with evidence of his constant agency: that he was supremely wise; for contrivances of every varied form, precisely fitted for the purposes which they should meet, continually offer themselves to our notice: that he was most benevolent; for these contrivances are every where adapted to a beneficial purpose.

Still, a man, who observed what passed within himself, would soon discover, that there were many most important questions, respecting

the nature of God and the consequent duties of mankind, which his observation and his reason could never resolve. The laws of God's moral government, the worship which he requires, how far he interferes to reward or punish men for their actions in this life, to what extent our existence hereafter is influenced by our conduct here — these, and other questions of the highest interest, are evidently incapable of being satisfactorily answered by the unassisted powers of the human mind. Other difficulties equally insuperable arise, when we endeavour to reconcile attributes of the Deity apparently inconsistent with one another; to conceive how it comes to pass that the foreknowledge of God interferes not with the free agency of man: to comprehend that mysterious power of God which no magnitude can overcome, no minuteness escape, no intricacy distract: a power which at the same instant directs the complicated motions of innumerable worlds; guides every heavenly body in its course through the free paths of infinite space, and gives life to the smallest of those living creatures which animate them. When we thus attempt to form a clear conception of a Being who neither slumbers nor sleeps; we are compelled to confess with Job; “Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion

is heard of him;”^e that the knowledge which man can thus attain of heavenly things cannot satisfy the soul, and still leaves a consciousness that much remains unknown.

But at this very point, where the feeble torch of reason ceases to direct our footsteps in the investigation of truth, the word of God shines forth, a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.^f Its character is perfection. It purports to be a revelation from heaven of all that man is to believe and to do, that he may obtain eternal life. It displays as much of the Divine counsels as it is necessary for man to know; perhaps as much as his present faculties are able to comprehend. It solves, upon authority, various questions which reason could never determine. It teaches man a becoming humility and diffidence of his own strength. It opens views of the Divine power and wisdom and goodness which the most persevering study of natural objects could never attain. It proposes means of grace and discloses hopes of future glory, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. The doctrine built solely upon natural reason, valuable as it is within its proper limits, is still imperfect and unsatisfactory. The doctrine of God is perfect, refreshing the soul.

^e Job xxvi. 14.

^f Psalm cxix. 105.

II. The law of God is perfect also, as a rule of life, contrasted with all other laws. Human laws can only regulate in some degree the actions of men. Over the thoughts of the heart they neither have, nor can pretend to have, any control. And in this respect they are imperfect, that, in every specific case, the evil which they intend to correct must already have taken place, before the remedy can be applied.

Now it is to the heart itself, to the very spring of volition and action, that the law of God is applied. It is not meant that the hearts even of those, who sincerely endeavour to obey the will of God, are always under the control of this law. For that would be to ascribe perfection to human nature which receives, as well as to God who gives, his law. And we all know by what a painful change the original perfection of our nature has been corrupted. Still the law of God is intended to exert this control; and may and will, by his grace, so act, if the mind of man be not unfitted to receive it. Now it is evident that a law which regulates the very thoughts; which forbids not only theft and murder and adultery, but the very act of desiring what belongs to another, and the rising even of hidden anger; which makes

the love of God and the love of man the foundation of every duty, and a lively faith in the promises of God and the mediation of his Son the ruling principle of our lives, is, in this respect, a perfect law.

III. There is still another qualification necessary to the perfection of any law, which is given to ensure the happiness of mankind. It requires no long experience to discover that in a greater or less degree "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."^g And so close is the connection, even in this world, between sin and suffering, that no man can long separate them in his imagination. Disguise it as we may, there will adhere to the consciousness of guilt a certain fearful looking for of judgment. Undoubtedly, in different men this feeling will vary in intensity. With some it may, for the present, amount only to an occasional uneasiness; a fear and dread that the way in which they are proceeding cannot end well: that it is not the way which will bring a man peace at the last. With others, the apprehension may be of a severer nature. It may haunt them in their hours of guilty pleasure; and poison the source of all their impure enjoyments. With others, again, it may be aggravated into

^g Rom. iii. 23.

an unutterable dread. Let any one read those passionate effusions of David, in which he laments the wickedness of his heart, speaks of the waves of God's wrath which have all gone over him, and compares the mental anguish which he endures with the bodily torture arising from fractured bones; and then let him say whether such outcries were ever uttered except under severe pain; whether there be not something real in the agonies of a broken spirit.

Surely then every law, which purports to direct mankind in all the circumstances of life, must contain some remedy for an evil of this magnitude. For truly miserable comforters would those be, who laid down only the penalty of guilt, and proposed no means by which even the sincerest repentance should make satisfaction for an offence. Now, as God's law is the only source whence we can learn the cause of sin, so is it the only law which provides a remedy for it. And it seems that David refers to this fact in his assertion, "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting" or restoring "the soul." The soul of the sinner, borne down by the sense of his guilt, and tortured with the agony of remorse, is disquieted and faints within him; and the word of God offers the only means

which can revive his spirit: the offer of pardon, and the promise of assistance and grace.

1. In perusing the word of God we cannot avoid noticing how prominent are the passages which promise forgiveness of sins to all who truly repent. Independently of those ordinances under the law, which, while they prefigured the great satisfaction made for sin, served also, when duly performed, to avert the punishment of guilt; the assurance of pardon to the penitent is repeated in every form of expression, which could persuade men to return and live.

The law of Moses contains the strongest promises of acceptance to all who should seek the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul, and turn to the Lord and be obedient unto his voice.^h

The history of God's chosen people abounds in exhortations to put away their sins and return to the worship and service of Jehovah: with the assurance that if they did return, their brethren and their children should find compassion.ⁱ And when the prophets were raised up to declare the whole will of God, they published the most animating promises

^h Deut. iv. 29, 30, 31. xxx. 1, 2, 3, 8.

ⁱ 1 Sam. vii. 3, 4. 1 Kings viii. 46—50. 2 Chron. xxx. 6, 7, 9.

to those who truly repent. Isaiah was commissioned to declare in the name of the Most High; “Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil, learn to do well:” “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”^k “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins.”^l “I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions; and as a cloud thy sins.”^m “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”ⁿ

Jeremiah referred the Jews to the new covenant, under which God would forgive their iniquity and no more remember their sin.^o The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel,^p and commissioned him to proclaim, “If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”^q Joel urged the people from the consideration of the gracious nature

^k Isaiah i. 16, 17, 18.

^l Isaiah xliiii. 25.

^m Isaiah xlv. 22.

ⁿ Isaiah lv. 7.

^o Jer. xxxi. 31, 34.

^p Ezek. i. 3.

^q Ezek. xviii. 21.

of God, to turn to Him with all their heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.^r Micah gave utterance to sentiments such as these. "Who is a God like unto thee? that pardoneth the iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage." "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."^s And Malachi, the last of that illustrious line of inspired men, in the midst of his invective against the degenerate people of the Jews, still urged them with this appeal: "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."^t

But the fulness of the promise of forgiveness was reserved for the Gospel dispensation. Then it was that the fountain was opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness:^u that the knowledge of salvation was given unto his people by the Almighty by the remission of their sins.^x Then it was that the great sacrifice so long prefigured by all the ordinances of the law, so long predicted by all the prophets, was made once for the sins of the whole world. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteous-

^r Joel ii. 12.

^s Mic. vii. 18, 19.

^t Mal. iii. 7.

^u Zech. xiii. 1.

^x Luke i. 77.

ness of God in him.^y Once in the end of the world Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself:^z “that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of their sins.”^a Forgiveness is thus promised to the repentant sinner; “that his sins may be blotted out when the times of *refreshing* shall come from the presence of the Lord.”^b On this account, therefore, the law of the Lord may justly be characterized as restoring the soul.

2. But when the sinner has learnt to rely upon these merciful promises, and strives to fulfil the conditions, which are imposed in the written word of God; when he endeavours to have a fixed faith in the assurance of God who cannot lie, and to live “soberly, righteously and godly in this present world;”^c he soon finds fresh cause for uneasiness, in his inability to fulfil the terms, on which alone he hoped for pardon. He finds that the weakness under which he labours is not such a partial failure of strength as a temporary medicine can remove; that “the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.”^d He find that to “restore”

^y 2 Cor. v. 21.

^z Heb. ix. 26.

^a Acts x. 43.

^b Acts iii. 19. ὅπως αὐτὸν ἐλθῶσι καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως ἀπὸ πρὸς σῶπον τοῦ Κυρίου.

^c Tit. ii. 12.

^d Isaiah i. 5.

his soul there is required not only a promise of pardon, but assistance even to perform the conditions which it has pleased God to propose. And this assistance also is promised to the penitent, in the written word of God.

When the apostle Paul had been favoured with that vision in which he was “caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter,”^c there was given unto him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure: and he besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him. But the Lord said unto him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”^f Neither is this a solitary instance of support. The apostle applies the same doctrine of assisting grace to others. He declares that “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:”^g and warns his converts not to grieve the holy Spirit of God whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.^h The same gracious promises of assistance are renewed in various parts of holy Scripture: and they afford a comfort to the soul, worn down with the consciousness of guilt, and with the fear of losing the pardon, which the mercy of

^c 2 Cor. xii. 4.

^f 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^g Rom. viii. 26.

^h Eph. iv. 30.

God has promised to those who truly repent.

Thus strengthened with the promise of forgiveness and with the assurance of assisting grace, the afflicted soul revives. It discovers in the word of God, a provision suitable to its desires, and adequate to its utmost need: and acknowledges that "the law of the Lord is perfect," and therefore restores the soul.

IV. The manner, in which the word of God acts, displays a further perfection, which makes it peculiarly fit to convert and invigorate the soul.

Instruction in this law must, it is true, be sought in the very same way as instruction in any other law, by diligent hearing, by patient research, by earnest attention to the precepts which are delivered, and to the language in which they are conveyed. He who would understand the full import of the holy truths which are there displayed, must search the Scriptures with the same assiduity as he would apply in order to comprehend any other book. There are difficulties of the very same kind to be surmounted; and they must be overcome, if they be overcome at all, by diligence and patience; by the slow process of mental cultivation, and the study, often repulsive, and sometimes apparently trifling, of subjects purely

grammatical and philological. And we have no reason whatever to expect such assistance from above, as shall in the least supersede the necessity of this laborious exertion.

But when the Scripture is considered as a rule of life, there is a fundamental distinction between the law of the Lord and every other law. Other laws are passive. The law of the Lord, we are taught in Scripture, is active. In thus considering the sacred volume, we must be indeed careful, as we would value our eternal welfare, not to relax our own endeavours: for without them nothing will be done for us. We must be careful too, that we be not hurried away by visionary fancies, which arise only from a heated imagination. For many, it is to be feared, have mistaken these for the undoubted tokens of immediate inspiration. Still we must never allow the danger that may arise from the abuse of the doctrine to prejudice our minds against the doctrine itself, if clearly revealed. And there undoubtedly is found in Scripture, sufficient proof that the word of God, acting by his Holy Spirit, does work with the patient enquirer and diligent hearer of that word, so as to convert his heart. "The word of God," says the apostle, speaking of the Scriptures, "is quick and powerful; and 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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”ⁱ Now with whatever limitations expressions such as these may be taken, they certainly do imply—and it is a doctrine full of comfort to those who find how weak their own endeavours are—that the word of God itself acts upon the mind of man; and that, in their very studies, the grace of God is given to those who search his word, and exercises a renewing and purifying influence upon their hearts.

In this sense, therefore, also, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”

Having, then a law revealed for our guidance, so precisely fitted to the wants and weakness of our nature, how great should be our thankfulness to God for this revelation of his will. We should receive it as the greatest blessing: we should make it, what it was intended to become, the guide and rule of our lives. In order to do this, we must diligently search the Scriptures. And this is a study as delightful as it is salutary. Hear with what rapturous expressions David speaks of his study of God’s word. “O how love I thy law: it is my meditation all the day.” “How sweet are thy words

ⁱ Heb. iv. 12. compared with Heb. iv. 2.

unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.”^k

This duty deserves peculiar attention in this place. Many of us are here engaged in the pursuit of the severer studies, which, while they habituate the mind to accuracy of demonstration and clearness of thought, often lead to some of the sublimest proofs of the wisdom and power of the Creator. When we study the material bodies, which surround us on all sides upon the earth, and trace the mechanical consequences, which flow from a few simple principles, when we observe the order in which all organized beings are arranged; and their close adaptation to the wants of animated creatures, we are led to the contemplation of him who contrived and established so fair a world. When our researches lead us to study the nature “of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall;” and the habits “of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes,”^l we join in the sentiments which such contemplations suggested to David, “Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches.”^m When we consider the wonders of the

^k Psalm cxix. 97, 103.

^l 1 Kings iv. 33.

^m Psalm civ. 24.

heavens, and have learned to arrange some of those innumerable brilliant bodies which shine in our skies, to discover the simple law by which all their motions are regulated, and to trace their courses through the fields of space, we must acknowledge that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” We must lift up our hearts to him who stretched out the heavens like a curtain;” who “telleteth the number of the stars,” and “calleteth them all by their names;”^o and “hath given them a law which shall not be broken.”^p

Now the danger is that we should rest here. That, feeling quite conscious of the existence and power of God, our understandings should be convinced, while our hearts are uninfluenced. That we should suffer the pursuits of science or of general literature to engross our attention, while we neglect those studies which are able to make us wise unto salvation. If we do this, we do what is most irrational; we rest satisfied with that which is imperfect, and neglect that perfect law of the Lord which converts the soul. Considered even in a philosophical point of view, such neglect is manifestly unjustifiable.

ⁿ Psalm civ. 2.

^o Psalm cxlvii. 4.

^p Psalm cxlviii. 6. Great Bible.

The beautiful arrangement of the celestial bodies, which modern science has discovered, doubtless leads the mind to reflections on the wisdom which conceived, and the power which executed so wonderful a fabric. But how much more touching to the Christian is the reflection, that the same God who arranged the motion of those heavenly bodies, is the God to whom he looks for individual support, and in whose immediate presence he continually dwells: that the same hand which binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looseth the bands of Orion,^a actively interferes to guide the faithful in all the intricacies and troubles of this life: that He, whose agency continually controls all the mighty changes of the material world, notes also every word which we speak and every thought which we conceive: that the Creator, who called out of nothing all that we behold, and sustains the Universe by his will, is also about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways.^r

To the contemplation, then, of the works of God, let us add the daily study of his word. So may we hope for that knowledge of heavenly things which no study of mere natural objects can attain; to be regu-

^a Job xxxviii. 31.

^r Psalm cxxxix. 3. Great Bible.

lated by a law perfect in itself, directing the very thoughts; and to receive those assurances of pardon, and that assistance of heavenly grace, which alone can convert and restore the soul.



LECTURE VI.

THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION : AND
ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION.



PSALM XIX. 7.

*The testimony of the Lord is sure ; making wise
the simple.*

IF a book, which purports to contain a revelation from heaven, and to offer instructions for the regulation of life, be put into the hands of man, it is requisite that evidence should be given, sufficient to satisfy a reasonable mind that its pretensions are valid. Accordingly David, in enumerating the excellencies which characterize the written word of God, neglects not to observe that the “testimony of the Lord is sure.”

Every imposture courts concealment: and false religions have always been anxious to discourage enquiry into their origin. They have enveloped the source of their belief in fables, and hidden it in the obscurity of remote ages. The Scriptures, on the contrary, not only permit, but command us to investigate

their pretensions to be really the word of God. They direct us to be ready to give to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope which is in us.^a Much has consequently been done by Christians in all ages, to establish the certainty of our faith: and it has been shewn that the goodly fabric of the universal Church is built upon so firm a foundation, that against it the gates of hell shall not prevail.

After so many have successfully laboured in this important work, it would be superfluous now to enter at large upon the evidence which they have accumulated, in order to prove the authority of the Holy Scriptures. Such an undertaking involves researches into many points of great intricacy; and requires more time and more study than many can bestow. Our present object requires only such a brief outline to be drawn of this evidence, as may illustrate the assertion of David, "The testimony of the Lord is sure."

I. 1. Since we derive our knowledge of the Christian religion from the written books of the New Testament; it is evidently requisite first to ascertain that these books are the genuine productions of the persons whose names they bear, or, at least, that they contain a true account of the facts which they relate, and of

^a 1 Pet. iii. 15.

the doctrine preached by the original founders of our faith. The canon of the New Testament has been established by an enquiry into the writings of those who lived at an early period of the Christian æra. Long before any written list of canonical Scripture was drawn up and fixed by any authority of the Church, the very same books, which we now receive as the undoubted works of the Evangelists and Apostles, are found to have been quoted and appealed to as authority by all Christian writers. These quotations can be traced back regularly from the present time to the age of the Apostles. Many of these writers give catalogues of the books which are received by them as genuine, carefully noticing those few which, though received by the majority of the Christian church, have yet not met with unanimous assent. Their testimony, therefore, in favour of the books which they all approve is perfectly convincing. And the doubts which they express, respecting some of the sacred books, have only this effect, that more care is requisite in tracing them to their source, than in proving the authenticity of the uncontroverted books. These writings, besides, were soon collected into a volume, and distinguished by titles of respect: they were divided by a broad line of separation from all other

writings even of the apostolic age: and their authority was received as a perfect proof of any disputed doctrine. Every sect of Christians, in all ages, grounded its opinions on the very same gospels which we now possess; and received, with very few exceptions, the same canon of Holy Scripture. And all their adversaries, in the height of their hostility, always recognized these books as the foundation upon which the Christian faith was built. Besides, the books of the New Testament were at an early period translated into different languages, and circulated in various parts of the civilized world. These versions, besides being corroborative proofs of the genuineness of the sacred writings, are also a security against their having been materially altered in the course of ages. Whoever will examine with care these proofs, which have been collected for the purpose of establishing by external evidence the authenticity of the Scriptures of the New Testament, will receive from his research the fullest satisfaction.

To these proofs is to be added the strong internal evidence which the books themselves contain. The language in which they are written is a very peculiar language; sufficiently varied to shew that they were not all composed by the same writer, yet in every

book highly characteristic of the age and persons of their alleged authors. The style is, however, very difficult to be successfully imitated, much more to have been invented. To this consideration must be added the circumstantiality of the narrative; the natural manner in which the names of places and persons are introduced: the perfect acquaintance which the writers incidentally display with all the minutest circumstances of the history of the Jewish people, and of the world at the period in which they are stated to have been written: the air of sincerity, and absence of artifice which pervade them: the close, though evidently undesigned, connection between the several relations of the Evangelists, and between the Epistles of St. Paul and his history, as written by St. Luke.

2. The writings of the New Testament having been in this manner proved to be, as they purport, the artless composition of sincere men, let us observe the nature of the facts which they disclose, sometimes by express assertion; and sometimes by indirect allusion. The Gospel history, although very simple in its language, relates events of the most astonishing kind. It declares that the ordinary course of nature was repeatedly interrupted. Now very strong evidence is undoubtedly required

to establish the reality of a miraculous fact. And such evidence is afforded. We know, as an indisputable historical truth, that the apostles passed through the most grievous perils and sufferings in attestation of those miracles, of which they had been eye-witnesses; miracles in which they could not have been deceived. We know that they gave up the whole of their time and labour, sacrificed all prospects of advancement, in the mode of life in which they had been brought up; were exposed to continual danger, and finally suffered a painful death, merely because they persisted in the belief of those facts. Therefore no reasonable man can doubt for a moment that those facts were true: that is, he cannot doubt that a person named Jesus appeared upon earth, and declared himself to be come down from heaven to do the will of God, and that he was the Son of God: that he performed miracles of wonder which proved his divine commission: for he gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; he fed multitudes by a morsel; healed the sick by a touch, by a word, or by a distant command; calmed the raging elements; restored the dead to life: that his miracles were also such merciful works, that as his adversaries could not deny them, so they could not attribute them to any evil principle.

Knowing then these facts to be true, no reasonable man can for a moment doubt, that the precepts and commands, which these miracles introduced, were from God. This was the very acknowledgment forced from one, who certainly at first had no favourable prepossessions for the gospel of Christ. "Rabbi," said a ruler of the Jews, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."^b

Besides, in the Epistles of St. Paul, frequent reference is made to the miraculous powers, the gift of tongues and prophecy, possessed by himself and by those to whom he wrote. These allusions are made in such a plain, simple manner, and arise so naturally out of the circumstances of his address, that every one must feel convinced that they refer to facts. They are made, too, not with an intention of setting forth those gifts as pre-eminent marks of divine favour; but frequently with the view of shewing that they were, in themselves, inferior in value to the more practical graces of the Christian character. Now, besides that this is a conduct entirely irreconcilable with the supposition that the apostle was an enthusiast, and the gifts

^b John iii. 2.

imaginary, it is quite impossible that these references should have been made, unless the powers which they imply had been really possessed. A credulous mind might believe a miraculous tale, upon insufficient evidence: but no men, however ready to be deceived, could be persuaded that they had witnessed, and themselves possessed, præternatural powers, when in reality they had never witnessed any miracle, nor possessed any such powers.

We must conclude, therefore, that the apostles themselves were endowed with miraculous powers for the propagation of the truths, which they employed their lives in disseminating.

The truth, then, of our religion is thus established upon the firm foundation of undoubted miracles, performed for that purpose both by Christ and his apostles.

3. "The testimony of Jesus" also, "is the spirit of prophecy."^c We have recently had occasion to notice several of the more remarkable predictions which he uttered;^d and observed, that in the course of his teaching he delivered to his followers many proofs of his perfect foreknowledge of futurity. He predicted the events which should happen to himself and

^c Rev. xix. 10.

^d See the VIth Hulsean Lecture for 1826.

his followers, to his own nation, and to the whole world. Many of those predictions have been accomplished: and some are still fulfilling before our own eyes.

We are thus irresistibly led to the conclusion, that a revelation has been made to man by Jesus Christ; and that what he taught has been faithfully recorded: consequently, that whatever was declared by Christ and his apostles, is indisputably true; and that, as far as they bear testimony, such testimony is *sure*.

4. Now the words of Christ and his apostles do bear testimony to another fact most important in the study of the sacred volume: that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”^e Those books which are written by an apostle of Christ, ratified by the authority of his name, and introduced by the assertion of his apostolic character,^f are, by that very assertion, impressed with the seal of inspiration. For the dignity of an apostle is invariably alleged to be greater than that of any other person, however highly favoured by inspiration of God.^g

The same authority is ascribed to those

^e 2 Tim. iii. 16.

^f 1 Cor. i. 1. 2 Cor. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Col. i. 1. 1 Tim. i. 1. 2 Tim. i. 1. Tit. i. 1—3. Gal. i. 1.

^g 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11.

books which are written by the apostles, even when the express assertion of this authority is not made. Christ himself, at several times, in the course of his ministry, promised his followers the assistance of the Holy Spirit. When he sent forth the twelve, and predicted the sufferings which they should undergo, he assured them that they should receive the aid of inspiration. "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."^h On another occasion, Jesus made a similar promise to his disciples, in the presence of an innumerable multitude of people.ⁱ And he repeated it at a still subsequent period.^k Neither was this promise confined to the particular circumstances in which it was made. Immediately before his death, our Saviour promised his apostles another Comforter, who should abide with them for ever, even the Spirit of truth; who should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remem-

^h Matt. x. 18—20.

ⁱ Luke xii. 11, 12.

^k Mark xiii. 11. Luke xxi. 12 - 15.

brance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them.¹ These words most plainly promise the extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit, to suggest to the minds of the apostles what they should speak.

The object of our Lord having been to encourage his apostles in publishing the Gospel, which was, in the first instance, to be performed by preaching, his words do not indeed prove that the same inspiration was extended to the writings of the apostles. Yet they afford a very strong presumption that the same divine superintendence, which regulated their words, did also operate upon their writings.

If we turn to the writings themselves, and enquire what claim to inspiration the apostles advance; we shall find them always speaking with authority, appearing not to think it necessary to prove their inspiration, but assuming it as an acknowledged fact; and incidentally making mention of it in the calm language of conscious truth. If indeed an apostle, in the exercise of his ministry, had occasion to *write*, we cannot conceive that he would hold a different doctrine, or that he could have received the knowledge of it in a different manner, from that which characterized his oral discourses. The memory of the apostles was

¹ John xiv. 16—26.

strengthened, and their mental faculties enlarged, by the assistance of God's Holy Spirit: and we cannot conceive that they were deprived of that assistance, at the time when it would be most wanted, when they sat down to commit to writing the relation of facts, which they had so frequently delivered in the course of their inspired verbal preaching.

Now we find St. Paul writing to the Corinthians, and making the fullest claim to divine inspiration in his teaching. "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."^m "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual."ⁿ We cannot doubt, knowing the words of the apostle to be the words of truth and soberness, that his speech was inspired. And the very misrepresentations of his adversaries forbid the supposition that his bodily presence was so weighty and powerful, but his letters comparatively weak;^o an hypo-

^m 1 Cor. ii. 4.

ⁿ 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

^o 2 Cor. x. 10.

thesis which must yet be supported by any one, who would regard the speech of the apostle as suggested by immediate inspiration, and his writings as produced by the unassisted powers, however great, of his own mind.

In another part of the same Epistle to the Corinthians, he appeals to those who possessed spiritual gifts, to acknowledge that the things which he wrote unto them were the commandments of God:^p and he is most careful to notice those parts of his advice which were given as the result of his own judgment, or were in any degree doubtful, and those in which he spoke by divine command.^q

St. Peter also, himself an apostle, expressly enumerates the writings of St. Paul among the other Scriptures,^r evidently meaning by that term such as were divinely inspired. The consideration of passages such as these necessarily leads to the conclusion, that the writings of the apostles, which have been handed down to us in a state of general accuracy, and contain a true statement of all the facts which they relate, were also

^p 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

^q 1 Cor. vii. 6, 10, 12, 25, 40.

^r 2 Pet. iii. 16. Divine authority appears to be here ascribed to St. Paul's writings, whether the true reading of the passage is, *ἐν οἷς ἐστὶ δυσνόητά τινα, ὅτι ἐν αἷς.*

originally dictated by the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

The inspiration of those parts of the New Testament which were written by the evangelists St. Mark and St. Luke, is a fact which is to be established upon somewhat different grounds. They are proved by undoubted evidence to have been written by the persons whose names they bear: they were approved of, respectively, by two of the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, whom the writers accompanied: and they have been invariably received, from the apostolic age, with the same reverence as the other books of the New Testament. This uninterrupted testimony proves that these writings always formed a part of the sacred canon, up to the period when the fact of their inspiration could be known by verbal testimony. For these reasons we receive also those books, as forming a part of canonical Scripture, and as divinely inspired.

The difficult enquiry, to what precise extent the inspiration of the Scriptures of the New Testament reached, falls not within the scope of our present intention. It is sufficient to know, that the Scriptures, thus proceeding from the Spirit of truth, may be fully relied upon as being free from all essential errors; and that thus, "the testimony of the Lord is sure."

5. The divine authority of the New Testament being thus established, that of the Old Testament cannot be denied: because it is expressly and repeatedly recognized both by Christ and his apostles. Christ declares that "all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."^s He comprizes the whole duty of man in two short precepts, and declares that on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.^t When Christ referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as writings of indisputable authority,^u and declared "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning him,"^x he alluded in explicit and well known terms to all the books of the Old Testament, and acknowledged their infallibility. After his ascension his apostles constantly refer to the same Scriptures.^y And St. Peter, especially, declares that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."^z

Upon the authority of assertions such as these, we must receive the Scriptures, to which they refer, as undoubtedly inspired.

6. The only question, which can be fairly

^s Matth. xi. 13.

^t Matth. xxii. 40.

^u Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

^x Luke xxiv. 44.

^y Acts i. 20. iii. 22. xxvi. 22. xxviii. 23.

^z 2 Pet. i. 21.

raised, is whether the books which we possess are the same books which then existed, having been transmitted from the period when they were first written by their alleged authors.

On this point, testimony has been collected amply sufficient to satisfy the most scrupulous mind. Independently of the catalogues which were published, at different periods of the Christian church up to the very age of the apostles, and of translations which were made as early as the second century, the very opposition made by the enemies of our faith has served in this respect to establish it. The Jews acknowledge the very same Scriptures of the Old Testament as ourselves. Josephus, in the age of the apostles bears this testimony to the veneration with which the Scriptures were held, and the accuracy with which they were preserved, as well as to their identity with the books which we now read. “ We have not innumerable books, disagreeing with one another, and contradictory, but twenty-two only. These contain the records of all past times, and are justly believed to be divine. Of these, five belong to Moses, and contain his laws, and the history of the origin of man, until his own death. This period of time comprehends nearly three thousand years. From the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who succeeded Xerxes on the throne,

the prophets who followed Moses wrote down what was done in their time, in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and moral precepts for the conduct of life. How stedfastly we have held fast our faith in these records of our nation, is evident by our deeds. For, during so many ages as have since elapsed, no one has dared to add any thing thereto, or to take any thing therefrom, or to make any change therein. It is become as it were, the very nature of a Jew, from his birth, to esteem these books as oracles of divine truth: to abide by them, and, if necessary, readily to die in their defence. It is no new thing for numerous captives to be frequently seen enduring divers kinds of death, rather than say one word against our laws, and the records which they contain.”^a

These books were always thus kept by the Jews with the most holy reverence. They were under the especial guard of a peculiar tribe set apart for that service. The authentic copy of the law was preserved in the ark of the covenant to be read every seven years.^b The Scriptures

^a Josephus against Apion, Lib. 1. §. 8. That this enumeration includes all the books now esteemed canonical, see Schmidius *Historia Antiq. et Vindicatio Canonis Sacri Vet. et Nov. Test.* Lib. 1. Sect. i. §. 53, 54.

^b Deut. xxxi. 9.

were ever publicly read in their synagogues. They were preserved as their most sacred treasure. They formed their national code of laws; they contained the record of their history, the promises of their future glory. The providence of God had thus so ordered their history as entirely to prevent any material alteration of their Scriptures.

There are numerous other collateral proofs, that we have received the Scriptures of the Old Testament without material addition or mutilation. The Samaritans, most hostile to the Jews, preserved the Pentateuch of Moses. And their copy has come down to our own times. For this portion of the Old Testament we have therefore the advantage of comparing two copies perfectly independent: each guarded with jealous care. The comparison of them shews how small a variation has taken place by the unavoidable errors of transcription; while their almost constant agreement affords an unanswerable proof of the authority of those books.

Nearly three hundred years before the Christian æra, the Septuagint version, into the Greek language, was made; and whatever authority this version may be entitled to, it shews, at least, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament, at that period, were essentially the same Scriptures which we now receive.

7. The divine authority of the Old Testament also is most strongly confirmed by the “sure word of prophecy.”^c A great part of that sacred book avowedly foretells future events. Predictions are made in various manners, and with different degrees of clearness: by intimation, by plain assertions, by significant actions and typical prefigurations; or by a narration of facts set forth almost with historical precision. These predictions are of astonishing extent. They sometimes foretell the fate of distant and extensive empires. They often embrace the lives and fortunes of individuals. But most commonly they bear reference to one person, who should be characterized by the most extraordinary, and in many respects contradictory endowments. Many of these prophecies indeed, now explained by infallible authority, were of a nature not to be understood before their fulfilment; but others were sufficiently clear to excite the expectation of the world. The person so predicted was to be the “first-born” of God, “higher than the kings of the earth,”^d and yet “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”^e He was to be the Son of David, and yet his Lord.^f His name was to be “called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the

^c 2 Pet. i. 19.

^d Psalm lxxxix. 27.

^e Isaiah liii. 3.

^f Matth. xxii. 42. Psalm cx. 1.

everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.”^g Yet he was to be esteemed “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”^h His soul was to be made an offering for sin; and yet he was to see his seed and prolong his days.ⁱ Because he had poured out his soul unto death, there should be divided to him a portion with the great, and he should divide the spoil with the strong.^k His grave was to be appointed with the wicked, yet with the rich man should be his tomb.^l He was to be the Messiah, the prince, yet should be cut off, but not for himself.^m Against the Lord and against his Anointed should the kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel.ⁿ He was to be born in a manner surpassing the ordinary course of nature; he was to be “the seed of the woman.”^o For the Lord was to create a new thing upon the earth: a woman should compass a man.^p He was to be descended by a specified line, from Abraham,^q from Isaac,^r from Jacob,^s from Jesse,^t from David.^u He was to be

^g Isaiah ix. 6.

ⁱ Isaiah liii. 10.

^l Isaiah liii. 9.

ⁿ Psalm ii. 2.

^p Jer. xxxi. 22.

^r Gen. xxvi. 4.

^t Isaiah xi. 1.

^u Psalm lxxxix. 4, 27. cxxxii. 11. Isaiah vi. 13, 14. ix. 7. Jer. xxiii. 5. xxxiii. 20, 21.

^h Isaiah liii. 4.

^k Isaiah liii. 12.

^m Dan. ix. 25, 26.

^o Gen. iii. 15.

^q Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18.

^s Gen. xxviii. 14.

born in Bethlehem,^x and yet brought out of Egypt.^y As his life was to be a life of suffering, his death was to be brought on by treachery: his own familiar friend was to lift up his heel against him:^z he was to be sold for thirty pieces of silver: that very money was to be afterwards expended for a peculiar purpose.^a He was to give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and not to hide his face from shame and spitting.^b His death was to be of a most cruel kind. His hands and feet were to be pierced.^c The heathen were to compass him about, and to stand staring and looking on him.^d They were to look on him whom they pierced.^e They were to use these very words, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him, let him deliver him if he delight in him."^f They were to part his garments among them, but for his vesture they were to cast lots.^g They were to give him gall for his meat, and in his thirst to give him vinegar to drink.^h His soul was to be made an offering for sin;ⁱ yet

^x Micah v. 2.^y Hosea xi. 1. as applied Matt. ii. 15.^z Psalm xli. 9.^a Zech. xi. 12, 13.^b Isaiah l. 6.^c Psalm xxii. 16.^d Psalm xxii. 16, 17.^e Zech. xii. 10.^f Psalm xxii. 8.^g Psalm xxii. 18.^h Psalm lxix. 21.ⁱ Isaiah liii. 10.

was not to be left in hell, neither was the Holy One of God to see corruption.^k

That these and numerous other predicted particulars were fulfilled in the person of Christ, it requires no laboured study of the sacred writings to know. The history of the New Testament displays such a correspondence between the events of the life of Christ, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, as proves incontestibly the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the reality of the revelation made by Christ. No one, except he be endued with more than human wisdom, can foresee future events. Therefore one clear prophecy, much more a succession of independent prophecies, is an undoubted evidence that he who delivers it, is illuminated from above.

It has been said, indeed, that a fortunate conjecture may anticipate a future occurrence; and that ambiguous expressions may be so ingeniously contrived, that any course of events may appear to be a fulfilment of a prediction. But the main prophecies of the Old Testament are subject to neither of these objections. What happy conjecture could devise the various particulars in the life and character of Christ? How should a series of independent

^k Psalm xvi. 10.

writers, living in different ages, all conspire to imagine a person so unlike all that the world ever produced, in all the years before or since the coming of Christ? And how could their predictions have been fulfilled, unless the providence of God, who inspired his prophets, had regulated the course of events, so as to bring to pass his designs. There is a limit beyond which conjectural prediction cannot extend. There is no limit to the fore-knowledge and power of God.

There is also a limit to those expressions, ambiguous either from their generality, or from their designed obscurity, with which those, who have advanced unfounded pretensions to prophetic powers, have endeavoured to delude the world.

A zeal even without knowledge might have led a worshipper of Jehovah to cry against Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin; and might have caused him to proclaim the destruction of his idolatrous rites. But no pretended prophet could have withered the hand which was stretched out against him, or have declared the name and the family of that prince, who should fulfil the prophecy, after a lapse of more than three centuries.¹

When the Jews of old mourned in their

¹ 1 Kings xiii. 2. 2 Kings xxiii. 16.

captivity the destruction of their city, a fictitious oracle might have held out the promise, that a time would come when their restoration should take place. But when was it heard that any voice but the voice of God could anticipate, by two hundred years, the course of time, and declare the very person who should perform the prediction. But it is the voice of God “that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid.”^m

Prophecies such as these could have proceeded from Him only, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.ⁿ He it is, who has given us his Holy Scriptures for our learning: and thus indelibly marked them for his own.

Having then, in the Old and New Testament, full proof that they exist now as they ever did; and that they are given by inspiration of God; we have reason to conclude with David, “The testimony of the Lord is sure.”

II. Still it may be said with truth, that the principal object of religion is to regulate the lives of all men; and to prepare them for

^m Isaiah xliv. 28.

ⁿ 2 Pet. iii. 3.

eternal happiness: and that comparatively few have leisure, or opportunity, or ability, to pursue for their own conviction those intricate investigations, which are sometimes required, in tracing, through all its branches, the evidence of our religion's truth. That, besides, the precepts of that religion, when firmly established, should be so plain and simple, that the most unlearned should be able to be thereby made wise unto salvation. How requisite this is may be collected from the excuse which so many make for their neglect of religion. When a man is questioned upon this important point, the very first answer, which he frequently makes, is that he has been deprived of the benefit of sufficient education. And he conceives this a satisfactory plea for not thinking at all upon a subject, which he affects to consider so difficult of comprehension. Now if this excuse be founded in mistake, it is surely a very dangerous mistake: for religion can have no influence upon a mind, which rejects the very thoughts of religion as too high for its attainment. And that it is a mistake we may learn from the words of David; who after he has declared that "the testimony of the Lord is sure," adds also, that it maketh wise the simple.

The Psalmist still carries on the contrast

which he began, between the evidence of the Deity as obtained from the contemplation of his works, and from meditating upon his word.

The truths of natural religion, especially those which are to be obtained from observation upon the great phænomena of the universe, require much study in order to comprehend them. Whereas the pure doctrines of Christianity are easy to be understood, although most difficult to practise. They are contained in a few precepts most comprehensive and plain, illustrated by narratives which attract the attention of the most uncultivated mind. We are required to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.^o To abstain from all appearance of evil;^p to have fervent charity among ourselves.^q We are assured that not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of our Father which is in heaven;^r and that “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.^s”

^o Mark xii. 30, 31.

^p 1 Thess. v. 22.

^q 1 Pet. iv. 8.

^r Matth. vii. 21.

^s James 1. 27.

Precepts such as these the most unlearned can comprehend, the most simple can remember. And if there be found in holy Scripture some things hard to be understood, they should teach us that humility which religion requires.

God has not left himself without witness; for there is contained in his Scriptures evidence enough to satisfy the most scrupulous enquirer. But it is the humble, meek, self-abased spirit, the unobtrusive and pious mind, the simple in heart made wise unto salvation by the practical application of his doctrines to the regulation and comfort of his soul, that is in the sight of God of the greatest price. The pride of man must be brought low, the vanity of “science falsely so called”^t must be humbled, before a man can be induced to rely with implicit confidence upon the sacrifice of Christ alone as the efficient means of his salvation. Yet it is this humility which the Scriptures require, and which the diligent study of them will not fail by the grace of God to produce.

The word of God, then, which thus claims our continual meditation, unlike all other laws, unites two essential qualifications usually incompatible. It speaks at once to the learned and to the unlearned; to the man of science and to the unlettered peasant; to all men in all ages and

^t 1 Tim. vi. 20.

in all climes: its sound is gone out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world. This testimony of the Lord is sure; and therefore convinces the understanding: it makes wise the simple; and therefore satisfies the heart.



LECTURE VII.

THE RECTITUDE, PURITY, INTEGRITY, AND TRUTH
OF REVEALED RELIGION.

PSALM XIX. 8—9.

*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening
the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring
for ever. The judgments of the Lord are true, and
righteous altogether.*

HAVING lately dwelt upon the perfection of revealed religion, and upon its power of converting the heart; upon the certainty of its testimony, and upon its capability of giving wisdom to the simple; we may now consider some of the other perfections, which David ascribes to our faith as delivered in the Holy Scriptures.

I. 1. The first assertion is, that the rule of life laid down in the Scriptures is plain, rational, and consistent, “The statutes of the Lord are right.”

Whoever has examined the reasonings of the heathen philosophers respecting the most

important points of morality and religion, must have noticed, not only how imperfect, but also how uncertain and contradictory their opinions were. It was the constant complaint of the wisest and the best, that the investigation of truth was intricate, and that all the conclusions, which they could draw, were unsatisfactory. They arrived perhaps at a general result; but failed in applying it to particular instances. Thus, that God should be worshipped, was a truth soon deduced from the fact of his existence, and the relation which his creatures bear to their Creator. But to determine the mode of worship, which would be most pleasing to God, involved principles which surpassed the powers of unassisted reason. Upon this important practical question, therefore, no satisfactory decision was ever obtained. In their enquiries respecting it, the sublimest truth was frequently mingled with absurd superstition. Not only did different philosophers vary from one another, but many were inconsistent with themselves. In some of their writings they approved the worship of various fictitious deities, while in others they rejected such service as a derogatory and foolish superstition.^a

^a See Dr. S. Clarke, Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion, ch. vi. 3.

Nearly allied to this subject were their questions respecting the pardon of sin. By what means the sinner might be restored to the favour of God; whether the tears of the sincerest repentance could ever wash away the stain of guilt; whether all the sacrifices which they offered had any, and what influence in propitiating the Deity, or whether a still further satisfaction were requisite—Questions such as these continually presented themselves to an enquiring mind: and the absolute impossibility of determining them threw a shade of doubt even upon those points, which had been more clearly traced out.

The very foundation of all questions of natural religion, the immortality of the soul, instead of being laid deep and sure, was very insecurely fixed. Not to speak of those, who from the affectation of singularity, or the deceitful influence of a vicious life upon the judgment, professed to deny all hope of a future existence; even those men of great wisdom and sagacity, who sometimes appeared to be convinced that the soul was indeed immortal, possessed not that firm conviction which alone can influence the conduct; and sometimes suffered the truth to escape altogether from their minds. The open denial of a future state, on occasions of the most public nature,

by those of the highest character and attainments,^b forms an extraordinary contrast to the strength of argument, with which, at other times, they advocated a contrary opinion. The feelings of doubt, which Cicero so eloquently expresses, in the person of another, seem practically to have influenced himself: “I know not how it is, as long as I am reading, I give my full assent: but when I have laid aside the book, and begin to reflect within myself on the immortality of the soul, that whole conviction vanishes.”^c

It is notorious what perplexity this diversity of opinions produced among all those, who professedly employed themselves in the search of truth. But the greatest disadvantage was undoubtedly this: that opinions so various and

^b “De pœna, possumus equidem dicere id, quod res habet: in luctu atque miseriis mortem ærumnarum requiem, non cruciatum esse: eam cuncta mortalium mala dissolvere: ultra neque curæ neque gaudio locum esse.” Orat. Cæsar. apud Sallust. Bell. Cat. L.

“Nam nunc quidem, quid tandem illi mali mors attulit? nisi forte ineptiis, ac fabulis, ducimur, ut existimemus, illum apud inferos impiorum supplicia perferre. . . . quæ si falsa sunt, id quod omnes intelligunt, quid ei tandem aliud mors eripuit præter sensum doloris. Cicero, Orat. pro A. Cluentio, §. 61.

^c “Nescio quomodo, dum lego assentior: cùm posui librums, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, assentio omnis illa elabitur.” Cicero, Tusc. Quæs. I. §. 11. Dr. S. Clarke on the Evidence, ch. vi. §. 3. quotes these words as expressing the sentiments of Cicero himself.

contradictory never could form a consistent rule of life; nor could maxims, depending solely upon the mutable authority of their proposer, possess sufficient influence to counteract the evil passions and habits of mankind. A rule of life, in order to be effective, must be so plain as to be easily understood, so consistent with itself as not to be mistaken: and must be established upon authority, which can neither be denied nor resisted. Such a rule, which the wisest of unassisted men ineffectually laboured to propose, has been given to us in the written word of God. One strict unyielding law is laid down for all mankind. The narrow path of duty is accurately defined, in which all are commanded to tread. In our ears is heard a voice behind us; saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when we turn to the right hand, and when we turn to the left.^d

Thus, “the statutes of the Lord are right.” They are agreeable to the precepts of human reason, but established by far superior authority, and uniformly consistent, plain, and just.

2. By being thus right, they also rejoice the heart.

An unerring standard of faith and practice is precisely that kind of assistance, which every

^d Isaiah xxx. 21.

human being must desire, in order to regulate his moral conduct. Encompassed as we are on all sides with objects, the research of which soon surpasses the limits of our faculties, we learn to feel our own insufficiency to attain perfect knowledge of any thing. But, in many branches of information, this ignorance is only humiliating. It entails no consequences greatly injurious. The ardent natural philosopher may bitterly regret the comparatively narrow limits, which are prescribed to his enquiries: but the greater part of mankind feel little interest, and no sympathy, for difficulties and distresses, which they scarcely know even by name. Entire ignorance, respecting the ultimate causes of many natural phænomena, prevents not the ordinary business of the world, which perhaps depends upon their constant recurrence, from going on in its usual course. Our bodily frames still continue to perform the functions for which they are so fearfully and wonderfully made, while we know not the mode, in which some of their most important though obscure actions are carried on. But in all questions which influence our moral conduct, in all those which regard the state of our souls and our relation to God, ignorance partakes of the nature of guilt.

If this world be indeed, what even reason

represents it, a state of probation; and if upon our conduct here depends our situation in an unknown futurity; if the soul of man survive the body, and will retain its being and its consciousness for ever in some world different from its present abode; it becomes imperiously necessary for our eternal welfare, that some certain knowledge should be attained upon these most momentous points. They are questions not of mere curiosity, but of vital importance to every man who is born into this world, the heir of immortality. That this want was really felt by those, who made the greatest efforts to arrive at the truth, there is no need of much research to shew. Turn to the eloquent pages of the heathen moralists, and read their confession how necessary it was for them to know something more than they could themselves discover. Hear their avowal that a revelation from heaven was the only means by which any certainty could be attained upon these points of the greatest interest; the worship of God, the expiation of sin, the immortality of the soul, and the final retribution. And observe what an aching void was experienced in the hearts of those, who sought in vain for the instruction which we have received.

Possessing then, as we do, an unerring standard of faith and conduct, just, plain, simple,

practical, able to make us wise unto salvation, we will rejoice in it and employ it. We will agree in word, and declare in deed, that “the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.”

II. The next property, which David ascribes to revealed religion, is its purity, by which it illuminates the understanding: “the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

Compare the religion of Christ with any other form of worship, which has ever been proposed. Read the description which the apostle gives, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, confirmed as it is by the testimony of heathen writers, and then say what those religious tenets must have been, which tolerated such abominations; and even made them a part of their most solemn services. Open the volume which contains the creed of the Mahometan: and observe, among many moral precepts, and those frequently borrowed from the Holy Scriptures, and some restraints upon the vices of human nature, how wide a door is opened to profligacy. Observe the kind of inducements which are held out to the obedient. See how the worst and most violent passions are enlisted upon the side of the Koran, while the pure precepts of the Gospel condemn the very rising of an impure

thought, and command us to resist all evil. Compare, besides, the personal character of Mahomet and Christ. See the one marshalling his followers in the ranks of battle, promising to those who fall the impure rewards of a sensual paradise. Follow the pretended prophet into his retirement, and behold him the slave of his lusts. Then turn to the lowly and pure Jesus, spotless in his life, holy in his precepts; hear him declaring that his kingdom is not of this world, and pronouncing his blessing upon the pure in heart. Follow him too into his seclusion, and behold him prostrate in prayer before his heavenly Father, continuing all night in prayer to God, supplicating blessings upon his disciples; and praying not for them only, but for those also which should believe on him through their word.^e

Of all the characters which the experience of ages has witnessed, or the imagination of man has feigned, not one has approached the unsullied purity of our Saviour's life. He stands forth embodied in a form of holiness, unlike any other person who ever appeared upon earth. Amidst all the contradiction of sinners which he endured, under all the trials to which he was exposed, surrounded by enemies eager to catch at every opportunity to vilify him, no breath of slander

^e John xvii. 20.

ever dared to impeach the purity of his divine character. And even the more calculating bitterness of modern unbelief has respected, what it dared not deny, the personal sanctity of Jesus.

To the holy example of our Lord, which is proposed for our imitation, are to be added the numerous precepts which inculcate purity, as one of the qualifications of the religious character. It is he that hath clean hands and a pure heart, to whom the promise is made that he shall stand in God's holy place.^f It is the pure in heart who are blessed, because they shall see God.^g The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart.^h One of the most awful attributes of God, to his sinful creatures, is that he is of purer eyes than to behold evil.ⁱ His words are declared, pure words.^k And the proper object of our love, because very pure.^l And the very first commendation which St. James gives, as distinguishing the wisdom that is from above, is that it is pure.^m "Keep thyself pure," was the command of St. Paul to his beloved Timothy,ⁿ for in purity the sum of religion is contained. Whatsoever things are pure are to be made the subject of our thoughts.^o

^f Psalm xxiv. 4.

^h 1 Tim. i. 5.

^k Psalm xii. 6.

^m James iii. 17.

^o Phil. iv. 8.

^g Matth. v. 8.

ⁱ Hab. i. 13.

^l Psalm cxix. 140.

ⁿ 1 Tim. v. 22.

And the purity of God himself is held up as the model, to which they, who hope for his bliss, must strive to conform themselves. "Beloved," says St. John, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."^p

Systems of morality, devised by man, afford some toleration for the passions, and some allowance for the weakness, of human nature; and thus darken the understanding, by confounding the distinction of right and wrong. Whereas the religion of the Scriptures continually offers for our guidance examples and precepts of the utmost holiness; "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

III. Another peculiarity of revealed religion is, that it is free from superstition and useless ceremonies, and that, contra-distinguished from all other modes of worship, it is applicable to every age from the beginning to the end of time. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever."

Various superstitions have in different ages risen up to delude mankind. They have enjoyed a temporary celebrity; and have in turn faded

^p 1 John iii. 2, 3.

and passed away. Where are we to look now for the fair fabric of heathen mythology? “Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad; where are the gods of Sepharvaim?”^q Like the people who invented them, they have vanished from the earth. The place thereof knoweth them no more.

But not so the religion which God himself has revealed. It consists, indeed, of several parts successively disclosed to the world: but these all form one harmonious whole. Before the world was, the scheme of our redemption was accomplished in the divine counsels: and immediately after the fall we perceive intimations of the wonderful event.^r In the patriarchal ages we find occasional though obscure glimpses of that mercy, which was afterwards to be vouchsafed to sinful man. In the institution of expiatory sacrifices, we recognize the trace of the one propitiatory offering which was in the fulness of time to be made. In the offering up of Isaac, we observe Abraham enabled to see “Christ’s day.”^s The Divine counsels were displayed, unaltered from age to age, in a series of express promises, made to Adam,^t to Abraham,^u to Isaac,^x to Jacob,^y

^q Isaiah xxxvi. 19.

^r Gen. iii. 15.

^s John viii. 56.

^t Gen. iii. 15.

^u Gen. xii. 1—3. xvii. 19. xxii. 18.

^x Gen. xxvi. 3, 4.

^y Gen. xxxv. 10, 12.

to Judah.^z Then we have Moses brought forth to be a lawgiver, and holding out the promise of a prophet who should be raised up like unto himself.^a We have a people separated from the rest of the world, governed by peculiar laws and ordinances, and subject to ceremonial rites, not as mere external observances, but as the shadows and representations of what should hereafter be fulfilled. They sacrifice the paschal lamb. It indicates the Lamb of God. They are healed by the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness. It exhibits a figure of the Son of man, who so also should be lifted up, that all who believe on him, should not perish, but have eternal life.^b They eat manna in the wilderness, even angels' food. It is a symbol of that bread of life which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die:^c the hidden manna, which was to be given to eat to him that overcometh.^d As also "they did all eat the same spiritual meat," so did they "all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ."^e Before the Israelites are established in the land of promise, the attention of the world is

^z Gen. xlix. 10.

^b John iii. 14, 15.

^d Rev. ii. 17.

^a Deut. xviii. 15.

^c John vi. 33, 50.

^e 1 Cor. x. 13.

directed to the Star which should come out of Jacob, and the sceptre which should rise out of Israel.^f After that period, the prophets of the Old Testament are raised up in succession, all speaking the same language, all referring to the same event.

In the fulness of time the Messiah comes. In him are accomplished all the promises, predictions, and types. The separate existence of the Jewish nation, as God's peculiar people, having accomplished its purpose, ceased. To the whole world were the words of salvation sent. The feet of them that bring good tidings of good, that publish salvation, have been seen on all mountains; and as this religion has continued from the commencement of the world, so we know it shall continue to the end of time. His salvation shall be for ever; and his righteousness shall not be abolished.^g

The true religion is thus peculiarly fitted for perpetuity, because it is undebased by superstitious observances, and ordinances of unnecessary severity. The fear of the Lord is clean, and therefore endureth for ever. The votaries of all other religions have been weighed down with the heavy burdens which the institutions of man imposed. Human victims have been immolated upon their altars, or

^f Numb. xxiv. 17.

^g Isaiah li. 6.

crushed beneath the car of their idols. Painful austerities, ceaseless vigils, perpetual abstinence, the scourge, and the rack, have been the instruments, by which they have endeavoured to appease the wrath of their sanguinary gods. Their very children have been made to pass through the fire: they have given their first-born for their transgression; the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. Far different are the sacrifices which our religion enjoins. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. He enjoins the offering up of ourselves a living sacrifice; the dedication of our lives to the service of God, whose commandments are not grievous. He requires the keeping of his sabbath, as a day of rest unto holiness; and the celebration of the sacraments, which have been ordained in the church of Christ. But chiefly he requires, what alone gives all external institutions any real value, the inward ornament of a holy life, according to the precepts revealed in his Gospel. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”^h

Any religion, indeed, may be abused by the perverseness of mankind; and in contem-

^h Micah vi. 8.

plating the world we observe with regret many of those, who call themselves Christians, debased and degraded by superstition. We observe “the mystery of iniquity” still working, “with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness,”ⁱ and still hear them “forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”^k These however have not known of what spirit they were. They have introduced ordinances hard to be borne, and the traditions of men, which they bind upon the consciences of their brethren. These austerities form no part of the religion of Christ. Unshackled by ceremonial observances, the fear of the Lord, which it teaches, is clean; his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

IV. The next peculiarity, which the Psalmist notices as belonging to revealed religion, is that it is perfectly true and just. “The judgements of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.”

To the religion which we profess is ascribed in Holy Scripture the attribute of truth, in several senses.

1. It is true, as being utterly at variance with all falsehood, both in itself and in those

ⁱ 2 Thess. ii. 7.

^k 1 Tim. iv. 3.

who profess it. In itself we have before seen that it is totally free from error and deceit, and in that sense true. And in those who profess it, truth and sincerity are especially required, as indications of the power of their religious principles. "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts,"¹ is the address of David unto God. "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour,"^m was one of the especial commands given by God to his people. And among those who are represented as excluded for ever from the heavenly promises, is especially named, "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."ⁿ In the sense, then, of opposition to all falsehood, "The judgments of the Lord are true."

2. Truth also is in Scripture ascribed to the Almighty and his revealed will, in the sense of sincerity and fidelity in keeping the promises, and threatenings contained in the Scriptures. In this sense it is declared that "the Lord is the true God."^o His truth in executing his promises is declared to be co-extensive with his mercy which makes them. "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens," says David, "and thy truth unto the clouds."^p

¹ Psalm li. 6.

^m Zech. viii. 16.

ⁿ Rev. xxii. 15.

^o Jer. x. 10.

^p Psalm lvii. 10.

Truth of this nature ascribed to our^s religion is one of its fundamental distinctions, for upon it must be founded all our belief and confidence. As he makes his gracious promises, so we know that faithful is he that calleth us, who also will do it.^q

3. Again, truth is peculiarly ascribed to the final revelation of God's will made in the Gospel. The Christian religion is called the truth:^r and it is separated from every other form of worship by the same distinctive term. "The law was given by Moses," says St. John, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."^s Our Saviour declared of himself that he was "the way and the truth and the life:"^t that to bear witness to the truth was a principal end of his coming into the world.^u He said to those Jews who believed on him, "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."^x And one of the most consoling promises which he made to his disciples before his death was, that "when He, the Spirit of truth, should come, he should guide them unto all truth."^y

^q 1 Thess. v. 24.

^s John i. 17.

^u John xviii. 37.

^y John xvi. 13.

^r Gal. iii. 1.

^t John xiv. 6.

^x John viii. 31, 32.

In this meaning, revealed religion, which communicates the doctrine of the Gospel, is especially true.

4. Real religion is also characterized by truth, as distinguished from mere formality and hypocrisy. Thus we are commanded to draw near to God with a true heart,^z in full assurance of faith: and reminded that “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”^a

Justly, therefore, does David ascribe truth and righteousness to a religion, which requires truth in the inward parts, detests all falsehood, is most faithful in performing with truth the promises which it makes, is emphatically and peculiarly styled, “The Truth;” and demands, of those who receive it, unfeigned and true obedience.


Blest, then, as we are with so precious a revelation from above, so perfect, converting the soul; so sure, making wise the simple; so right, rejoicing the heart; so pure, enlightening the eyes; so true and righteous altogether; how careful should we be duly to appreciate this inestimable benefit. The Scriptures are given, not merely to be admired for their superiority over all human compositions; not

^z Heb. x. 22.

^a 1 John i. 8.

merely to furnish that polemical armour, by which the shafts of infidelity may be repelled; but they are given as our guide and our counsellor, in all the temptations and perils of a sinful world. They teach us upon infallible authority the dealings of God with man. They teach us how the penitent may obtain pardon. They open to us an accurate view of the world in which we live, and of that to which we are hastening. They explain the intentions of providence in the mysterious transactions of this life: what death is: what judgment will be.

Be it, then, our care continually to study them, as the oracles of divine truth; for in them, and in them only, we have the words of eternal life. Let us read them, not coldly, not as a task; still less with any spirit of light cavilling at their minute difficulties; but with the seriousness, which the word of God demands, and the responsibility of man requires. So may we hope, through the influence of that Holy Spirit, which is promised to the patient enquirer and diligent hearer of God's word, to be made wise unto salvation.



LECTURE VIII.

THE ADVANTAGE AND PLEASURE DERIVED FROM
THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.



PSALM XIX. 10.

*More to be desired are they than gold, yea,
than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey,
and the honey-comb.*

THE two principal pursuits, which engage the attention of mankind in this life, are those of interest and pleasure; the one affording the means of future enjoyment, the other promising immediate gratification. In this passage, David, still referring to that revelation which God has given us in the Scriptures, asserts that religion, as an object of pursuit, is preferable to both these.

I. It is very customary, especially in poetic diction, to assume one prominent object as a representation of all objects of a similar

kind. Thus gold is selected as the symbol, by which all earthly advantages, derived from the possession of wealth, are designated. A competent portion of the goods of this life is undoubtedly an innocent, and even a laudable excitement to honest industry. The providence of God has so wisely constituted the affairs of the world, that each individual, labouring in his respective calling, and often pursuing it without a very enlarged view of the relative bearings of different parts of society, most effectually promotes his own happiness and the general good. It is the abuse of the pursuit of riches, which becomes reprehensible and criminal. And so liable are they to be abused, that the Scriptures, in many places, caution us in the strongest terms against their seductive influence.

The objects of earthly pursuit so nearly and so continually solicit the attention, that there is always great cause of alarm, lest men should be entirely absorbed in their search after the riches and advantages of the world, and neglect their more real and permanent interests. In order to counteract this peril, and to display the superiority which the Scriptures possess, as leading to a religious life, David declares that they are "more to be desired than gold: yea than much fine gold."

1. “Godliness with contentment is great gain,”^a so that religion is superior to worldly riches, by superseding them. “In the house of the righteous,” says Solomon, “there is much treasure.”^b A pious mind will be contented and happy in the deepest poverty: an avaricious mind will be most miserable in the midst of affluence.

2. But there is another cause which renders religious advancement a more desirable object of pursuit than riches; it is never sought without success. Various as are the schemes which worldly riches suggest, painful as are the labours which they excite, the toil is frequently bestowed in vain. The most complicated plans, which human ingenuity can devise, are often overthrown by causes which no prudence could foresee, no care prevent. Years of anxious thought and ceaseless exertion not unfrequently terminate in disappointment. But he who, with a sincere heart, endeavours to attain the true riches which God has given by his word, shall experience no failure. His progress may be slow. He may frequently have occasion to complain of the hardness of his heart, and the difficulty of obedience. But if he rely not upon his own power, but upon the grace of God which is sufficient for him, he will go on

^a 1 Tim. vi. 6.

^b Prov. xv. 6.

from strength to strength, so as to attain the inestimable prize which is proposed to his exertions.

3. Again, the advantages of religion are more to be desired than gold, because they are unfading. Short lived indeed are all the gratifications which depend solely upon this life. Scripture represents them all, and especially riches, by images of the most fleeting kind. Hear the words of Solomon, who certainly experienced as much as any man what are the real advantages of wealth. "Labour not to be rich.... Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings. They flee away as an eagle towards heaven."^c

But the advantages, which religion affords, are as permanent as the God who grants them. There is in them no variableness. They continue from age to age, an object of pursuit most desirable and most certain.

4. Earthly riches too, although sought with the greatest avidity, and pursued with the most unremitting perseverance, are, at best, but a very uncertain blessing. How many, after the successful termination of their labours, sigh for the comparative freedom from care, which they enjoyed at an earlier period of their lives.

^c Prov. xxiii. 4, 5.

How many confess that the success, which renders them objects of envy to others, might, with greater propriety, claim their pity.

Advancement in religious acquirement is accompanied with no such inconvenience. Whoever pursues it as his chief good, knows that it is, in this respect, far more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold. He who is most advanced in the Christian course looks back upon his past life, with deep regret for the sins which he has committed, and with sincere thankfulness for the grace, which has often kept him from falling. But before him there is always held out some new object of attainment; a higher elevation to be reached by fresh exertion, and to be rewarded by a greater recompence. The sentiments of St. Paul will be those of every sincere follower of Christ: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before; I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”^d

With reason, then, might the Psalmist prefer the study of revealed religion, by which alone any effectual advancement in holiness

^d Phil. iii. 13, 14.

can be anticipated, to the pursuit of earthly riches.

II. The second part of the assertion made by David is, that the study and practice of religion are to be preferred to all earthly pleasures: not only are they “more to be desired than gold;” but they are “sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.” Sweetness of taste is one of the most obvious metaphors, under which any thing which delights the senses can be signified: and honey is naturally selected as the sweetest substance in ordinary use, among the simple and inartificial inhabitants of the East. The same comparison is made by David in another Psalm. “How sweet are thy words unto my taste: yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.”^e And Solomon employs the same figure: “My son, eat thou honey, because it is good, and the honey-comb which is sweet to thy taste: so shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul.”^f This familiar image acquires an additional propriety, when it is considered, that honey was often used as the peculiar symbol of sensual pleasure; and perhaps for that reason was expressly forbidden, in the law of Moses, to be burnt upon the altar of God.^g

^e Psalm cxix. 103.

^f Prov. xxiv. 13, 14.

^g Lev. ii. 11.

Now to assert, that religion promises more present pleasure than the gratification of sense, is to advance a proposition, which many are inclined to deny; if not by word, at least by deed. Those who find the restraints of religion, what they are intended to be, a barrier against the indulgence of their passions, have always been ready to represent a religious life as a hard service. They see little prospect of delight, in studying and obeying a code of regulations, which forbids the exercise of all licentiousness, however confirmed and endeared by habit. They notice the firm demeanour of religion; the calm severity of her aspect; the majestic dignity of her step; and judging from their own prepossessions, they rashly and unwisely pronounce that, although her ways may be the ways of security, they are not the ways of pleasantness, that her paths are not peace. When the conclusions of man's reasoning are thus expressly opposed to the assertions of God's word, we know on whose side the error lies. But that we may see how really irrational such a conclusion is, let us observe some of the pleasures, which more immediately accompany the study of the Scriptures; reserving those, which attend the practice of religion, for a future occasion.

1. Every man of a cultivated mind will allow, that some of our purest and most rational

pleasures are derived from studying those works of eloquence and imagination, which have, for a succession of ages, continued to delight the world. Many of those, who have been the most ardent advocates for enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sense, have yet, in their hours of solitude and calm retirement, been sensible of literary enjoyment. They have sometimes distinguished themselves as the most enthusiastic admirers, and successful followers, of the poets and orators of antiquity. Now to a mind, capable of appreciating all that constitutes the charm of language and sentiment, where can so rich a feast be offered as in the volume of the Scriptures? Where shall we discover such various and natural descriptions, such touching tenderness; such beautiful simplicity; such terrible sublimity? The lover of poetry may find the most admired human compositions surpassed, in the hymns of triumph scattered throughout the Pentateuch; in the devotional effusions of David; in the sublime descriptions of the book of Job. The admirer of empasioned eloquence may find, in the addresses of the Hebrew prophets, and especially in the writings of St. Paul, instances of a strength of conception, and a copiousness and power of language, unequalled in Grecian and Roman literature. Those passages of the heathen poets, which have been selected as models

of pathetic composition, are inferior to the elegy pronounced by David over Jonathan.^h The most tender sentiments, which mere imagination ever suggested, fall short of those, which are so elegantly displayed in the histories of Joseph and of Ruth; and especially in the narrative of our Saviour's life and sufferings.

2. The beauties of style, however, which adorn the Scriptures, are incidental advantages: and a great portion of their charm arises from the fact, that they are not studiously displayed, but spring naturally from the subjects which are treated of. Independently of the manner, in which they are thus recommended, the subjects themselves open the most noble field for contemplation to every reflecting mind.

(1.) If a man would exercise the powers of his understanding, the sacred volume displays an inexhaustible variety of great and noble objects. It commands us to be ready to give to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us;ⁱ and therefore calls for the exercise of all our rational faculties; for patience to collect, and carefulness to arrange, and judgment to weigh the proofs, which establish our faith. It treats also of all which is great and noble; of the Almighty God himself; of his perfections; of his nature; of his providence. It proposes for our

^h 2 Sam. i. 17, 27.

ⁱ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

contemplation a Being who is a spirit, without body, without parts, without passions; subject to neither chance nor change; existing, from eternity to eternity, the same. It overwhelms every mind, however accustomed to reflect upon number and magnitude, with the conception of the unlimited power of God, set forth in the variety of his works. It perplexes the most subtle, with the consideration of his universal presence; of that mysterious existence, which pervades at once all parts of infinite space without distraction. It astonishes us, who can conceive of time only as made up of successive parts of duration, by speaking of “the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity;”^k who dwells, as it were, at once in all the moments of infinite duration, with whom the past and the future are the same as the present; and, in the strictest sense, incomprehensible by us, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.^l It raises our thoughts far beyond the limits of human comprehension, when it fixes them upon the wonderful union of infinite justice with infinite mercy: upon the truth of Him, who cannot lie:^m upon the wisdom of Him, who is the only wise God:ⁿ upon the holiness of Him,

^k Isaiah lvii. 15.

^l 2 Pet. iii. 8.

^m Heb. vi. 18.

ⁿ 1 Tim. i. 17.

who cannot look on iniquity :^o upon the justice of Him, who “is righteous in all the works which He doth :”^p upon the benevolence of Him, whose goodness endureth continually.^q

The Scriptures also open to the enquiring mind of man, vast subjects of speculation, peculiar to revealed religion. They disclose as much as it is fitting for us to know, respecting the very nature of God. They speak of the three distinct persons, all united in one Divine essence. They set forth the wonderful manner, in which full satisfaction was made to inflexible justice for the sins of offending man : they describe the nature and influence of the Holy Spirit. They offer the means of unravelling the apparent confusion, in which the events of this world are involved. They speak of time, and of eternity : of the life which now is, and of that which is to come : of heaven, and of hell ; of death, and of judgment.

Many of the subjects, thus treated of in Scripture, are, indeed, too wonderful and excellent to be fully comprehended by the mind of man. But they offer an unbounded field of rational contemplation, for the employment of the understanding, with which the bounty of the Creator has endowed him.

^o Hab. i. 13.

^p Dan. ix. 14.

^q Psalm lii. 1.

(2.) They also, whose minds are better qualified to receive pleasure through the medium of their imagination, may find in the study of the Scriptures, subjects upon which they may dwell with peculiar delight. All that is terrible and majestic, all that is glorious and splendid, all that is beautiful, all that is engaging, are in turn displayed in that sacred volume. In what other book shall we find a series of images so magnificent, as those with which David describes the coming of the Lord? “The earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place: his pavilion round about him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed; hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the

world were discovered, at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.”^r

Neither is imagery of this nature confined to the poetical parts of Scripture. The grandeur of the transactions, which are related, elevates the style even of its histories. Where shall we search elsewhere for a description of a real event, which so fills the imagination, as the descent of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai, at the giving of the Law? “Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace: and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.”^s

Equally sublime is the description of the Almighty passing by the cave, in which Elijah had taken refuge. “Behold the Lord passed by. And a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: And after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not

^r Psalm xviii. 7—15. 2 Sam. xxii. 8—16.

^s Exod. xix. 18, 19.

in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice.”^t

Time would fail me to enumerate the passages of the same kind, which might easily be collected.

Still more majestic are the intimations, occasionally dispersed throughout the sacred writings, respecting the splendour which accompanies the more immediate presence of God in heaven. The Scriptures indeed, usually expressed in the words of soberness as well as of truth, do not frequently dwell upon the glories of the celestial state, except for the purpose of exciting our desires and our wishes to be made partakers of it. They rather imply, than describe, the inconceivable glory of God. They speak of Him “who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.”^u They allude to “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord;”^x to the “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”^y They thus lead our minds to ideas of the grandeur and magnificence of God, generally without using any definite words,

^t 1 Kings xix. 11, 12.

^u 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

^x Ezek. i. 28.

^y 2 Cor. xii. 4.

which might probably excite erroneous impressions. But sometimes the veil is partially withdrawn; and we are permitted to catch, as it were, a distant view even of the glory of the heavenly throne. The beloved St. John was favoured with a vision of this nature, and commissioned to write it for the information of the Christian churches. “I was in the Spirit,” says the apostle, “and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone. And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment: and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices... And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts, full of eyes, before and behind... And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks, to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for

ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.”^z

It becomes us not to examine, with too great curiosity, the things which are thus revealed for our encouragement. The expressions used, although designedly taken from things which we can see, in order that we may be able in some measure to comprehend them, shew that they really describe a glory, greater than the eye of man could endure, or his heart conceive. And the book which contains them, while it makes man wise unto salvation, places before his imagination objects which far surpass the conception of the most fertile invention.

In other parts of the Scriptures, the mind is refreshed with the most pleasing images of calmness and repose. We are led through green pastures, and beside the still waters. The voice of instruction is modulated to the most harmonious numbers; and precepts, sufficiently attractive by their importance, receive

^z Rev. iv. 2—11.

additional charms from the beautiful form, in which they are embodied.

(3.) Again, the study of the Scriptures is peculiarly adapted to delight the mind, by most forcibly engaging the affections. Not to speak, now, of the tenderness and delicacy of sentiment, which adorn many parts of the sacred volume; the subjects displayed are calculated to call forth in us the most vivid emotions of gratitude and love. The Scriptures describe the universe, as filled with the goodness of God. They dwell upon the benevolence, which is so conspicuous in all his material works. They refer to the deep, which covereth the earth like a garment; and is replenished with things creeping innumerable, which all wait upon God: to the waters, which go up by the mountains and down by the valleys, which God hath founded for them: to the springs, which are sent into the valleys, and run among the hills.^a They represent every thing which we enjoy in this life, as the immediate gift of our heavenly Father; in whom we live, and move, and have our being.^b

Above all, the Scriptures declare the inconceivable mercies of our redemption. They

^a Psalm civ.

^b Acts xvii. 28.

describe man in his fallen state, dead in trespasses and sins; and subject to everlasting misery. They contrast the purity of God with this wickedness of man. They set forth the mercy of God, who pitieth them that fear him, like as a father pitieth his own children.^c They speak of Him as long-suffering, patient, gracious, good. They transmit the grievous complaints of those, who felt conscious of their own guilt, and of their inability to save themselves. They contain that complaint of Job; “If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean: yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.”^d Then they display the mercy of God, which devised a remedy for so great an evil; that where sin abounded, grace might much more abound.^e They speak comfortably to the people of God, who have received of the Lord’s hand double for all their sins.^f They describe in detail the wonderful dispensation of the Gospel: the incarnation of the Son of God; the privations which he endured during

^c Psalm ciii. 13.

^d Job ix. 30—33.

^e Rom. v. 20.

^f Isaiah xl. 2.

his life ; his sufferings, his death ; his resurrection ; his ascension ; his assumption of his mediatorial kingdom ; his intercession in heaven for his faithful followers upon earth.

It is to be lamented that frequency of repetition should diminish the effect, which the contemplation of events like these might reasonably be expected to produce. When we consider that all this is no fictitious tale, devised in order to excite our feelings, but the sober narrative of what was actually performed for us men and for our salvation—that these were the means, by which we were redeemed from the curse—that what Christ suffered was all endured for our sakes—that if he was wounded, it was for our transgressions—if bruised, it was for our iniquities—that “the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed”^g—that “God commended his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”^h—that “in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him”—that, “herein is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”ⁱ—we should surely love God,

^g Isaiah liii. 5.

^h Rom. v. 8.

ⁱ 1 John iv. 9, 10.

because he first loved us; we should acknowledge that such inestimable blessings call for feelings of thankfulness, which no other cause can ever claim.

The study, then, of the sacred writings affords the highest pleasure to every rational mind. It satisfies the understanding: it delights the imagination: it engages the affections. It speaks of subjects of vital interest to every soul of man; by which every one is required to regulate his life, and by which he will be judged at the great day. Yet, even among those who conceive themselves most capable of judging, there have been found some who would represent the study of the Scriptures as repulsive. And many, it is to be feared, among the young, are deterred by prejudices of this nature, from searching the book of life. They do read the Bible occasionally; but it is with a carelessness, which prevents them, as well from relishing the beauties, as from imbibing the spirit of the sacred volume.

You are perhaps well read in the pages of ancient and modern literature: you would account it grievous ignorance not to know, and great want of taste not to appreciate, the charms of eloquence and sentiment so profusely scattered over them. But there is a book more eloquent, more sublime, more tender, more de-

scriptive than all which you admire, which yet you suffer to lie from day to day unopened, or read only with inattention and indifference. I speak not now of the pleasures attending the practice of religion, I speak only of those which accompany its study. These are pleasures pure, and rational; able to satisfy the soul of man, and adequate to its utmost capacity; pleasures which alone might induce men to exercise themselves in God's law day and night.

But far be it from any one to urge the study of the Bible only because it possesses unrivalled interest, and charms of diction. We stand upon higher ground. We search the Scriptures, because in them we think we have the words of eternal life. But, in so searching them, we receive the purest pleasure, as well as the most lasting advantage. We press forward with ardour for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:^k and, by the goodness of our heavenly guide, every step, which we tread, leads us continually on through the ways of pleasantness and peace.

^k Phil. iii. 14.

LECTURE IX.

THE WARNINGS AND PROMISES OF THE SCRIPTURES.

PSALM XIX. 11.

*Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and
in keeping of them there is great reward.*

THE Psalmist, having before dwelt upon the benefits which revealed religion affords, and shewn that it is an object of pursuit more desirable, and more agreèable, than any worldly advantages, here declares two more peculiarities, by which it is characterized;

That it warns and teaches mankind:

That it promises, and will give, an exceeding great reward to those who keep it.

The two great instruments, by which all laws have been enforced, are the fear of punishment, and the hope of reward. But, in every human code of legislation, both these instruments are very imperfect in their operation. The fear of punishment has always proved

too weak for the hope of eventual impunity. And the expectation of reward has failed in its effect, from the actual impossibility that the legislator should appreciate merit, and his inability to requite it, even when discovered. But the punishments and rewards, with which religion is conversant, are subject to no such imperfection. The warnings are the most emphatic; because they proceed from a Being, who knows the origin and end of the most obscure event. The threatenings are most awful; because they are uttered by a Being, whose power knows no limits, either of extension or duration: by one, whose words are truth itself: by one, who will most assuredly perform what he declares. Similarly, the rewards, which are promised, are most sure. However secret an action may be, it is exposed to the eye of our Almighty Father: however complicated in its causes and consequences, He can distinguish the motives by which it was produced, and the events to which it gives rise. And although our very best actions can deserve no reward at his hands, yet we are assured, that they who through faith endeavour to lay hold of eternal life, shall, by the free grace and mercy of God, through the atonement of his Son, receive an exceeding great recompence.

I. David declares, with reference to the precepts and doctrines of revealed religion, “By them is thy servant warned,” or, as the same term signifies in other parts of Scripture, “by them is thy servant enlightened.” His assertion may be considered, therefore, to refer to the historical warnings, which the Scriptures deliver to mankind; to the full assurance of future judgment; and to the promised influence of God’s Holy Spirit.

1. The warnings, which any history delivers, are always impressive, because they exhibit the natural course of events, similar to those in which we are all engaged. They display the origin, and progress, and consequences of transactions, modified by all the variety of circumstances to which they are subject. But the warnings of sacred history are peculiarly striking; since they shew the causes as well as the effects. They lay open frequently the very dealings of God with man: the internal dispensations, by which his counsels are directed.

If we open the word of God, we are presented with a series of historical warnings, which speak most forcibly the abhorrence in which all sin is held in the sight of God: and especially those sins which are directed against himself. The offences which are punished are

those of nations, and of individuals: and the punishment corresponds with the crime.

National offences are visited by national judgments. Scarcely was the earth peopled, after the fall of our first parents, when it was “corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” All flesh turned from the worship of the Lord: the wickedness of man became great, and the imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.^a But the same narrative, which records the guiltiness of the world, relates also the judgment which came upon it. The Spirit of God would not always strive with man. While men were still in the midst of their wickedness, heedless of their danger, God sent a flood of waters upon the earth, and destroyed both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air. The patriarchal age is replete with warnings of a similar nature. The confusion of tongues, the destruction of the cities of the plain, offer subjects of very serious contemplation. When, again, we proceed to the history of the people, who were selected for God’s peculiar care, we read scarcely any thing but a continued succession of warnings and punishments: warnings which, although they failed to effect their immediate

^a Gen. vi. 5, 11.

purpose of turning the Israelites from their errors, we should do well to lay to heart. When first they were delivered from Egyptian bondage, they wandered in the desert, and suffered from hunger, and thirst, and fatigue. When at length they were established in the land of promise, they were frequently subdued by the people around them, who were emphatically styled “scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes.”^b As they advanced in experience, they made few advances in obedience, and consequently few in national prosperity. They became a divided people: one part was carried away captive, never to return; the remaining part was afterwards led away to Babylon, and, for seventy years, endured all the afflictions which a state of slavery entails. When their temple, and worship, and nation were restored, their sins were renewed; and so was their punishment. The Lord of life appeared among them; and him they crucified and slew: and soon after, the measure of their national iniquities being at length fulfilled, their city was finally destroyed, and the remnant of them dispersed abroad among all people of the earth, a living warning of the fearful nature of disobedience to the commands of an omnipotent God.

^b Josh. xxiii. 13.

The word of God besides warns us by the history of individuals.

From the first disobedience of Adam, by whose transgression sin entered into the world and death by sin, we learn the grievous curse which is entailed upon our nature; the bitter fruits of the forbidden tree. From the murder of Abel, we learn the depravity of fallen man; how soon, how fatally the image of God, in which man was created, was defaced and obliterated. By various passages in the history of the patriarchs, we may receive the most forcible lessons of piety, the most awful warnings against sin. From the judgments which were inflicted upon Pharaoh, we see how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. From the failings of Aaron, and even of Moses, how imperfect are all the services of the most upright men. From the melancholy falling away of Saul, how soon, all men sink into destruction, when they forsake the ordinances of God, and neglect the means of his grace. From the sins and punishment of David, the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the certainty that our sin will find us out. From the death of that prophet of God, who, though he prophesied against the altar at Bethel, yet disobeyed the command of the Lord and was slain by a lion in the way,^c

^c 1 Kings xiii.

that even those who are commissioned to proclaim the way of the Lord, may yet most fearfully fall. From the destruction of Sennacherib's army,^d how mightily the hand of God is sometimes stretched out to save his people: from the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar,^e how dreadful is his anger; from the death of Herod,^f how certainly vengeance sometimes overtakes the wicked even in the present life. These and numerous other instances, which might easily be collected from the sacred volume, are written for our instruction. They are histories, by which, in an especial degree we are warned.

2. Still more striking is the warning information which we receive from the assurance of future judgment. As in all ages some men have neglected, so some men will always neglect, the example offered to them by the punishment of others; and discover or invent some palliating circumstances in their own case. But if they once feel convinced that immediate punishment is hanging over their own heads, they may then be induced to turn from their errors, with real contrition, and practical amendment.

It would be difficult to find an instance, in which a whole nation was reformed by the con-

^d 2 Kings xiii. 35. Isaiah xxxvii. 36.

^e Dan. iv.

^f Acts xii. 23.

sideration of those historical warnings, which are held out for their instruction; not from any deficiency in the instruction itself, but from the want of observation in themselves: because they will not lay it to heart. But if, among the most profligate people upon earth, a prophet should appear, as Jonah appeared to the Ninevites, armed with a commission of speedy vengeance, if they did not repent, they, who heard and believed the threat, would have no alternative but immediate repentance. “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” was a declaration which clothed that corrupt city in sack-cloth, and brought down even the king from his throne to sit in ashes.⁵

Now thus particular is the warning which the Scriptures hold out in those solemn assurances of future judgment, which it was one of the main objects of revealed religion to deliver. By this voice of revelation we are indeed warned. The circumstances of this awful event are the subject of many of the most striking declarations, which the Scriptures contain. These may be familiar to our ears. But it is at our peril if we therefore suffer them to affect our minds but lightly. They are warnings conceived in words like these; “when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him,

⁵ Jonah iii. 5.

then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”^h Again, “ the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout ; with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.”ⁱ From this judgment no man can escape. “ For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”^k And this decision is final. The wicked “ shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.”^l

I shall instance but one passage more, and that because, expressed in the boldest language of prophecy, it represents, as actually present, what every one who breathes the breath of life will one day see realized. Wrapped into futurity St. John declares, “ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God : and the books were opened : and another book was opened which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death

^h Matth. xxv. 31, 32.

^k 2 Cor. v. 20.

ⁱ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

^l Matth. xxv. 46.

and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”^m Such is the language of the Spirit of God, which sees things future as if already present. And surely it is language calculated to warn the most indifferent. Men may neglect to read, or understand, or apply the warnings which the Scripture history affords; but when we read what will most assuredly happen to every one of us, a doom by which our happiness or misery for ever will be fixed, we must surely join in the Apostle’s conclusion, Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness: looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.ⁿ

3. But the Scriptures not only warn by their histories, and by their positive assurance of future judgment, they also promise the assistance of God’s Holy Spirit to enlighten his faithful servants: and to enable them to lay these warnings to heart.

This illumination varies with the designs which it pleases the Almighty to effect, in different ages, and by different persons. There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit.

^m Rev. xx. 12, 13.

ⁿ 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12.

David and other holy men of old were enlightened to declare the will of God in their inspired writings. At other periods, the Spirit of God was poured out upon all flesh: the young men saw visions, and the old men dreamed dreams, under its holy influence. Sometimes, as on this day,^o the Holy Spirit descended in a visible form; and was manifested by its præternatural effects. The first Christians were by it enabled to speak with other tongues, which they had never learned; to work miracles; to heal all manner of sickness and disease; to control the elements of the universe. When they were taken before kings and rulers, the Spirit gave them utterance: and their unpremeditated eloquence had a force, which all their adversaries were unable to gainsay or resist. It opened also to their minds the prospect of futurity. They were enabled to foresee events long hidden in the obscurity of ages yet to come: to discern what should come to pass in the last days. Since the necessity for these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased, we are taught that it still enlightens the hearts of the faithful servants of God.

That man is sinful, and therefore exposed to the wrath of God, is a truth suggested by

^o This Lecture was delivered on Whit-Sunday.

undeviating experience; repeatedly confirmed by the authority of Scripture. That some change, therefore, must take place in the nature of man, before he is qualified for that state of blessedness, to which he aspires, is a necessary consequence, and is also confirmed by Scripture. But reason tells us not how that change is to be effected. Repentance for past sin, and a real amendment of life, might reform the sinner for the future; remorse might embitter his remembrance of the past: and terror might restrain him from incurring fresh guilt. But no repentance, no remorse, no terror could ever, by its own efficacy, absolve for past guilt; and experience will soon shew that even to repent and amend thoroughly is a work, which surpasses the unassisted powers of man. Something more, therefore, than mere natural means are requisite: and that assistance the Holy Spirit of God affords.

The words of Scripture upon this important point are most express. Christ declares “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”^p Again, “*No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*”^q So St. Paul affirms distinctly, “*if any man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of his.*”^r The whole

^p John iii. 5.^q John vi. 44.^r Rom. viii. 9.

love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.ⁱ And, while the benefits, derived from spiritual assistance, are so clearly displayed, we are encouraged to hope for its sanctifying influence by an express assurance of our Lord: “if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”^k

Thus have we seen how revealed religion addresses itself to the fears of mankind, by its warnings of history, and by its assurance of judgment: and what assistance it affords to enable man to direct his conduct according to his conviction.

II. But religion further addresses itself to our hopes; by holding out the most glorious promises to those who follow it. Not only by the judgments of God are his servants warned; but in keeping of them there is great reward.

1. It is not to be expected, and perhaps it is not to be desired, that in a state of probation, such as the present life is, apparent happiness should be distributed in proportion to apparent merit. I say apparent happiness, because it is well known how often, in the

ⁱ Gal. v. 22.

^k Luke xi. 13.

midst of what seems pleasure, there is found many a sorrowing heart; and under circumstances of the greatest distress, how the spirit of a man may be sustained. Still it is undoubtedly true, and it is enough for our present purpose, that the general tendency of religious habits is to increase happiness.

The first particular, in which we may instance this effect, is in bodily health. Habits of sobriety, of temperance, of regularity, the absence of those violent passions, which wear out the animal frame, and of those too great anxieties about worldly cares, which prey upon the mind, all these have a direct tendency to produce and continue that most inestimable of earthly blessings, good health. The disorders, to which we are subject, from causes over which we have no control, are few in number, compared with those which indolence, luxury, intemperance, and excess of every kind, have introduced. In as far, then, as practical religion is opposed to all these evil habits, so far is it immediately conducive to health.

A second benefit, analogous to this, is the internal peace of mind, which is the reward of a life well spent. As there is no torture so great as that of an accusing conscience, so is there no satisfaction so perfect as that of a conscience void of offence. The holy joy

which results from this source, is a gratification of no ordinary kind. It is that religious joy, which has been eloquently characterized as “a masculine and a severe thing: the recreation of the judgment, the jubilee of reason, the result of a real good suitably applied; commencing upon the solidities of truth, and the substance of fruition: not perhaps displaying itself in voice, but filling the soul, as the presence of God pervades the universe, silently and without noise; refreshing but composed; like the pleasantness of youth tempered with the gravity of age; or the mirth of a festival managed with the silence of contemplation.”¹

Another reward, usually attached to a sincere profession of religion, is the esteem of those whose favour is most valuable. The world is not so depraved, but that many can be found, who honour true piety wherever it is seen. Many are the knees, which have not bowed unto Baal. And the approbation of one of these should, in the estimation of a reasonable man, outweigh the scoffs of many a thoughtless tongue.

2. But far be it from any one to represent the rewards, which this perishable world offers, as the only rewards, which God in his infinite

¹ See South's Sermon on Gen. i. 27. Vol. I. p. 22. folio edition.

mercy has in store for those who truly serve him. These rewards are fading and uncertain as the world itself. They may perhaps be felt but in a small degree, or for a short time, or be totally withheld. Still, even if these blessings are removed, religion can convert our very trials to our good. Sickness and pain will, at some period, be the portion of every man. But if religion will not avert sickness, it will teach us to employ it aright; it will bring us to acknowledge with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."^m

Conscience will not always speak peace. There is none on earth who liveth and sinneth not. The mind will sometimes write bitter things against every man, and make him to possess the iniquities of his youth.ⁿ But this godly sorrow will, by the grace of God, work repentance unto life not to be repented of: it will lead us to seek for mercy, not for our own merits, but through the mediation of our Saviour, by which alone we can be accepted of God.

The obloquy of the world may be directed even against our best intentioned actions: but if, in consequence of our religion, in the world we do have tribulation, religion will still cheer and support us, for it will enable us to overcome the world.

^m Psalm cxix. 71.

ⁿ Job xiii. 26.

3. But the exceeding great reward, which is reserved for those who through faith inherit the promises, is to be looked for after this world, and all that it contains, shall have passed away. It is a reward which no man can conceive, much less describe. We know not even, with certainty, wherein it shall consist. But it is represented in the most exalted terms which language can express; still accompanied with the assurance that it is inexpressible. The reality, we are certain, will not be inferior to the imperfect figures under which it is represented. It is described as the fulness of joy in the presence of God, and pleasures for evermore at his right hand:^o as a state, in which God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.^p And when we have strained our faculties, to obtain some faint conception of the full meaning of these and similar expressions, we are at once humbled and consoled with the assurance, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him.”^q

^o Psalm xvi. 11.

^p Rev. xxi. 4.

^q 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Such then being the warnings, which we receive from the Scriptures, and such the rewards promised to our obedience, let us beware that we refuse not him that speaketh. For the regulation of our lives is the punishment declared, and the recompence proposed: and it now rests with ourselves, while our day of grace remains, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, assured that God will by his Spirit work in us effectually both to will and to do, if we neglect not the means, which his grace affords.

Although our future happiness is made to depend upon something more than we can do for ourselves, it is most requisite that we use all caution not to deceive ourselves upon a point so important; not to desist from our efforts, as if nothing were to be done by us: not to relax our exertions as if we were already perfect. In the ordinary state of a Christian's life, he must not expect any sudden, sensible indications of the operations of the Holy Spirit. It acts silently, secretly, invisibly, though effectually. There are means of grace by which it may be expected to be conveyed, such, for instance, as constant prayer, and the faithful use of the Sacraments ordained by Christ himself. If we use means like these worthily; the grace of God will not be withheld. But, like all

other hidden powers, the power of the Spirit upon the soul of man must be estimated by its effect. By its fruits it is known. And the fruits of the Spirit are manifest, which are these.^r “Love;” the love of God and man: a desire to promote the general happiness of those around us: “Joy,” a quiet, unobtrusive, cheerful disposition, not too much elated with the good things of this life: not unduly depressed with their loss. “Peace;” that peace, inwardly and deeply seated, which the world can neither give nor take away: “Long-suffering;” a temper not easily provoked to anger; ready to forgive others, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us; “gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law:” they are the genuine proofs, where they are found, that the Scriptures of God have been effectually addressed to the fears and to the hopes of man: that the Holy Spirit has warned and enlightened his mind; and still actuates, guides and sanctifies: and they afford a reasonable expectation, that he will in the end receive the exceeding great reward which is promised to the faithful.

^r Gal. v. 22.



PART III.

LECTURE X.

SECRET FAULTS.

PSALM XIX. 12.

*Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou
me from secret faults.*

WHEN we compare the purity and perfection of the rule of life laid down in Scripture, with the imperfect obedience, which every one must be conscious he has paid, one of the most obvious reflexions which we are led to make is, that there must be many secret faults lurking within us, which the eye of God can discover, although the eye of man cannot. When we further consider, that man is a responsible agent, responsible for his obedience to the divine law; which he can hope to render only by means of the grace of God preventing and

assisting him—that, after all the care which he may bestow to improve the means of salvation, he must still remain a humble suppliant for pardon—one of the most earnest prayers, which we shall be induced to prefer, must be a petition for that inestimable grace and mercy, to enable us to understand our errors, and to cleanse us from secret faults.

This is the train of thought, which the mind of David pursues in the nineteenth Psalm. The contemplation of the wonderful works of nature elevates his thoughts to nature's God. The consideration of the wonderful revelation of God's word leads him to expatiate, as we have seen, upon its perfection, its certainty, its equity, its purity, its integrity, its truth. He acknowledges that the statutes and judgments of the Lord are more to be desired than gold: sweeter than honey: that by them mankind is warned: and that in keeping of them there is great reward. Yet, after all these assertions, which express feelings of great thankfulness for the benefit of Divine revelation, he experiences that sinking of the heart, produced by comparing precept with practice; the commands of God, with the obedience of man: and he adds, in the words of humility and piety, "who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Human nature is not grown less liable to err, since the days of David : and his complaint must always find a responsive feeling in every heart, that soberly reflects upon its eternal interest. Conscious, then, that it is an enquiry which deeply concerns us all, whether high, or low ; rich, or poor ; learned, or unlearned ; let us proceed to reflect, with all seriousness, upon the important doctrine, that we have all secret faults. Let us consider how we may discover some of them ; and the remedy, which the merciful dispensation of the Gospel has provided against their influence.

I. 1. The first method, by which we may obtain a knowledge that we have secret faults, is to compare the nature of God with the nature of fallen man.

The conceptions of God, which the Scriptures give us, are those of purity itself. “Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not ; yea the stars are not pure in his sight ; how much less man that is a worm, and the Son of man which is a worm.”^a “He is of purer eyes than to behold evil.”^b Yet the Almighty so pure, so holy, is the Being before whom we stand, and by whom our conduct is to be weighed. “His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.”^c

^a Job xxv. 5.

^b Hab. i. 13.

^c Psalm xi. 4.

Now it needs no laboured argument to prove, that before the eye of a pure, perfect, all-seeing God, all men must shrink with a consciousness of deep infirmity. We have not now to learn how sin first entered into the world; nor need we to be reminded how deadly a change has passed upon our nature. If we refer to the Scriptures, we learn that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing.^d David will declare, respecting mankind in general, "there is none that doeth good, no not one:"^e and St. Paul, that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."^f If we refer to experience, we shall receive the same instruction. We shall perceive the laws of all nations continually, but ineffectually, endeavouring to restrain the propensity to sin. We shall discover all forms of religious worship to have a reference, more or less direct, to the offering of some expiatory sacrifice, to take away guilt. We shall observe superstition urging mankind to the most irksome labours, in order to appease the Divine wrath, which they were so conscious they merited. Tedious pilgrimages, frequent ablutions, voluntary exposure to hunger, and thirst, and cold, and nakedness, and weariness; bodily tortures of the most excruciating kind,

^d Rom. vii. 18.^e Psalm xiv. 5. Rom. iii. 10.^f Rom. v. 12.

all bear witness to the existence of moral guilt. The testimony of individuals leads to the same result. The very best of mankind readily confess and lament their own sins: and those who have been blessed with the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God express themselves in terms of the greatest humiliation. St. Paul declares himself to be encompassed with a body of death from which he struggles with ineffectual efforts to be delivered.⁵ The patriarchs, and prophets, the apostles, and followers of Christ, all utter the same complaints. The personal experience of all men is equally decisive. All have, at some times, serious apprehensions concerning their future state; some hidden consciousness that their whole duty is not performed as it ought to be. Conscience will sometimes hold up its faithful mirror before the mental eye, and discover numerous imperfections and vices. And every man, even when he attempts to do what he knows to be his duty, often finds a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity. The good he would he does not, the evil he would not that he does.

Now if this contrast between the purity of God, who requires our obedience, and the

⁵ Rom. vii. 24.

imperfection of our nature, even in our own sight, be thus striking, the conclusion is irresistible, that, where we see much that is done amiss, God must see more: that if there are many offences which we can understand, there must be many more which to us are secret, and from which we may reasonably pray to be cleansed.

2. If, however, there be many faults which are necessarily hidden from our view, by the weakness of our minds, there are others which remain concealed by our own wilful neglect.

Every one is proverbially blind to his own errors. They escape his notice, not because he would not acknowledge them to be culpable in others, but because he either contrives to avoid seeing them at all, or disguises them to his own conscience under specious names. If avarice be his vice, he styles it prudence; if prodigality, he considers it the overflowing of a liberal heart. Anger and revenge are gratified under the plea of a spirited vindication of his rights: licentiousness is denominated a venial error of youth; obstinacy, firmness; and arrogance, proper pride. As long as the faults of a man are thus hidden from him, they are secret faults: but they are faults which he may and ought to know, and to amend: and every one who has learned that “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately

wicked,"^h would do well to pray that it may be cleansed from them.

3. There is still another mode, in which we may have secret faults; and a mode even more dangerous than the preceding; because it proceeds from a hardihood in continued sin. It is by no means uncommon for a man to advance so far in a guilty course, that he ceases to reflect at all upon his actions. On first entering upon a vicious life, remorse and hesitation are usually felt. The mind unused to gross violations of duty proceeds with timorousness: and the sinner still flatters himself with the delusive hope of returning, at no distant period, into the path of duty, which he has deserted. Soon, however, one guilty compliance succeeds to another: that unchecked produces still more; until the progress of corruption is complete: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Conscience, long heard in vain ceases to utter her warning voice; and the calm of insensibility is mistaken for the tranquillity of a self approving mind.

As long as the sinner continues in this melancholy state, all his sins to him are secret faults. Clear as the noon-day to the rest of the world, open in all their deformity before the eye of God, they still escape his own observation.

^h Jer. xvii. 9.

From such a degree of mental blindness it is surely above all things desirable to be delivered : and knowing that these things are sometimes so, we must join in the prayer of David, “ who can understand his errors ? cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

II. Having thus seen some of the causes which render many of our faults secret, and the danger with which they are especially invested, as long as they are concealed, let us turn our attention to some of the means, by which we may, with the divine blessing, be enabled to discover them.

1. The first method is by sincere self examination, according to the rule of life laid down in the Scriptures. As long as men measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves,ⁱ they will make no progress in true wisdom. Self love will always tend to withdraw our attention from those parts of our conduct, which are reprehensible ; and entertain us with the more pleasing prospect of our imagined virtues. And in making a comparison, between the relative merits of ourselves and others, we are still more liable to be deceived. That man must be bad indeed, who cannot discover something in his own character, which his

ⁱ 2 Cor. x. 12.

partiality may convert into a mark of superiority over his neighbour. “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,”^k is an address, conceived in the heart, if not uttered by the lips, of many, who have made even less progress in a religious life than the Pharisee in the parable. But let a man once peruse his Bible with an earnest desire to profit by its instructions; let him study its history, with a full determination to take counsel by its warnings; let him reflect upon its holy precepts, and its pure doctrines; let him compare together all the evidences of its truth; let him contemplate the noble, but awful views, which it discloses, concerning the dealings of God, and the weakness of fallen man; let him ponder its declarations concerning the deceitfulness, and universal extent of sin; and the astonishing means which have been devised for our redemption: let him regard mankind in their present state of probation, and in their future state of ultimate retribution: and then let him apply all these particulars individually to his own case: let him examine, step by step, the degree of his proficiency in all his relative duties; the influence which his faith exercises upon his life; and he will have found an unerring standard,

^k Luke xviii. 11.

by which he may not only be made to understand his errors, but be cleansed from many of his secret faults.

The exercise of self examination must always, at the first, be deeply humiliating. Let a man's life be, in his own estimation, as spotless as it may, a close investigation will not fail to discover numerous offences against the declared will of God, which before lay concealed from view. It will often expose sins of a still deeper die. It will perhaps disclose some vice seated in the inmost recesses of the heart, some easily besetting sin, which the offender would rather palliate, than oppose. Secret sins of this nature are dangerous indeed. And we have all great need to pray, with all the earnestness which our salvation demands, that the grace of God may be sent down to inspire and bless our imperfect efforts; to enable us to understand our errors, and to overcome them; to create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us.

2. Another method, by which some of our secret faults may be made known to us, is by attending to the sincere advice of our real friends. There is no effort of friendship so truly valuable as that which discloses to us errors, which our own partiality would hide from our notice: and unhappily there is none,

which our pride receives with so much aversion. The pride, however, which is thus exerted, is that which goeth before destruction. And a man who is truly desirous to understand his errors, will receive intimations of this nature even with gratitude: if ill-founded, that he may avoid the fault submitted to his notice; if well founded, that he may repent and amend. Even the false accusations of calumny may sometimes be made conducive to the same good purpose. He who says much which is false, may say something which is true. The keen eye of an enemy may detect a flaw, which the partial glance of friendship might everlook, or our own blindness hide.

Still, after all the care which our vigilance can bestow, we cannot understand our errors. Much of imperfection, much of error, much of infirmity, many an unnoticed act, and word and thought will exist; many faults, which however venial in the sight of man, are nevertheless offensive to a God of perfect purity.

III. It remains, then, that we briefly consider the remedy, which, by the merciful dispensations of our Almighty Father, is provided against the natural consequences of this guilt. The means, by which we may hope to be cleansed from our secret faults, are intimated in the prayer of David. "Cleanse thou me

from secret faults." That which is impossible with man is possible with God. Although man cannot understand his own errors, the Almighty possesses both the power and the will to cleanse the sinner from his secret faults.

Upon a subject of this nature, revelation is the only sure source, whence we can obtain any satisfactory information. Reason might shew us, how agreeable to our notions of the Deity is the attribute of mercy; and might raise some faint hopes that he, who, in the material world, has given us all things richly to enjoy, would not, in his moral government, be extreme to mark what is done amiss. But then would recur the remembrance of the Divine justice, of that purity and holiness, which is so opposed to all sin: and the least alarming conclusion, at which man could arrive, would be a timid hope, that his secret sins might not be visited upon him in judgment. But Revelation leaves us not comfortless. It informs us that God, out of his infinite mercy, has provided for fallen and sinful man a remedy, which by his unassisted powers he could neither have discovered nor attained. It enables us to pray, with confidence that the prayer of faith will be heard and answered, that we may be cleansed from our secret faults.

The ultimate cause, to which we are in-

debted for this inestimable benefit, is the mercy of God, who has revealed to us the means, through which it has pleased him to exercise his grace. The more immediate cause is that sacrifice, which has been made upon the cross by Jesus Christ, who “once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”¹ The whole of the revelation, which has been successively made to the world, displays with different degrees of clearness, this one great event. For this cause it was that, as soon as the first parents of the human race had sinned, and by sin brought death into the world, the merciful promise was made of that seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent’s head. For this cause it was, that the same promise was continued from age to age in an unbroken chain of prophecies and types: that the written word of God was preserved, a living witness and register of all the events, which his Providence had brought about, for the advancement of his wonderful determination. For this cause it was, that the Son of God himself came into the world, preceded by his messenger who should make straight his path before him: grew up in wisdom and in stature, in subjection to his earthly parents; went about doing good; speaking as

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

never man spake; and doing works such as never man did: that he submitted himself to the will of his cruel enemies, and gave up his life for the sins of all mankind. For this cause it was that he rose from the dead, and ascended up to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; and there for ever liveth to make intercession for us.


Here, then, is the remedy for all our secret faults; the wonderful satisfaction, which has been made by infinite mercy, to propitiate infinite justice. Those, who come unto God in the name, and through the mediation, of Christ, he will in no wise cast out. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."^m As a God of purity and justice, the Almighty has set our misdeeds before him, and our secret sins in the light of his countenance." As a God of mercy, he "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."^o

All that it is in the power of man to do, we are commanded to do, as a proof of the sincerity of our obedience: for the grace of God

^m 1 Tim. i. 15.ⁿ Psalm xc. 8.^o 2 Cor. v. 18.

is not promised except to those who sincerely strive to work out their own salvation. But when all our own efforts would avail us nothing, we are taught to look with faith to that sacrifice, which has been offered for us; to him who was made sin for us, although himself without sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.^p Seeing then that these things are so, with what care should we watch the most secret motions of our hearts; with what diligence should we use the means appointed for our salvation; and with what earnestness should we join in the pious prayer of David, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

^p 2 Cor. v. 21.



LECTURE XI.

PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.



PSALM XIX. 13.

*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ;
let them not have dominion over me : then shall
I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the
great transgression.*

ALTHOUGH all sin is in itself hateful to God, yet reason and revelation agree in representing it as susceptible of different degrees. There may be sins of ignorance, and other secret faults, from which, as we have lately seen, David prays to be delivered: or there may be sins of surprise, such as sudden temptation produces, followed by immediate humiliation and repentance. With what degree of mercy it may please our Almighty Father to visit these errors of human infirmity, how extreme he may be in marking all that is done amiss, must remain to be shewn at the great day

of account. And we have all reason to pray, that we may obtain an individual interest in that holy dispensation, by which alone we shall then be able to stand.

But there exist other sins of a deeper dye, and deadlier nature. Sins aggravated by every circumstance of long continuance, and wilful indulgence; which have grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength: which have gone on from year to year, unchecked by reason, uninfluenced by the hopes of religion, undaunted by her terrors: sins so heinous, that whoever is unstained by them is represented as comparatively innocent — a transgression so flagrant, as to be distinguished by the peculiar epithet of great. To these sins our attention is directed by David's earnest prayer, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Sins of this kind are mentioned in Scripture in terms which sufficiently declare their flagrant nature. A person, who persists in presumptuous sin, is said to harden his heart;^a to harden his face;^b to harden himself against

^a Deut. xv. 7. 1 Sam. vi. 6. Mark vi. 52.

^b Prov. xxi. 29.

God;^c to resist the Holy Ghost;^d to grieve, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace.^c And David, who prays only to be cleansed from secret faults, beseeches the Almighty to restrain him altogether, to keep him back, from presumptuous sins.

I. The distinction, between a sin of presumption and any other, consists not so much in the offence itself, as in the circumstances, under which it is committed. Whatever the sin be, if the offender be conscious, at the time of committing it, that the action is forbidden, that sin is a presumptuous sin.

Under this description, then, will be included all those numerous sins, which are committed against sufficient warning.

1. There are some offences, which the common consent of all mankind indelibly marks as presumptuous sins. Whoever commits such crimes as murder, theft, adultery, must be conscious, at the time he commits the act, that he is violating laws, which have been established almost in every country and in every age, for the security of life, property, and happiness. He, to whom the Scriptures of God have been revealed, knows also, that against crimes of this nature, the especial

^c Job ix. 4.

^d Acts vii. 51.

^c Eph. iv. 30. Heb. x. 29.

wrath of the Almighty is most explicitly denounced. Whoever, therefore, after these warnings is led into such transgressions, assuredly incurs all the guilt attached to a presumptuous sin.

2. There are many other sins, of which human laws can take no cognizance, which yet we know to be open to the eye of Him with whom we have to do. There are few, who are not sometimes led to think with anxiety upon their conduct, by hearing, or reading, or meditating upon the word of God. The sin of each individual, with all its seducing train of causes, and all its fearful consequences, is found described in the sacred volume so clearly, so pointedly, that the most thoughtless cannot fail to recognize his own portrait. For some time, at least, the sinner must feel that the very indulgence, which he encourages, is one of those, against which the displeasure of God is denounced; that the path, which he treads, is one of those marked out in the great chart, as leading surely to destruction. During the time that these impressions are made, he feels alarm for his own state. He resolves, perhaps, to repent and to amend. But these sensations continue but for a while. The current of his evil life is for an instant checked, but it is not rolled backward

towards its source. After a few hasty resolutions, and a few feelings of regret, he returns to his former habits and pursuits; as frivolous, as thoughtless, as absorbed in the passions and vices of his ordinary life, as if he had never heard the word, which is able to save his soul. Now, what are the terms in which Scripture addresses itself to men like these? “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”^f Whenever a man, after being thus warned, returns into the evil way, which he had resolved to forsake, he at once is guilty of presumptuous sin; and is obnoxious to the severest punishment denounced against it. God has spoken, and still speaks by his word. He has declared frequently what his will is, and his long-suffering towards mankind, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”^g But if all this long-suffering and mercy be despised, the same infallible word declares the consequence: “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and

^f James i. 22, 24.

^g 2 Pet. iii. 9.

no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh.”^h May Almighty God, of his great mercy, keep us all back from presumptuous sins of such malignity as this.

3. There is still a degree of presumptuous sin, in which men are apt to deceive themselves with the fallacious hope of impunity, by ascribing to ignorance, what an impartial judge must trace to culpable inattention. Many there are who, living in a Christian land, and having been baptized in the Christian faith, have yet neglected to employ such opportunities, as they possess, of studying the Holy Scriptures, which were written for our learning. And these men, when they fail in the performance of duties, which they ought to have known, and practised, imagine that their voluntary ignorance is at once a reason and an excuse for the omission. Now, ignorance such as this can, evidently, form no ground of excuse. Without presuming to say how far the divine mercy, through the atonement of Christ, may be extended to those, to whom the terms of their acceptance have never been revealed, it is evident, that a voluntary ignorance, which would never be allowed as a

^h Prov. i. 24, 25.

plea for the infringement of human laws, can form no effectual excuse for a violation of a divine law. And it will make little difference, whether the guilt of presumption be attached immediately to the offence itself, or to the ignorance, in consequence of which the offence is committed.

4. Again, every sin is a presumptuous sin, against which conscience has raised its warning voice in vain.

At some period of their lives, all sinners must have experienced compunction. And whatever be the cause of that inward feeling—whether it be the immediate sense of right and wrong implanted in us, the involuntary reflection of the mind upon what passes within itself, or the judgment, which we form, of what is known to be our duty compared with the manner in which we perform it—that feeling itself, if unheeded, impresses upon the action the mark of presumptuous sin. Whoever sins against such conviction, sins with his eyes open. His own heart condemns him, and he must know that God is greater than his heart and knoweth every thing.

5. Another infallible proof of the presumptuous nature of any sin is, when the offender, at the time of committing the act, comforts himself with the hope of future re-

penitance. So deceitful is the heart, that numerous offences are committed under this delusive expectation. We need not now dwell upon the fallacious nature of such a reliance. It is sufficient to observe, that the consciousness of guilt, which it presupposes, sufficiently proves the presumptuous nature of the offence. Even when a long continuance in a vicious course has so hardened the sinner, that conscience at the moment is silent; although the individual offence so committed may partake of the nature of a secret fault, yet the mind, before it reaches this degree of depravity, must have been previously stained with presumptuous guilt.

II. The consideration of some of the kinds of presumptuous sins naturally leads us to meditate upon their fearful consequences.

1. The first consequence is intimated by David himself, the state of subjection in which the sinner is held. For his prayer is, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me."

The tendency of all sin, especially when long continued, is to engross the mind. Timorousness, hesitation, reluctance, a secret dread of offending, accompany the first steps of the offender's wicked course. An act is proposed by his associates, or suggested by his own heart, which his better judgment disapproves: But

he has not strength or resolution enough to resist. Many a secret misgiving, much remorse, much upbraiding of an accusing conscience, follow this compliance; and follow it in vain. The second temptation finds the heart already prepared for its reception, and predisposed to obey its influence. The judgment is enlisted on the side of passion, and endeavours to palliate, if not to excuse, the guilt. It discovers a reason why an act sinful in itself, and guilty in any other person, becomes so modified in his own circumstances, as to lose much of its atrocity. It suggests, perhaps, that the compliance required is in itself trifling: and that it will be easy to stop in the evil course. "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further," are the words, with which it expects to control the tempestuous ocean of unruly passion. But experience soon shews how vain are his hopes. His sin, from having been unpremeditated and casual, becomes presumptuous, and degenerates into a habit. It gains the dominion over him. He acquiesces in this subjection, with the vague hope that circumstances may at a future period render his reformation more easy.

Conscience sometimes interposes still: but her voice is unheard; or, if heard, disregarded. The sacred volume becomes a sealed book; its warnings are uttered, and its promises made in

vain. He, who is thus under the dominion of sin, often goes on in the same course, from year to year, without any permanent, or effectual improvement. Occasionally, perhaps, circumstances alarm him for a time, and call forth some faint resolutions of amendment. But the chains of his adversary are bound around him too firmly to be broken by the feeble efforts of mortal hands. Too frequently his whole life is spent in a vain struggle with his powerful enemy. He may abhor his vices, but he feels unable to escape from their fascination. He may wish to avoid evil; but the evil he would not that he does. He may resolve, and re-resolve: but he too often dies, in the same condition in which he had lived.

There is scarcely a more pitiable object, than a man whose sin has thus gained the dominion over him. Yet look around, and you will see thousands who are thus led captive. Observe the victim of intemperance. Hear him, in the moments of reflection, acknowledging his weakness, with all the bitterness of self reproach: lamenting the waste of health, and character: openly confessing how sinful his course is in the sight of God: and perhaps making the most earnest, and apparently sincere, vows of amendment. Then behold him in the hour of his temptation. The season of his accustomed

indulgence arrives. His passions solicit their usual gratification. The companions of his intemperate delights surround him: he again yields to the temptation: and continues, by adding sin to sin, to treasure up to himself wrath against the day of wrath.

Believe not, that among those, who appear the most thoughtless, there are not many, who feel and deplore the bondage, in which they are restrained. But they have bound themselves to a hard master, who fails not to exact his due; and now compels them to continue in the course, into which they had at first voluntarily entered. This is the natural tendency of all sin. It mingles so insidiously with a man's ordinary pursuits, becomes by degrees so identified with his habits of life, that unless, by the grace of God, he is enabled to cast away its cords from him, he will soon find himself inextricably entangled. In proportion also to the degree of presumption, which characterizes any sin, is its power of enslaving the soul. For he, who so sins, willingly gives himself up to the consequence of that guilt. He offers his allegiance to his great adversary; and may therefore expect that his voluntary obedience should terminate in involuntary servitude.

There is also another mode, in which pre-

sumptuous sin gets dominion over a man, so as to prevent his return to holiness. Even if, by the especial mercy of God, the sinner be made conscious of his danger, and desirous of escaping; he often will have wandered so far from the right course, that his return is only not impossible. Nothing is so difficult as to escape from the dominion of an unholy life. It is hard indeed, without the assistance of the Spirit of grace, to expose our folly and shame to the reproach of the world; to endure the ridicule, and scoffs of former companions, once perhaps esteemed for some qualities really amiable. They, therefore, who rely not upon that Spirit, often dare not undertake the task. They have not courage enough to encounter the perils, which a return into the path of life presents: nor power enough to oppose the irresistible authority, by which their sin, and the consequence of their sin, hold them in subjection.

2. Another fatal consequence, attending a course of presumptuous sin, is the hardness of heart, which a continuance in sin produces. Compunction and remorse are the first indications that a man is brought to a sense of his guilt: and every presumptuous sin has a natural and necessary tendency to weaken this sensibility of the conscience. A change from

sin to godliness is represented in Scripture as one of the most difficult things in the world. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin," says Jeremiah, "or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."¹ Besides, as there are many, who feel and lament how powerful is the dominion, which their sins have obtained over them, so are there others, who by long continuance have acquired a still more dangerous affection for their evil courses. However certain they may be, that the end of these things is death, they still fix their principal delight upon perishing pleasures, and licentious enjoyments; until at length the mind becomes careless, and the conscience seared. In this extremity, their sin may indeed be said to have dominion over them. It destroys not only the power, but the very wish of amendment.

3. Still another consequence of continuing in presumptuous sin, is found in the judgments with which, even in this world, guilt is often visited.

We live not now, it is true, under a dispensation, in which an immediate, open act of providence often interposes, to cut short the sinner in the midst of his sin. And we are often ready enough to shut our eyes against

¹ Jer. xiii. 23.

the conviction, that such signal punishment is ever awarded. But from the unerring authority of Scripture we learn, that the judgments of God are sometimes most fearfully poured out upon all sin, and upon presumptuous sins particularly. Now this surely is a consequence of presumptuous sin, which ought to terrify the most audacious. He may flatter himself that, however others be misled, his sins will not get the dominion over him, so as to prevent his return to a holy life; that his heart will not be so hardened, as to preclude his desire to amend. But who will dare to go on in open and presumptuous sin, if he once has the full conviction, that the anger of a just and all-powerful God will pursue his crimes, if not with present punishment, at least with ultimate retribution.

III. It now remains that we consider the means, which, by the divine blessing, may keep us back from presumptuous sins, so that they may not get the dominion over us. The words of David, which have suggested the danger of these sins, also supply an example of the only means, to which sinful man can have recourse. For they contain a *prayer* to the Almighty, that the evil consequences of presumptuous sin may be averted by the especial influence of Divine grace: "Keep back thy

servant also from presumptuous sins: let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

Prayer is ordained to be the medium of communication between weak, offending man, and his heavenly Father. While it exhibits and encourages a faithful reliance upon those promises, which God has revealed, we are assured that it is made the means of conveying into the mind the all-powerful influence of the Spirit of God, to strengthen our weakness, to dispel our fears, to raise us when we fall, and finally to beat down Satan under our feet. When, however, we have done all, we must expect to find, even in our own judgment, much which is still done amiss. And if we were obliged to rely upon our own merits, for final acceptance at the hands of a pure and holy God, trembling indeed would be the hope, and feeble the expectations, and melancholy the forebodings of every soul of man. But we have not, I trust, so learned to regard the promises of God through the mediation of his Son. We have read, and are sure, that by the wonderful dispensation of the Gospel, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:” that he “who knew no sin was made sin for

us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”^k

In proportion to the misery of those, who are under the dominion of presumptuous sin, is the blessedness of those, who are, by the especial grace of God, kept back from them, and are consequently said to be “upright, and innocent from the great transgression.”

True it is, that in many things we offend all: and no man can be sufficiently humble before God, when he reflects upon his manifold transgressions. But yet there is no cause, which calls for a more lively expression of gratitude, than preservation from sin. It is with no Pharisaical reliance upon our own imperfect services, it is with no unseemly boastings of our own qualifications, that we lift up the voice of thanksgiving, together with that of prayer, if we have been enabled to avoid some of the snares, which beset our path, and to walk in any respect worthy of the vocation with which we are called. We know that in the sight of our heavenly Father we are all deeply guilty. We look for final acceptance, not upon the plea of our obedience, but in firm reliance upon the mercy of God, through the atonement once offered for sin. But still we pray and hope for the influence of Divine

^k 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.

grace, to keep us back from presumptuous sins, that they gain not dominion over us: that so we may be “upright and innocent from the great transgression.”



LECTURE XII.

PURITY OF WORDS AND THOUGHTS.

PSALM XIX. 14.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

AFTER David has been reflecting upon the perfection of God's law, and the imperfection of man's obedience; and has prayed to be defended by the Spirit of grace from secret faults, and from presumptuous sins; he concludes this noble Psalm, with a prayer for purity, in the words of his mouth, and in the meditation of his heart. Both these qualifications are indispensable to the formation of the religious character; and the degree of perfection, in which they are possessed, peculiarly distinguishes the advancement which different persons have made in the Christian course.

I. Purity of words is one of the most obvious marks, by which the inward influence of religion upon the mind is denoted. And the absence of it, as indicated by profaneness in any mode, is as certain a token of depravity. But there exist gradations in vice, as well as in virtue: and in order that the words of our mouth may be rendered acceptable, we will consider some of the most ordinary methods, in which this duty is violated.

1. The first and most offensive is by open profaneness and blasphemy. It is grievous that, in a Christian land, they who watch for the souls of others, as they that must give account,^a should so frequently be called to exhort and persuade men against a vice such as this. But while, in passing through our streets, we are shocked at expressions of the most revolting nature, even from the mouths of those, who are young in years, though old in guilt, we must, at the hazard of being tedious, or of repeating sentiments which are common, because important, set before such sinners the enormity of their guilt.

Open profaneness is a vice which excites the greatest abhorrence in every reflecting mind, whether it be thoroughly imbued with true piety or not. There may be vices more extensively

^a Heb. xiii. 17.

injurious to society, and more immediately prejudicious to individuals, than this: but there is none which marks greater depravity of mind, and none which men commit with so little even of the appearance of reason. Some of the moral commandments of God are directed against intemperance of every kind: and when a man breaks through them, he endeavours to palliate his guilt, by urging the force of his passions, or the peculiar temperament of his constitution. But to impiety and blasphemy no man ever pretended that he was constitutionally prone. Some of the commandments of God are directed against unlawful gain. And when a man breaks through these, he generally represents to himself, either the imperious necessity of some immediate want, or the expectation of some great contingent advantage. But what advantage can any one expect from defying that God, from whom alone all blessings proceed?

Notwithstanding, however, the unreasonable-ness of this heinous vice, we need but little experience to find how many there are who practise it. That this is done without any peculiar temptation we have already seen. Consider, besides, the extreme evil which it produces. First, it is the direct breach of a command of God himself: "Thou shalt not

take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”^b In the next place, it encourages, beyond all other vices, an habitual disregard for holy things. He, who blasphemes his Maker, will have little inclination to obey his commands. He, who is constantly imprecating curses upon others and upon himself, must soon cease to regard the dreadful punishment, to which allusion is so lightly made, as it really deserves to be regarded, and as he will, if he repent not, hereafter be compelled to regard it. Besides, blasphemy is a contagious vice. The ear of the young is, at first, shocked with the irreverent manner, in which the attributes of God are mentioned. But familiarized by degrees, and led to consider this most abhorrent practice as a mark of superiority, they are but too frequently seduced to follow an example, from which they originally recoiled with disgust.

As it is much easier to contract an evil habit, than to shake it off, they who are guilty of this sin, although they can find little excuse for first acquiring it, sometimes attempt to palliate their continuance in it, by urging their inability to escape from its bondage. They will say, that the expressions, which they employ, are become so familiar as to be used

^b Exod. xx. 7.

without any evil intention, and frequently without consciousness: and that no caution can prevent an involuntary offence. Now if this excuse were true, what a degree of depravity would it argue. But the excuse is not true. Place the blasphemer in the presence of those whom he respects and fears, and his tongue ceases to utter impieties against the most High. Here, then, is a practical proof that it is possible, at least, to keep the door of his lips. And if he will not exercise the same forbearance at all times, it is because he does not, or will not, remember, that there is One ever present, infinitely superior to every human power, who hears every idle, much more every impure word; and what he hears, records; and what he records, will judge.

But it is needless, in this place, to dwell longer upon this flagrant vice. No one here present will hesitate to acknowledge, that words of blasphemy are not the words which can ever be acceptable in the sight of that pure God, who is our strength and our redeemer.

2. Another mode, in which our words are turned to our own hurt, is by treating the Holy Scriptures, and any thing belonging to religion, with levity or irreverence. Even those, who believe in the Scriptures, are sometimes found to commit this sin. And ridicule has long been

the weapon, which the enemies of revelation have wielded, as the most effectual to promote their unhallowed designs. But whether it be the deceitful friend, or the open enemy, that offers this dishonour to the word of truth, their conduct is not only in the highest degree impious, but most irrational.

Whatever men may choose to say of the Scriptures, and whatever they may wish to believe, the subjects treated of in the sacred volume are so exceedingly important in their consequences, that they deserve and require, at all events, to be treated with seriousness. A book is put into the hands of man, purporting to be a revelation from his Maker; professing to communicate the will of God to mankind; and to disclose eternal life, and eternal death; together with the means, by which the one may be obtained, and the other avoided. It is a book, which has been received as authentic by far the greater part of those, to whom it has fairly been proposed, by almost all the most learned, by all the most virtuous. The issues, which depend upon its truth, are the most immediately interesting to every individual; and of the most awful kind. It speaks of man as a fallen creature, liable to the wrath of an omnipotent God. It speaks of the majesty, the eternity, the power, the purity of a Being, "dwelling in the light

which no man may approach unto: whom no man hath seen nor can see.”^c It discloses some few but most dreadful particulars of those “angels, which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation,” and are “reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.”^d It speaks of the Son of God leaving the glories of heaven, and putting on the form of man, and enduring a life of suffering, and a death of ignominy, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It speaks of the terrors of judgment to come: and of the fate of endless ages, to be passed in bliss unutterable, or in misery inconceivable, according to that judgment.

Now, this I maintain, that, setting aside all the evidence of our religion’s truth, for a man to treat a book, which has all these *pretensions*, with levity, with ridicule, with contempt, is one of the grossest instances of extreme folly which can be found. After all the scoffs of infidelity, and the foolish insinuations of the thoughtless, the great question will still be left where it was before. Ridicule is not argument. There will still be a heaven, and a hell: a soul to save, or to lose: a short perishable time of probation; an unchangeable eternity. Whether it be

^c 1 Tim. vi. 16.

^d Jude 6.

wise so to think, and so to speak, of a religion, upon which so much *may* depend, judge ye.

But what shall we say of those who, believing and knowing the Bible to be true, and professing to look to it as the only guide and comfort of their lives, sometimes allow themselves to indulge in unholy levity, upon its doctrines, or its history: introduce into their ordinary language disrespectful allusions to its sacred mysteries; or abuse the solemn grandeur of its diction, to give an epigrammatic point to poetry, to enliven familiar conversation, or to adorn a tale? Surely these know not of what spirit they are. “My heart standeth in awe of thy word”^e, says David. And this respectful fear will be exhibited by all who, like David, wish the words of their mouth to be acceptable to God.

3. Still a third instance, in which the words of our mouth are prevented from being acceptable in the sight of God, is when our duty of prayer to him is either totally omitted, or carelessly performed. And this deficiency in our duty is of no uncommon occurrence. Too many, who call themselves Christians, have by degrees allowed the regular observance of family worship and of private prayer to fall into neglect. Forgetting the inestimable benefits which prayer

^e Psalm cxix. 161.

is made the means of procuring—the intimate connection which it is calculated to maintain between the Lord of Heaven and the sinful inhabitants of the earth—the powerful check, which it often gives, even to the most unruly passions—and the comfort, which it sheds upon the hours of affliction, when the world and the things of the world are rejected as utterly worthless—breaking the very commandment of God, “Pray without ceasing,”^f “pray always,”^g “continue instant in prayer”^h—unmoved by the assurances, “by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;”ⁱ “by the mouth, confession is made unto salvation”^k—disregarding the example, which our Saviour Christ himself gave us that we should follow his steps, and the examples of all those holy men, who have been successively raised up to give light to the world—many, who yet consider themselves in the pale of the Christian Church, who look for salvation by no other means, and, whenever they think upon religion at all, think upon it with the reverence it deserves, do yet go on, from day to day, and from year to year, without once bending the knee in private supplication to God; without

^f 1 Thess. v. 17.

^g Eph. vi. 18.

^h Rom. xii. 12. Col. iv. 2.

ⁱ Matth. xii. 37.

^k Rom. x. 10.

once calling around them their family and their household, to worship Him, who alone setteth the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock¹.

Now this surely ought not to be. In the sight of God, the words of that man can never be acceptable, who neglects his commands, sets at nought his counsel and his instruction, and wilfully neglects the principal means of grace, which in his mercy He has vouchsafed to sinners.

Again, the words of our mouth are unacceptable, when our offering of prayer is made with irreverence, or with carelessness. The duty of public worship has always been considered most important, and susceptible of being rendered most advantageous. The solemnity of the place in which we assemble, the force of association, which enters more or less into almost all our actions, and the influence of example, jointly conspire to give a higher tone to our devotions in public than to those of a more private nature. Still it requires but little observation, in every assembly for public worship, to discern many, whose careless demeanour and wandering eye sufficiently indicate the inattention of their minds: and that more especially, when their own duty of prayer and

¹ Psalm cvii. 41.

of hearing the revealed word of God is to be performed. Some perhaps may be seen engaged in frivolous discourse; some whose thoughts are manifestly roving abroad among the world and its pursuits; and some, who even intentionally and habitually slumber away the time, which a sense of decency or of duty has induced them to spend within these sacred walls. I would not now speak of the influence of this evil example on those around them: although that is great and dangerous. But I would ask such persons how they will answer for this negligence—to call it by no severer name—at the great day of general account? They are here, to make the words of their mouth acceptable to their Creator and Redeemer: to offer up the voice of prayer and praise. If they wilfully neglect this duty, if they are less ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools, undoubtedly they are committing a very great and dangerous sin. If this be done through thoughtlessness; a rational being ought surely to be thoughtful in the more immediate presence of God in his courts: if through wilfulness; the most daring ought to tremble, when he knows that God requireth truth in the inward parts, and that he has both an eye to discern, and an arm to avenge, whatever is wilfully done amiss.

That purity of *words*, then, for which David so earnestly prays, is principally violated by open profaneness, by treating the Holy Scriptures with irreverence: and by omitting, or carelessly performing, the duty of prayer.

II. But David further prays that “the meditation of his heart may be acceptable” in the sight of God.

The effect of religion upon the soul of man is marked by the degree of habitual influence, which it obtains over his heart. In order that religion may be really effective in any one, its motives, its hopes and fears, its general precepts, must enter deeply into his customary train of thought; and present themselves to his mind without effort, as soon as any occasion calls them forth. When the time of immediate action, or the trying hour of temptation is come, it is then too late to be acquiring the religious knowledge, which may enable us to encounter the difficulty. Deep and earnest meditation must first have familiarised the mind with the great truths of religion; and enabled it, at one glance, to discern the connection of the several parts, which complete the scheme. Long continued discipline must have trained the Christian soldier, and taught him to draw forth, and effectually employ the polished weapons, supplied by the armoury of

faith. This is the only way in which accurate information is obtained upon any point. Patient thought and gradual investigation are the only sure guides to accurate knowledge. In proportion, then, as religion is of more importance than any thing else in the world, both in its influence upon our conduct in this life, and in its promotion of our eternal interest in the world to come, religious meditation is also necessary above all other. By means of it, a man is made to feel individually interested in the great duties of his religion: and their influence on his mind is rendered permanent and practical. It sustains a kind of perpetual devotion, which actuates and pervades the soul silently, yet irresistibly; teaches it on all occasions, and at all times, to regard the will of God revealed in his Scriptures, as the unerring rule of conduct: and the motives of religion as real, stable, sufficient inducements to persevere in holiness of life. Until the mind has been thus trained, religion has not gained its proper ascendancy over the heart: and until that time, the meditations of our heart cannot be considered acceptable in the sight of God.

David, in conclusion, alludes to the only means, by which we may obtain these qualifications, and the only foundation for our hopes—

the power of God, who is our strength and our Redeemer.

Whoever trusts to his own unassisted endeavours, will assuredly fail in the hour of trial. Whoever trusts that he shall be preternaturally assisted, without using such means as the Divine mercy has given him, has no reason to expect the fulfilment of his hopes. But if, with full reliance upon God's grace, which is sufficient for us, we endeavour earnestly to attain the prize of our high calling, we have reason to hope and believe, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord: that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be acceptable to God, our strength and our Redeemer.

Even conviction of the evidence of religion, and admiration of its precepts, will vary with the degree of holiness, which each individual has been enabled to attain. The heavens, it is true, declare the glory of God: the firmament sheweth his handy work: but they speak a language unintelligible to those, whose minds are still clouded by a vicious life. The word of God is indeed most perfect, converting the soul: most sure, making wise the simple: most right, rejoicing the heart: most pure, enlightening the eyes: most clean, enduring for ever: most true, and righteous altogether: more de-

sirable than earthly treasures: more delightful than mere earthly joys. It warns by its terrors, and allures by its exceeding great rewards—but man may neglect this great salvation, and do despite to the Spirit of grace. Happy is he, who is endued with strength to employ these means to the salvation of his soul: who is made to understand his errors, cleansed from his secret faults, kept back from the dominion of presumptuous sin, whose words and thoughts are so purified, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, as to be acceptable in the sight of the Lord; who is truly his strength and his Redeemer.



PART IV.

LECTURE XIII.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

THE imperfection of language, and the inadequacy of our own ideas, are more than usually felt, whenever our attention is directed towards the attributes of God.

Even the words, which Revelation has adopted to display the divine perfections, are often necessarily figurative; and convey impressions which must be in some measure

indefinite: and our own contemplations are soon lost in the consideration of a Being, so incomparably superior to every thing created. Still these perfections are frequently displayed in the written word of God: and therefore were intended to be meditated upon by his rational creatures, for the enlargement of their mental faculties, as well as for their improvement in holiness. No well regulated mind can ever contemplate a Being of infinite wisdom, and mercy, and power, whose presence fills all space, and whose knowledge embraces the very thoughts of all men, without feelings of deep and sincere humility. With these dispositions let us consider the omnipresence of the Deity, as displayed in the works of the creation, and as revealed in his holy word.

I. We may form some conception of the omnipresence of God, by observing the wide field, in which his power is exerted. Our faculties, it is true, are capable of contemplating only a very small portion of the universe. We soon arrive at a limit, when we direct our attention to objects either greater or less than ourselves, beyond which our senses, even assisted by artificial means, are unable to penetrate. We approach a degree of minuteness, which our minds may indeed conceive capable of further sub-division, but which our sight

or touch would then cease to recognize. We form, on the other hand, the conception of indefinite number, or of unbounded extent; but our observation is conversant with finite objects only: and even our reasoning appears strictly conclusive only while it treats of subjects, which are limited in extent. Yet, even in this comparatively small scale, how wonderful and extensive are the proofs which we find of the continued care of an omnipresent God. We need not now insist merely upon the numerous contrivances for the comfort and subsistence of every species of created beings, nor upon that exquisite nicety, with which the most minute parts of every individual are finished. It is not that these offer no proof of the omnipresence of their great Creator, as indicated by his watchful care over them: but it is a proof, which the perverseness of misguided man may elude, by referring to another attribute of the Deity, his omnipotence. It is certainly conceivable—for it has been imagined—that a Being of infinite power should, at the beginning, make all things both in the heaven, and the earth, so that they should continue for ever in one unvaried course. So that the earth should bring forth grass, and the fruit-tree fruit after its kind; and that cattle and creeping thing should succeed each other in an uninterrupted

series. Thus the Deity would be considered to be infinite indeed in wisdom and in power, but as far removed from any immediate care for the universe which he had created. The mere existence then of great contrivance and great care, in all the different parts of animated creation, might not alone furnish a proof of the omnipresence of the Deity, in the sense for which we contend, although it would afford evidence of his omnipotence and goodness.

Still the existence of the animated creation, as we find it, does, surely, furnish also a proof of the Divine omnipresence. If each species of animals, and of vegetables, had originally been created, so as to possess within itself the means of increase, and to be capable of subsisting independently of the rest, it might be argued, that every separate line had been continued, without the necessity of any subsequent interference of the creator's hand: and it might be, perhaps, no easy matter to shew the fallacy of the argument, and the faultiness of the conclusion.

But when the whole universe, animate and inanimate, is maintained by a continual balance of conflicting forces — when every species of created beings is implicated with every other species, destroying and being destroyed — when the existence of every plant is threatened by

some peculiar tribe of insect, which, in turn, is only kept within proper limits by enemies of its own — when numerous animals live only by the destruction of others, and yet become themselves a prey to some more powerful antagonist — and when, notwithstanding all this, plants, and insects, and animals have continued to exist, from the creation to this day, in all probability undiminished in number, and unimpaired in power — when none has fallen a victim to the undue increase of another, and individuals of every kind have lived in the enjoyment of the faculties, with which the Creator had blessed them, and promoted, in their life and by their death, their own part in the grand scheme of existence — we must surely be constrained to confess, that the same God, who, by his voice, called into life the wonders of creation, still interposes to direct them with his presiding care. And if the Almighty interposes at all, he interposes every where, and always. For it is impossible to conceive that any one part of creation should possess the exclusive privilege of the Divine care. If the complicated plan of organized nature proves the presence of God, its unity of design and execution prove his omnipresence.

It is only when a blessing is removed, that we feel fully sensible of its value: and we may

be enjoying the continual advantages, which we derive from the care of an ever present God, every day of our lives, without knowing the extent of the benefit; or indeed without thinking about it at all. But no one, who does think upon the subject, will say, that the evils, which we might experience, were even the inferior tribes of created beings suffered to increase without a mutual check, are imaginary, or trifling, or few. For the punishment of sin, the balance of animated nature has sometimes been intentionally destroyed. When Israel came into Egypt, and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham, what were the plagues which the Almighty poured out upon Pharaoh and upon his host? Not only did he give them hailstones for rain, and flames of fire in their land; not only did he smite all the first-born in their land, even the chief of all their strength; but he removed those barriers, which himself had created, against the undue increase of the insect tribes; and overwhelmed his enemies with their noisome swarms. “He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies; and lice in all their coasts.”^a “He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number; and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.”

^a Psalm cv. 31, 34.

Upon other occasions, and for other sins, has the locust, one of the most dreadful scourges of the Almighty, been sent upon the earth to destroy it. The whole force even of inspired language is employed, in describing the ravages of the "Northern army." "A nation is come up upon my land," says the prophet Joel, "strong, and without number; whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion."^b "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and of gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: The land is as the garden of Eden before them; and behind them a desolate wilderness. Yea, and nothing shall escape them . . . Before their face the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men: they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another: they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded."^c These words are not the exaggerated representation of poetic fancy: the words of the prophet are

^b Joel i. 6.^c Joel ii. 1—8.

confirmed in the fullest manner by the history of ages, and the researches of science. Now to a plague similar in kind, if not equal in degree, we are all continually liable, from causes, over which we have no control. If the whole world is not overrun with these, or with other creatures, as insignificant individually, and as irresistible when collected, it is because the providence of an omnipresent God retains each species in subservience to its own use, and restricted to its proper bounds. If then, any of the less powerful animals could, by their undue increase, render a fruitful land barren, how desolate might the face of nature be rendered, if the preventive care of the Almighty were for an instant remitted. And since no such general confusion is observed, we may conclude even from observation alone, that the care of God is co-extensive with his works.

How boundless, then, is even this conception of the Divine Essence. Whither can we go from His Spirit; or whither shall we flee from his presence? If we ascend up into heaven, he is there. Even the material heavens, the works of his hands, declare the glory of God: and while their simplicity and magnificence denote his wisdom, what testimony does their continuance bear to his omnipresence.

Men may, indeed, accustom themselves to the contemplation of the regular order of the universe; and calculate the operation of the forces, which act upon the several parts; until they almost persuade themselves that they have unveiled the hidden mysteries of omnipotence. They may discover with sagacity, and investigate with care, a general law; and having denominated it the law of nature, may presume that they have solved the great problem of creation. But this law, as has been already argued,^d supersedes not the necessity of the Divine superintendence. It is but the regular operation of a great cause, originally emanating from the will of God, and depending for its continuance upon his good pleasure. We see every where the marks of contrivance; and we conclude that there must have been a contriver. We see every where the marks of continued care; either by active interference, or by forbearing to disturb what already exists; and we thence conclude, not only that the Almighty is all wise, but that his power is every where present.

II. Such are some of the proofs, in the works of nature, by which we learn the omnipresence of God. But from his own word do we derive the most infallible proof: and

^d Lecture II. IV.

from that alone do we obtain all our knowledge of his moral omnipresence. We there read the words, which God spake, by the mouth of Jeremiah his prophet: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?—Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do I not fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."^e We there read also these words of the Almighty, "though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them: though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them."^f "He is not far from every one of us," says St. Paul, "for in him we live and move and have our being."^g "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit," says David in a strain of unparalleled sublimity; "or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

^e Jer. xxiii. 23, 24.

^f Amos ix. 2.

^g Acts xvii. 27, 28.

even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

If, however, we should have collected all that can be deduced from observation, and from reason, and studied all that is revealed for our learning, how imperfect would still be the estimate, which we could form, of a God present every where and always: entirely present in every place, without removal from any other: actively interfering in all the works of nature, without distraction. That these things are so, we know: but we presume not to ask, “how can these things be.” We dare not in our ignorance suppose, with some bold men, because man, and his world, and his pursuits, form so minute a part in the universe, that therefore he may be overlooked by the Creator of all things. To entertain such a supposition, would be to limit the incomprehensible God within the bounds of our minute comprehension. It is not that we arrogantly attribute to ourselves an importance in the realms of space, to which we have no claim. We see that no object is removed, by its minuteness, from the care of the Almighty: and we read in the word of God that “his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.”^h Therefore we acquiesce in the degree of know-

^h Psalm xi. 4.

ledge which we have; and after contemplating the heavens, the moon and the stars which he has ordained, we exclaim with humility, “What is man that thou visitest him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him?”ⁱ but we believe that man *is* visited by the Creator of the world, and that the Son of man *is* regarded.

This, however, is more than a mere acquiescence in the belief of an undoubted fact. If it be an immense conclusion that there is a God, it is a no less interesting conclusion that God exists in all places, and at all times: that he is every where present, in his eternal and all pervading Spirit; that he compasseth our path, and our lying down; and is acquainted with all our ways.

Let us, then, consider some of the practical benefits, which we may and ought to derive from the continued sense of God’s presence.

1. If we really feel that a Being, almighty in power, and of infinite purity, and of unerring justice, is for ever with us; a Being to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, how careful should we be to set him always before us.

The presence of the meanest of human beings would be some check, in the most inconsiderate,

ⁱ Psalm viii. 4.

against the commission of many a sin. If, at the moment in which any one were about to commit an evil action, with what thoughtlessness or hardihood he might, an angel of light should suddenly come down from above, armed with a commission of immediate vengeance upon the offender, how would the stoutest heart be seen to tremble, and the firmest knee to bend. No man would dare, in the presence of the celestial messenger, openly to persist in his wickedness, and call down punishment upon himself. How much greater, then, should be the dread arising from the presence of the eternal God himself, who seeth not after the seeing of our eyes, nor heareth after the hearing of our ears, but judgeth with unbiassed and righteous judgment; and what he now condemns, will hereafter assuredly punish.

If we believe God to be omnipresent, we must believe him to be omniscient. The murderer may rise with the light, to kill the poor and needy, and in the night as a thief;^k the eye also of the adulterer may wait for the twilight, saying No eye shall see me, and disguise his face. But before the all-seeing God, the night is as clear as the day: yea the darkness is no darkness unto him: the darkness and light

^k Job xxiv. 14, 15.

to him are both alike. All the workers of ungodliness may flatter themselves in their own sight: but they will in vain attempt to escape the notice of their God. "Hell," says the pious Job, "is naked before Him: and destruction hath no covering."¹ "Hell and destruction are before the Lord," says Solomon, "much more then, the hearts of the children of men."^m

In a world constituted like the present, we are all constantly liable to fall into temptation. And when we are tempted, whether in society or in solitude, there is no surer means of resistance to the destroyer, than to possess a well grounded and habitual consciousness of the presence of God. That to every impious deed and thought God is a witness; that he knows and marks those actions, which he will hereafter judge; that he observes the progress of sin and of grace in our hearts, knowing well the horrors of remorse, and the struggles of repentance, and the ardent desire for mercy, which many an afflicted soul feels within itself; and that he is ever assisting our feeble efforts, and strengthening our failing power, is an encouragement to every good work, and a motive to avoid every evil way, the most powerful that reason could devise. If this thought were really as familiar

¹ Job xxvi. 6.

^m Prov. xv. 11.

to our minds as it ought to be, it would hinder the commission of many a careless, and many a presumptuous sin. Men may forget that the eye of the Lord is ever upon them; and consequently may act as if under no restraint. Men may drive away from their attention a truth which, if admitted, must be so irksome, and so terrible to the workers of iniquity. But to sin, with a full conviction that the immediate presence of an all pure God is around us and within us, is a degree of depravity, which few, we may hope, have ever attained.

2. The sense of God's active omnipresence should also teach us to be sincere in all our dealings. The mind of the Almighty understandeth our thoughts "afar off." Before ever they have been moulded within the recesses of our hearts, and stamped as our own by the act of our volition, there are they discerned with clearness, and judged with equity. To attempt then to dissemble in the presence of God is most futile, and most impious. If man deals with man, he may for a time deceive his vigilance, and derive a cursory advantage from the deceit. He may assign for his own conduct other motives, than those which really actuate him; and assume a virtue which he does not possess. He may conceal the pride, or the wantonness,

or the infidelity of his heart; he may clothe hypocrisy in the garb of holiness, and whiten and make fair the outside of a sepulchre, which within is full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. But where is that hypocrite, who would dare to dissemble before the living God? He needeth not that any should testify of man: for he knoweth what is in man. With him it is in vain to flatter with our mouth, and dissemble in our tongue.ⁿ He requireth truth in the inward parts: "for the Lord seeth not as man seeth. For man looketh on the outward appearance: but the Lord looketh upon the heart."^o To put on in his presence the counterfeit resemblance of any virtue, is but to bring down punishment upon our own heads. To address our prayers to his awful throne with our lips, while our hearts are far from him, is, if possible, worse than actual neglect: it is a mockery of a Being, whom it is impossible to deceive.

3. Another most important advantage, to be derived from our knowledge of God's omnipresence, is the support, and consolation, which it is calculated to afford in the day of adversity. And happy are they, who have thus learned to obtain, from their sense of

ⁿ Psalm lxxviii. 36.

^o 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

God's superintending care, a very present help in time of trouble.

What more effectual comfort, indeed, can we receive, than this: that the God, whom we adore, and in whom we trust, is ever watching over us for our good: ordering the course of every event, however apparently trivial; and leading us on, sometimes indeed by rough, and intricate, and displeasing paths, to that place of rest where we would be? Reason alone can shew to a certain degree the omnipresence of God, from the operations of his hands. Hope can point out his mercy, so eminently conspicuous over all his works, and almost conclude, that a Being so beneficent will not willingly afflict, or grieve the children of men. But faith, founded upon the unerring promises of God's most true and holy word, teaches and assures us, that the Creator himself "is nigh unto all that call upon him: yea all such as call upon him faithfully: He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them."^p Sincerely to feel a firm reliance upon these promises of God, so as to derive a lasting and unfailing support in all those troubles, which weigh down the soul, is a practical advantage from the doctrine of an Omnipresent God, which they only,

^p Psalm cxlv. 18.

who have experienced it, can duly appreciate. And they who have so learned “to rest upon divine protection, gather thence a force and faith, which human nature in itself could not attain.”⁹

Such are the conclusions, which we should draw, and the benefits, which we should derive, from our knowledge of the Divine Omnipresence. Whither shall we go from the Spirit of God, or whither shall we flee from his presence? In the solitude of our chambers, in the tumult of the world; in our daily occupations, in our accidental pursuits; in our hours of sadness, and in our moments of joy; in our devotions to the throne of life, and in our guilty compliance with the ways of death, we are still in the presence of that great Being, in whom we live, and move, and exist. The sinner may follow a multitude to do evil: but his individual offence is yet seen, and recorded, with perfect clearness. He may retire into solitude: but in solitude is God found. In the darkness, as in the light, in the inmost recesses of the most artful heart, as well as in the actions, the eye of the most Highest can read the very hidden thoughts. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness. How careful so to live, as in the

⁹ Bacon. Essay on Atheism.

presence of our eternal and impartial judge: so to purify our thoughts from all hypocrisy, as before one who knoweth them all: and so to endure the trials of life and the pains of death, as conscious of a continual support, which the world can neither give, nor take away.



LECTURE XIV.

ON THE SCRIPTURAL ESTIMATE OF TALENT.



PSALM CXI. 10.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;
a good understanding have all they that do
his commandments : his praise endureth for
ever.*

THE estimate, which religion forms of many things, is totally different from that made by the world at large. It has frequently been observed, that the dispositions most esteemed by society, ambition, emulation, the love of distinction, and the ardour for fame, are the very qualities against which the injunctions of the Gospel are most expressly directed : and also that when their consequences are carefully and accurately traced, these dispositions are found to be as generally injurious, as they are by the inconsiderate generally approved. Thus reason, which perhaps never

might have *discovered* the tendency of certain rules of action, can discern the supreme wisdom, which forbids them, when they are forbidden. And few, if any, moralists, who have written since life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel, fail to acknowledge that the patience under injuries, the quietness, the long-suffering, the forbearance, the relinquishment of self, which is so constantly enjoined by the Gospel, are the very habits of thought, and action, which are especially conducive to the general interest of mankind.

But it has not, I think, been so often noticed, that the Scriptures contain also an estimate of *talent* peculiar to themselves. The world is very apt to be struck with what are called great abilities. An acute and penetrating intellect, which seizes with avidity, and retains with accuracy, the impressions made upon it, is what the most anxious parent would often pray, in sincerity of heart, might be bestowed upon the child of his affections. And if he were told that in encouraging such a wish, unless it embraced far more important, though less splendid, qualifications, he was only seeking to draw down misery both upon him, who was the object of it, and upon society at large, he might perhaps consider the objector merely as a setter forth of strange opinions.

Still it is true, that those very talents, which are most admired in the world, are singularly liable to abuse ; and when abused, or even when partially misapplied, tend in an eminent degree to render the possessor miserable.

Examples there are both numerous and well known, in which the very acuteness, which might have been employed to the noblest purposes, has been perverted to serve the ends of party, to sharpen the acrimony of resentment, and point the stings of vengeance. Literary history unfortunately recounts too many instances of men, who begun life under every circumstance of encouragement, and yet have, in the end, afforded an awful warning. A vivid imagination, uncontrolled by religious principle, encouraged by indulgence, fed with popular applause, has become the severest punishment to its own possessor. The same ingenuity, which might, under proper restraint, have discovered, and successfully investigated, tracts in the realms of science hitherto unexplored, has been employed in ingeniously heightening and combining imaginary injuries ; and in giving reality to the phantoms of caprice. However fanciful such subjects of unhappiness may be, they are still felt, and acted upon. And they are peculiarly painful in this respect, that, existing only in the mind of the sufferer,

they allow of but little alleviation from a change in external circumstances.

Neither are the evil consequences, arising from the abuse of intellectual power, confined to the individual.

All the seductive powers of language have been employed, to clothe falshood in the garb of truth; to remove from the inexperienced mind that sure guide of his conduct, which is afforded in the written word of God; and to substitute for it, not merely the uncertain deductions of man's erring reason, but the dictates of his perverted imagination. The feelings — a man's own judgment upon what he does, from whatever cause that judgment is derived — have been seriously laid down as a rule, by which our conduct is to be regulated.

Consequences equally lamentable have followed the misapplication of scientific attainments. That penetrating glance of the mind, which might have looked through the wonderful fabric of nature, and there read indelibly impressed the marks of the superintending providence, and astonishing wisdom, and inconceivable power, of the God of nature, has been distorted in order to discern some point which might be represented as useless or imperfect. They who would be wise above that which is written have been puffed up with the vain

conceit of their own imagination. They have dared to arraign the supreme will, and to cavil at the precepts of God's holy word. Being thus led on from doubt to doubt, conceiving themselves able to solve all mysteries and all knowledge, it is no wonder that, professing themselves wise, they have become fools. Endeavouring to measure by the frail standard of human intellect, those high things of God, into which the very angels of heaven desire in vain to look, they have been given over to their own devices, and become fearful instances of the weakness of that reason, which would raise itself above what it was intended to accomplish.

Now, in the Scriptures, we find nothing like this high estimate of natural abilities. If ever they have occasion to mention the acquisitions of science, it is rather with a caution not to abuse them, and an intimation how dangerous are the dispositions, which they are calculated to cherish. They hold up a standard widely different, and estimate talent by another scale: and *that* scale is expressed in the words of the text. "The *fear of the Lord* is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments."

This term, "the fear of the Lord," is used in Scripture in different senses.

Its primary meaning is that filial respect for the commands and will of God, by which the soul is induced and enabled to obey his commandments, and to frame its conduct in conformity with them. It is in this sense, that God says of his people, I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;^a that David declares, “his salvation is nigh them that fear him;”^b and he will fulfil their desire;^c that Solomon commands his son to “fear the Lord, and depart from evil,”^d and enjoins all men to “fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”^e

There is also another fear of God, of a very different kind, the fear, which arises in a mind conscious of guilt, when it reflects upon the grievous consequences to which it was exposed. It was with such fear as this, that Felix trembled before his prisoner Paul, as he reasoned of temperance and righteousness, and judgment to come.^f And it is this fear also, which St. John declares exists not in those who have the love of God, for perfect love casteth out servile fear.^g

^a Jer. xxxii. 40.

^c Psalm cxlv. 19.

^c Eccles. xii. 13.

^g 1 John iv. 18.

^b Psalm lxxxv. 9.

^d Prov. iii. 7.

^f Acts xxiv. 25.

Whether, however, the fear of the Lord be the filial regard for his manifold mercies, or the dread of his power and the vengeance of his wrath, it still, when it gains possession of the heart, is the beginning of true wisdom. No progress can reasonably be expected to be made in a life of piety, until the mind is, by some means, impressed with that devout awe, that holy reverence, that serious regard for the might and majesty of the most High God, which intermingles itself, silently perhaps, and unobtrusively, but still effectually and deeply, with every action, and every thought: which prompts an ejaculation of thanksgiving for every mercy, as soon as it is received; and a prayer for support, under every temptation. Until the soul, whether in sorrow or in joy, learns to regard the displeasure of the Almighty as the supreme object to be avoided, his will as the standard, by which every action is to be regulated.

In consequence of the supreme importance of this *fear* of God, this beginning of wisdom, in establishing a virtuous life, “The fear of the Lord” is often in Scripture used to designate the service which is peculiarly acceptable to Him: as when David addresses himself to the young, and promises to teach them

the fear of the Lord,^h he evidently intends, that he would instruct them in such a mode of serving him as should be acceptable in his sight, and conduce to their own salvation.

The estimate then of intellect, which is made in Scripture, is founded upon the degree of proficiency which every one has made in religion. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.”

Now this is a proficiency, which the meanest and most humble may attain, if he be careful to use those means of grace, with which in a Christian land he is blessed. No depth of research, no brilliancy of imagination is required, in order to learn those precepts, which are essential to salvation. The grand truths and precepts of our religion are so plain that, to comprehend them, are required no mental endowments beyond the plain discernment of right and wrong. But, unhappily, this fact is often unobserved, or purposely removed from sight. Our own estimate of intellectual superiority, artificial and improper as it is, produces this evil consequence: that they, who are unlearned in human science, are apt to draw, from their acknowledged ignorance

^h Psalm xxxiv. 11.

of many things, an excuse for continuing ignorant also of the plain duties required of them. They believe, or affect to believe, that there is something mysterious in the doctrines and precepts of religion: that they should be unable to comprehend the commands of God, which are given in the Scriptures, even if their attention were directed to them.

Now one inconsistency of such an opinion is, that they who hold it often assume a right of judging upon a point, at the same time that they disclaim the capability of comprehending it. If an illiterate man had reason to believe that, by a particular action, he would subject himself to punishment, by any human law, it is very conceivable that he might not possess the ability to investigate for himself the true nature of the case; or to comprehend the abstract principles, which had influenced the legislator in composing the law. But what, upon this supposition, would be the conduct of a prudent man? He would not, surely, reason, that his inability to discover some particulars, connected with the law, entitled him to interpret the law, and to act upon that interpretation. He would rather repair to those, upon whose judgment he could rely; and if their representation shewed him plainly how he ought to act, in order to

avoid danger, he would be inexcusably presumptuous, if he still persisted in his own erroneous judgment. Equally unreasonable is the conduct of those, who persuade themselves to live as without God in the world, from an apprehension that religious proficiency is necessarily connected with literary attainments. To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God; to fear him, to love him, to put our trust in him; and to look to his mercy, through the merits of our Redeemer, for the pardon of the faults, which we sincerely repent of, and earnestly desire to amend, is in the power of every man, learned or unlearned. And they who shelter their own *disinclination* to obey religion, under the plea of inability to *understand* it, will have a heavy account to settle at the great day, when it shall be seen who they are who have done according to the commandments of God, and therefore have had a good understanding. The unlearned and the learned have each a talent given them to employ: and upon their use of the means which they enjoy, unaffected by the frivolous excuses, with which they endeavour to hide their neglect, will depend their acceptance or reprobation. Their proficiency, besides, is not to be estimated by any sudden impulse of feeling, however powerful; but by the practical

effects upon their life and conduct. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that *do his commandments.*”

There is, especially, one important duty which men are peculiarly apt to neglect, under the plea of inability to comprehend it: I mean the duty of commemorating the death of Christ, by partaking of the sacrament which he ordained. The command is express: the rite is simple: yet thousands go on to their dying hour, without ever complying with this positive command: and endeavour all the time to deceive others, and perhaps even do deceive themselves, with alleging some imagined mysteriousness in that holy sacrament. But be ye not so deceived—God is not mocked; though man may be. He will require obedience to his commands, which are not grievous. And be assured that the plea of ignorance or of inability will avail no one, who has the opportunities, which we all enjoy, of instruction in the Christian faith.

But it is not only to the uneducated and the simple, that the declaration is made, a good understanding have all they that do the commandments of God. In the study of the works and words of the Almighty, which is an essential part of our duty, the most vigorous intellect may find ample employment. In considering

the wonders of his creation, and the extent of his holy attributes, the mind is conversant with conceptions too mighty for unassisted reason to comprehend. The unspeakable majesty, the mysterious omnipresence, the overpowering immensity, the inconceivable power of God, the nature and offices of the three distinct persons of the Godhead, the means of our redemption, the hopes of future glory, are all subjects of speculation which will employ and satisfy the most comprehensive mind. It will lead the enquirer to fall low on his knees before the throne of the Most High; and to shew forth His praise in the actions of his life, as well as in the words of his lips. Whether he be wise, therefore, or whether he be simple, the enquirer after religious truth may shew forth the goodness of his understanding by his obedience to the commands of God.

As however the estimate of intellectual attainment, which is formed by the world at large, is often widely different from that which is found in the Scriptures of truth; so also is the reward bestowed upon success incomparably superior. Temporal advancement, the gratification of vanity or ambition, the triumph over emulous competitors, are found to be inducements amply sufficient to persuade those, who are desirous of honourable distinction, to

persevere through many difficulties and many toils. They, who strive for this mastery, will often be temperate in all things, will forego much pleasure, will rise early and late take rest, to ensure the reward to which they aspire. To repress this ardour, when legitimately exercised, is not necessary; and, if necessary, is scarcely to be expected. If however the competition be so earnest to obtain a corruptible crown, with what anxiety should the true Christian strive for that which is incorruptible. If praise, short-lived and precarious, often ill-bestowed, often withheld, and always soon forgotten, be an inducement of sufficient weight to counterbalance much of the love of ease, and much of the eagerness for the immediate gratifications of sense—what should be the ardour, with which they, who sincerely fear God, should strive to follow his commandments, knowing that “the praise of it endureth *for ever*.¹” This phrase, for ever, is easily pronounced, and is so often used in ordinary speech with great latitude, without sufficiently attending to its import, that we are almost apt to overlook its real meaning when found in Scripture. And what *is* its meaning? It implies a state, to which imagination itself can ascribe no end—a series of ages succeeding

¹ The translation of the Old Bible is here adopted.

each other without the least approach to a termination—a period, which after myriads of centuries shall have rolled away, will be no nearer to its conclusion than at this instant. We may not clearly conceive how this can be. But this we *can* conceive: that it is our interest, beyond all which this world can offer with all its pleasures and pomps, to seek to ensure our happiness for this endless period. How we may do so, we learn in God's holy word, which we should therefore make the guide of our conduct. Especially when tempted to rely upon the pride of reason, or to be wise in our own conceits, should we humble ourselves with the reflection, that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—a good understanding have all they that do there-after”—and that the praise of it endureth for ever.

The duties, suggested by the subject which we have been considering, acquire a peculiar importance in this place. All who are called upon to direct the literary pursuits of youth, must never lose sight of this important fact, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom, not only for the regulation of their own conduct, but in their direction of the pursuits of others. They must, in the course of their arduous and useful labours, often be compelled to direct much of their attention

to the peculiar studies which are here pursued. They must employ, perhaps, the greatest part of their time, in superintending labours, which are only indirectly connected with moral improvement. Let them not forget, however, that their labour is not to terminate in promoting a taste for the elegancies of literature, in imparting an accurate knowledge of abstract science, or in explaining the principles, by which the wonderful phenomena of the natural world are deduced from a few simple facts. All these pursuits, and the labours which they require, serve indeed to develop the faculties of the mind, and may be made subservient to the most noble purposes. But in the midst of those mental labours which adorn the imagination, or improve the reasoning powers, let not those studies which lead to the knowledge of the Most High be neglected. Upon the degree of importance, which those in authority here attach to the student's proficiency in sacred literature, and especially to his moral conduct, will depend, in a great measure, the alacrity with which those studies will be pursued, and the general tone of feeling with respect to religion. Let it not be said, that while all other branches of literature and science meet here with a full and impartial reward, they, who endeavour to attain that knowledge

which is the most excellent of all, receive little or uncertain encouragement.

To those who are themselves more particularly engaged in the elementary studies of the place, I would also address a few words of exhortation.

Those among you, who are competitors for the distinction which accompanies successful exertions, are striving with eagerness to obtain the proposed reward. We would not discourage your honourable endeavours. Pursue with diligence, and with reasonable anxiety, the course, for which your whole education has been training you. But forget not that there is a wisdom, far greater than any which is attained by the most successful effort of human learning, a wisdom, which will always be successfully sought by those who sincerely endeavour to obtain it, and followed by a most sure and glorious reward.

Neither let those, who think they are exempted, by their station in life, or a distrust of their own powers, from the necessity of making the same exertions in the pursuit of human learning, deceive themselves with the idea, that they may, without guilt, supinely neglect to attain the wisdom which is from above. Let not the timid be discouraged in its pursuit. All, who sincerely strive for that

prize, shall assuredly obtain it, for they shall be strengthened with such might in the inner man, that they shall not in the end fail of their reward. And if any of you should ever be placed among those, who abuse the abilities with which God has endowed them, by misrepresenting the facts and doctrines of revealed religion, or even—for such things have been—by purposely employing their perverted imagination in the practice and encouragement of wilful profaneness, and in the open defence of infidelity, take heed how ye hear. Remember that by their fruits may the children of disobedience be known: that the wisdom that is from above is “first *pure*, then peaceable:”^k and distrust that carnal mind, however adorned with the brilliancy of fancy, and with the speciousness of false reasoning, which is pronounced, by infallible authority, to be “enmity against God.¹” The applause of a vain world may be obtained by such unworthy and wicked means. The abuse of talents may lead to a degree of fame, and even to some kind of eminence. But the fear of the Lord is the only beginning of true wisdom: they only have a good understanding who do his commandments: the praise of it is the only praise which endureth for ever.

^k James iii. 17.

¹ Rom. viii. 7.

LECTURE XV.

REFLECTIONS ON THE RAINBOW, AS THE SIGN
OF A COVENANT WITH NOAH.



GEN. IX. 14.

It shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.

IT was an awful period in the history of mankind, when the waters of the deluge subsided from the face of the earth, and the patriarch Noah came forth from the ark, and looked round upon the ruins of a former world. How changed must have been the aspect of nature. Every object must have borne the appearance of novelty, as if it had been just formed by the hand of its Creator. Perhaps new mountains had risen during the mighty convulsion, which broke up the fountains of the great deep: perhaps new rivers now ran in valleys, which

before had no existence. Even in those parts, which had suffered a less violent alteration, an awful change must have taken place; a change from fruitfulness to desolation, from animation to stillness. The natural process of vegetation was for a time suspended, and all living creatures were destroyed upon the earth, except those few, which had been saved by Divine command. The patriarch must have looked, with thankfulness shadowed with horror, upon the places, where once stood cities thronged with population: where nations, perhaps, had flourished in arts and arms: where luxury had by degrees infected all society with her baneful influence, until the whole earth was corrupt, and filled with violence. Among those who had perished, there might have been some, whom, as a preacher of righteousness, he had earnestly laboured to convert, and hoped to save. Some for whom, with all their vices, he had felt great interest, and much anxiety. And, even in the midst of his thankfulness to God for the many mercies of his own deliverance, he must have experienced many feeling of loneliness, when he viewed around him nothing but the dull traces of the retiring waters, and reflected that he and his family were left the sole possessors of a deluged world.

We read of the devotion with which he

sacrificed, as soon as he came out from the ark, burnt-offerings of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, upon the altar which he built unto the Lord: and we know the blessing which God then pronounced upon him.

But the fearful judgment, which he had just witnessed, must have had a powerful influence upon his mind. He could not soon forget the terrors of that scene, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up; and the waters prevailed and were increased greatly upon the earth, and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered.^a Accustomed as we are to the regular return of the seasons, which was then promised to mankind; seeing that seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, do not cease, we can hardly bring ourselves to imagine the thoughts, which might not unnaturally intrude themselves into the mind of the patriarch, when he reflected upon the mighty change, which he had witnessed in the most stable elements of nature. He might, humanly speaking, be excused, if he felt at times some doubt even respecting the recurrence of the ordinary phenomena of the natural world: if he sometimes feared, lest some second catastrophe

^a Gen. vii.

might overwhelm the earth, all the foundations of which were so out of course. Especially when the heavens became black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain, if he did not expect, he might at least apprehend, that the Almighty was a second time about to cut off all flesh with the waters of a flood. As long as this influence continued upon his mind—and it was of a nature to last all his life, and to be transmitted to his descendants for many generations—he might look with a timid eye even upon the cloud, which was dropping fatness upon the earth. The time, in which the showers “drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side,”—when “the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy; they also sing”^b—might to the patriarch be but a season of doubt and dismay.

But the Father of goodness delights not in the suffering of his creatures. He revealed himself to Noah, with many assurances of support, and many promises of blessing. And he pointed out to him a sign in the heavens, immediately connected with the subject of his apprehensions, to be a token of a covenant between God and the earth, that he would not any more bring a flood to destroy the earth.

^b Psalm lxx. 12, 13.

“And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud; and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh: and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.”

The selection of this peculiar symbol, as the token of a covenant thus solemnly made between God and man, has given rise, as might be expected, to great diversity of opinion. That vicious species of allegorical interpretation, which distorts plain facts, has here been introduced. It would not easily be imagined that the words of Scripture—“God said, I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth,”—could be taken to be any thing, but a plain narration of a fact. At an early period, however, of the Christian church, the words were considered to represent only, under the figure of a bow, the Divine providence, which is sometimes extended, for the infliction of more severe punishment, and sometimes relaxed, by the

loving kindness of God, who in his judgment remembers mercy.^c It is true that the mercy of God is immediately suggested by the event. But thus to explain away the literal meaning of the sacred volume is to introduce a principle of exposition totally at variance with sound judgment.

Other interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, struck with the emphatic manner in which the sign is pointed out, have been of opinion that until the deluge, the bow was never seen in the cloud.^d There is indeed nothing in the brief account which is given of the antediluvian world, to contradict this supposition. Some time, undoubtedly, elapsed after the creation, when God “had not caused it to rain upon the

^c Non enim, sicut plerique arbitrantur, arcum istum dicit, quem aiunt homines esse, quo pluviarum signa aliqua declarantur, in quo colores diversi...figurantur....Sed absit ut hunc arcum Dei dicamus....Ergo videamus, ne, quia arcus quo sagittæ jaciuntur, nunc tenditur, nunc resolvitur, quandam extensionem et remissionem videatur scriptura significare, per quam neque penitus per nimiam extensionem universa rumpantur, sed sit quædam mensura et quoddam Divinæ virtutis examen. Est ergo virtus invisibilis Dei quæ et specie istius arcûs extendendi et remittendi moderatur pro Divina voluntate, misericordia, potestate, quæ neque omnia confundi nimia solutione, neque dirumpi nimia irruptione patiat. Quam ideo in nubibus dicit poni, quia tunc maximè opus est Divinæ auxilio prudentiæ, quando agmina nubium procellas tempestatesque cogantur. Ambrosius Lib. de Arcâ et Noe; c. 27. apud Heidegger. de Hist. Sacra Exercitat. xix. §. 26.

^d Aben Ezra on Gen. ix. 14.

earth.”^e And the termination of that time is not distinctly marked. The first specific account, which we read respecting the fall of rain, is when “in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”^f It may be, then, that the constitution of nature was, in some material respects, changed at the deluge: that, during the whole period before the flood, the earth was watered continually in the same manner as Eden was in the time of man’s innocence, when “there went up a mist from the Lord, and covered the whole face of the earth.”^g Upon that supposition, no bow would be formed in the cloud, from natural causes, until the heavens were once more cleared, after the waters of the deluge had been poured out. And the promise of the covenant would have been made, at the time when the natural symbol was first observed.

Such a supposition, however, is unnecessary. And the words of Scripture have by others^h been considered to lead to quite a different conclusion. They observe that the words in the

^e Gen. ii. 6.

^f Gen. vii. 11.

^g Gen. ii. 7.

^h Vatablus, Clavius, and the *Notæ majores* in the *Critici Sacri*.

original may properly be paraphrased, "I have already long since set my bow in the cloud, and henceforth it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

The question, however, is in reality a question of mere curiosity. Whether the bow were previously formed or not, it certainly was then first pointed out, and specifically established, as the sign of a covenant between God and man. Its appearance had perhaps no natural connection with an exemption from the danger of a deluge. It was calculated to excite feelings of astonishment; as we find that among the most civilized nations of heathen antiquity the Rainbow was personified as the daughter of Wonder;¹ and that even among the half barbarous Peruvians, when first discovered, divine honours were paid to an object so splendid, and so intimately related to the Sun, to whom their superstitious reverence was principally directed. The contemplation of this phænomenon was likely to inspire such sentiments as are

¹ Καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ τὴν Ἴριω Θαύματος ἔκγονον φήσας οὐ κακῶς γενεαλογεῖν. Plato in Theæteto. Πλάτων φησὶ Θαύματος αὐτὴν γενεαλογῆσαι τοῦς ἀνθρώπους διὰ τὸ θαυμάσαι ταύτην. Plutarch. de placitis Philos. III. 5. Ob eam causam, (Arcus) quia speciem habeat admirabilem Thaumante dicitur esse natus. Cicero de Nat. Deor. Lib. III. 20. See Heidegger, De Historia Sacra Patriarcharum; Exercitat. XIX. §. 32. Parkhurst's Heb. Lexicon, Art. תְּשֻׁבָה.

eloquently expressed by the Son of Sirach :
“ Look upon the rainbow, and praise him that made it : very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof. It compasseth the heavens about with a glorious circle : and the hands of the Most High have bended it.”^k But to the patriarch Noah, and to his descendants, to all who retained even a traditionary remembrance of the fact,¹ the bow in the cloud was to be something more than an object of wonder. It was to be the monument of past deliverance, and the pledge of future safety. For whatever reason the peculiar sign was originally chosen, the connection between the sign and the deliverance was established by the authority of God himself ; and was most appropriate. And after it was appointed, with what joyful confidence must the pious patriarch have turned his eyes towards the lowering skies, which had been so much dreaded, and beheld, in the midst of the darkness, gleams of celestial light gradually forming themselves into the symbol of the covenant, spanning and illuminating the thick cloud,

^k Ecclus xliiii. 11, 12.

¹ It has been supposed, that Homer preserves some traditionary notion, that the rainbow was appointed for a memorial, in the words,

*ἴρισσι ἐοικότες, ἄς τε Κρονίων
Ἔν νέφεϊ στήριξε, τέρας μερόπων ἀνθρώπων. Π. λ. 27.*

appearing to unite heaven with earth, a splendid and significant emblem of the security which it portended.

Now the events effected by the immediate appointment of the providence of God, and written for our learning, are not isolated facts. They are parts of one great scheme. And there may be traced, in all the dealings of the Almighty with mankind, a most striking analogy, pointing out the same great Being as the author of the creation, the ruler of the universe, and also as the sovereign disposer of the affairs of men. It may be useful to trace, in a few instances, what may be called a general principle — a similarity in the law by which it has pleased God to act — and this general principle is, the bringing of good out of the object of our fear, and consequently the *association* of the remedy with the disorder: so that, when the evil is suggested to the mind, the idea of the accompanying relief may rise up in the imagination at the same time.

1. The first instance, which shall be mentioned, is the promise made to our first parents immediately after the fall. Fatally deceived as they had been by the wiles of their adversary, and actuated by deep remorse and shame for their guilt; the sight of the serpent, which had seduced them, would ever have brought back

to their recollection the state of innocence which they had lost; and the sentence of death which was suspended over them. But in this their humbled state, it pleased the Lord to promise them an ultimate deliverance. And the terms in which the promise was conceived are such, that, whenever they thought upon their past sin, they must also think upon their future delivery. “The Lord said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head; and thou shalt bruise his heel.”^m This was the first promise of that Seed of the woman, who in the fulness of time should, through death, “destroy him that had the power of death: that is, the devil.”ⁿ This is not the time for entering into an enquiry, how accurate might be the notion, which our first parents formed, respecting “the man, the Lord,”^o who should thus be born. Our present intention is only to observe how intimately associated in the dispensations of God, and his revelation to man, are the guilt and the expiation. The same reflex act of the mind,

^m Gen. iii. 14, 15.

ⁿ Heb. ii. 14.

^o Gen. iv. 1.

which brought to fallen man the remembrance of his sin, would also set before him the assurance that the *power* of sin would be destroyed.

2. Another obvious instance of the same nature is found, under the Gospel dispensation, in associating some of the most solemn acts of our religion, and uniting some of our most sure grounds of confidence, with the remembrance of the death of Christ.

It is true that there may be found instances, in which the death of an individual has been recorded by some specific institution: but it has been when the circumstances of his death were, perhaps, the most glorious among a series of splendid achievements; when his life has been sacrificed for the benefit of his country, or distinguished by some peculiar dignity. But when was it ever heard that any one, whose whole life had offered so many deeds worthy of celebration, selected, during his life, his ignominious death, as the subject of a commemorative ordinance?

A prophet, mighty in word and deed, it might have been thought, would have directed the minds of his disciples to his miracles—would have been desirous to live in their memories, as commanding the waves of the sea to be calm—curing diseases with a touch—

bidding the dead to rise—or invested with the glories which he put on in the mount of transfiguration, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. But Christ directed the minds of his disciples throughout the world *immediately* to none of these; but to his *death*, his ignominious and painful death.

This event, which would have terminated the ministry of any other than a divine teacher, Christ commanded us to perpetuate in our memories by an ordinance for ever. And one beneficial consequence, which his faithful followers may derive from that holy ordinance, is this: that if ever they be tempted by their great adversary, or by the wiles of deceitful men, to think of that humiliation in any other view than as the crowning mercy which reconciled man to God—to be *ashamed* of Christ crucified—they may remember, that this very death was the great end of Christ's ministry upon earth: the object of so many prophecies; of such numerous prefigurations; of such a wonderful series of providential events. That they may remember also, that the *resurrection* of Christ followed his death; that his ascension speedily succeeded his resurrection; and that his coming again in glory will as assuredly follow his ascension.

With us, indeed, this association of the death of Christ upon the cross with all our hopes is so complete, that we can scarcely, even in imagination, place ourselves in the situation of the immediate followers of Christ. The death of our Lord has been so hallowed, its very instrument has been invested with such holiness, the cross has been so long the symbol of a prevailing faith, has been so long “drawn upon foreheads, carried upon banners, put upon crowns imperial,”^p that we now regard it, almost instinctively, with feelings of the utmost veneration. But with the disciples of Christ it was far otherwise. The death of their Lord would be considered as the extinction of their hopes: his death upon the *cross* would be regarded as an indignity, which numbered him, not only with the transgressors, but with the most degraded of the human race. To them it was important, both as a consolation and as an encouragement, that the event, which cut off all their expectations of earthly advantages, should be connected immediately with the spiritual blessings which were thereby secured. Accordingly, in the Gospel dispensation, and especially in the institution of the Eucharist, the doctrine of Christ crucified, which was to the Jews a stumbling-

^p Jer. Taylor's Sermon on the Funeral of Archbp. Bramhall.

block, and to the Greeks foolishness, was directly associated with his prophetic character, and with his triumphant victory over the power of death. Henceforth, whenever the disciples of Christ reflected upon his death, they would remember, that Christ had told them before it came to pass. All their hopes of glory were thus connected with an event, which they had before contemplated with the utmost dismay. The rebuke which the apostle Peter addressed even to Jesus, who had just predicted his own death—"Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee"^q—was changed into the triumphant exultation of St. Paul, "It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."^r

3. There are other events, in the course of God's providence, in which, objects in themselves regarded with terror, are either associated with alleviating circumstances, or made the very means of conveying benefits of the most important nature. All men are naturally averse from affliction, and they, who are unenlightened by revelation, have ever regarded adversity as an evil, which the wise would endeavour to bear with patience, because it is irremediable, but still an evil of great magnitude.

^q Matt. xvi. 22.

^r Rom. viii. 34.

Revelation teaches us to regard it in a very different light. It affords consolation peculiar to itself, and points out most important benefits derived from affliction. The state of man in this life is still a state of suffering; but the very suffering is shewn to be part of a dispensation of mercy. Upon all men, at some period of their lives, there lours some thick cloud, to which their apprehensions may often direct a fearful eye. Calamities, over which they have no control, may thicken around them. Their riches may make to themselves wings and flee away: their friends may forsake them: their health may fail. They may feel tempted almost to distrust the possibility of being supported through the distress, under which they labour. With dispositions not unlike that which the patriarch Noah might entertain, before he was assured that the flood should no more overwhelm the earth, they may have feared, in the despondency of their hearts, that God had forgotten to be gracious, and had shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure. But “unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.”^s The word of God, rich in instruction adapted to all circumstances, offers peculiar assistance to those who seek from it comfort under affliction.

^s Psalm cxii. 4.

It was a fanciful opinion of some of the Jewish expounders of their law, that when the high priest enquired of God by Urim and Thummin, he fixed his eyes upon the magnificent breast-plate of judgment, upon which were set “stones with the names of the children of Israel, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet;”^c and that the reply to his enquiries was given by a lambent splendour, illuminating those characters which, when united, formed an answer to the question proposed. To the Christian this notion is in some measure realized. Let the afflicted soul repair to the living oracles of God’s word, and he will there find an answer to all the difficulties, which to the natural man are inexplicable. When he opens the written volume, in which are inscribed the words of life, his eye will rest upon assurances such as these. “In the multitude of the sorrows that I have in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul.”^u “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.....For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”^x Above all, he will see, inscribed in characters

^c Exod. xxviii. 15, 21.

^u Psalm xciv. 19. version of the Great Bible.

^x Isaiah xliii. 2, 3.

so plain, that he may run which readeth them, the comfortable words of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."^y "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."^z

Man is sometimes tried with afflictions of more than ordinary severity. His whole mind may have been occupied in some favourite pursuit, or centered in some beloved object. He may be a parent, anxious for his child: a child, as solicitous for his parent. He may be connected by ties of friendship, as close as those which united Jonathan and David. In any of these cases, he may have formed in his imagination many fond visions of future happiness, and animated an ideal world with hopes which never are to be realized. In the midst of his security, a mighty flood may come down and sweep away all that in which he so delights. Time passes on: and he comes forth from his house of mourning, as the patriarch Noah went out upon the earth, from which the waters had just subsided. He finds all things changed. The whole world presents to him a blank: void of any associations, which could confer pleasure, or satisfaction: and all the interest which he once took in the pursuits of the world is vanished. Whither, then, should such

^y Matt. xi. 28.

^z Matt. v. 4.

a man turn, but to the “faithful witness in heaven,”^a that covenant of mercy which was made between God and man: that covenant which, while it teaches the sufferer in all humility to acknowledge that it was good for him to be afflicted, bids him look beyond this transitory state for an abiding city; and holds forth the consoling hope of being re-united in a better world, and in a happier state, to those who, while on earth, were most beloved, and most dear.

In these, then, and in numerous other instances, when God brings “a cloud upon the earth,” when he tries his people by a partial removal of the light of his favour, he still sets his “bow in the cloud,” he gives a token of the covenant which he has made, and a symbol that in his anger he has thought upon mercy.

Even in that last trying hour, when the thick shadows of approaching death are gathering around the Christian, when the light of his earthly life grows still fainter and fainter, and his soul is even disquieted within him: when deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the water-spouts, and all the waves and billows are gone over him;^b the light of God’s holy word will still penetrate the darkness of his soul, and display to the eye of faith the cove-

^a Psalm lxxxix. 38.

^b Psalm xlii. 7.

nant of His grace. He will receive comfort in the midst of his sorrows, and be enabled to exclaim with faith, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.”^c

We may, in conclusion, refer to still more glorious scenes, displayed in the book of life, and partially connected with the subject before us. Whenever we behold the “bow in the cloud,” we must remember that it is not only a memorial of the covenant which God made with Noah, but an imperfect representation of some of that splendour, which is described in Scripture as surrounding the Divine presence. Ezekiel, in relating the first vision which he beheld, declares these words: “I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the *bow* that is in the cloud, in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.”^d St. John also, the beloved Apostle, “was in the Spirit, and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne: and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone;

^c Psalm xlii. 11.

^d Ezek. i. 27, 28.

and there was a *rainbow* round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”^e And when the “mighty angel came down from heaven,” and “lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer”—he also was “clothed with a cloud, and a *rainbow* was upon his head.”^f

These things, we know, are not to be scrutinized with unhallowed curiosity. They may be only imperfect figures of what shall be hereafter revealed; purposely adapted to give us some faint conception of the glories of Him whom no man hath seen nor can see. But still they are written in the book of God; and written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. May we have grace to regard them aright. May we be enabled, when the clouds and darkness of this lower world shall be removed, to enter into that celestial city, which has “no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”^g

^e Rev. iv. 2, 3.

^f Rev. x. 1, 6.

^g Rev. xxi. 23.

LECTURE XVI.

ON THE LOVE OF LIFE.

—♦—
JOB II. 4.

All that a man hath will he give for his life.

OF all the feelings and passions, which occur so continually as deservedly to be styled *natural*, the love of life is the most general, the most deeply rooted, and the most ardent. As soon as existence is felt, in the earliest dawn of infancy, nature shrinks with instinctive horror from any thing which may threaten its destruction. As we advance in age, reason and reflection serve but to strengthen this native impulse. The acuteness of pain and the feebleness of disease are regarded with aversion, not merely from the present uneasiness which they occasion, but, still more, from the termination, to which we apprehend they may lead. Bodily diseases, indeed, appear to be classed, in general estimation, and probably from this cause,

according to the degree of hazard which they bring to life, and not according to the degree of suffering by which they are characterized. Some disorders, painful and wearisome in the extreme, if they are not borne with patience by the sufferer, are at any rate regarded with much indifference by the observer, if not attended with immediate danger. Whilst others, gradually and almost insensibly wearing away the strength, deservedly excite the most earnest commiseration, not so much from the actual suffering, as from the anticipated result. The advance of years, and the necessary approach of death, add but little to the fortitude with which it naturally is contemplated. Grievous as are many of the infirmities to which old age is exposed, they do not necessarily abate the love of life. The young may imagine that existence would be insupportable, if burdened with the pains of age: yet the old themselves still continue to cling with pertinacity to the remains of life, even after all, that appears in the eyes of others to render existence desirable, has long ceased.

Proportioned to our love of life, is the earnestness with which we invariably endeavour to preserve it. There is no labour, however burdensome, no privation, however irksome, but for this end it is cheerfully endured. The

close of life is, by the natural man, removed as long as possible from sight. The heart may sicken at the long delay of hope: but some faint remains still mingle with the bitter cup, which suffering humanity is often compelled to drain. Sooner than give way to absolute despair, every practicable effort will be made: "all that a man hath will he give for his life."

Now, there is something in this universal love of life, which appears to distinguish it essentially from all the other feelings which we experience. All our instincts, and passions, and desires, although when abused they may, and do, lead to great irregularity and great misery, yet may be so regulated as to produce much real good. They are implanted in us in order to be employed, not to be inconsiderately indulged: and they are of such a nature, that they *can* be legitimately gratified. Hunger and thirst *may* lead to gluttony and drunkenness; but the natural appetite is then perverted from its original intention. The affection of a parent towards the child may degenerate into culpable weakness: but it is only by the fondness of parental love that the helplessness of infancy could be preserved.

The same thing is true of these moral propensities, as of the mechanical contrivances of our frame. Every thing was at first prepared

for a peculiar purpose: and if any inconvenience is experienced, if any thing goes wrong, we may be sure that it arises, either from improper use, or from natural decay, and not from any inherent defect in the design. Nothing is made on purpose to cause inconvenience or pain; no desire implanted which *must* necessarily and continually be frustrated.

But the strongest of *all* passions, the love of life, appears in some degree to form an exception to this general rule of beneficent design. Much good, no doubt, arises from it during life: for by its operation individuals are preserved from danger, and from destruction. But still, as long as the sentence, "it is appointed unto all men once to die," is suspended over the human race, so long is the love of life an instinctive feeling which, at the very time we experience it, we know *must* sooner or later be violated.—There is also something very peculiar in the dread of death in *man*. In the animal creation, it is true, instinct is especially active in the preservation of life, and in guarding from any thing which may endanger it. But this instinct performs its natural office, and no more. It does not become, what it very frequently is in man, a source of fearful apprehension of future evil. Death comes upon the beasts of the field unexpectedly,

and therefore deprived of half its terrors. It overtakes man, if he has hope only in *this* life, long feared, and long anticipated; overpowering all his efforts, opposing all his desires.

Now, compare this necessity of submitting to so dreaded an enemy, with the usual course of God's merciful providence.

Pain is allowed to be a great corporeal evil: and, with the exception of some peculiar cases, in which the final cause is explained by reason, and by revelation, it may usually be traced to the derangement, or decay, of some part of our bodily frame. But suppose, that, upon the inspection of some animated frame, we detected an elaborate contrivance for the production of excruciating pain, should we not conclude that this arose from some evil source; that this *exception* to all the other works of creation was not the original production of that all-good and all-wise Being, by whom we have been so fearfully and wonderfully made?

Or, again, if in the very midst of a machine, which we knew had been once successfully contrived for long continued motion, we observed, upon a closer inspection, a series of preconcerted devices, by the action of which that motion must, after a certain short period, inevitably cease, should we not be certain that these had been introduced by some foreign

agent, or at least were deviations from the original design?

Similar to this anomaly—only greater in degree, in proportion as man is greater than the *works* of man, and the dread of dissolution than our aversion from uneasiness,—is the intense apprehension of death inherent in a being, to whom death is inevitable. It is a self-acting torture, in the midst of a world of benevolent contrivances. In vain would we flee from this end of all men. We may for a time remove from our thoughts the apprehension of our end: we may scheme, and contrive, and complain, and resist: all that a man hath may he give for his life; but still there is working unseen within us the sure process of continual decay: the fatal arrow still lingers in our side.

Surely, then, here is a manifest exception to the usual analogy of nature. While all our other desires are implanted in us in order to be gratified, this, the most powerful of all, appears designed to be counteracted. The eye is so formed as to delight itself in vision: and is surrounded by every thing which is pleasant to the sight; gratified with splendid objects in the heavens above; charmed with a profusion of colours, and refreshed with verdure, upon the earth beneath. The ear is made to receive the impulse of various sounds:

and a medium is provided to transmit and modulate them, and articulate organs of speech to give them utterance. Yet the only creature endued with reason and forethought, although possessing bodily senses all capable of gratification, and surrounded by living objects each fitted for its pursuits and pleasures, is still a being destined to a fate which he abhors, a mortal longing after immortality.

Surely an enemy has done this. The beneficent Being, who has given us all things so richly to enjoy, would not have *created* man so imperfectly adapted to the circumstances of his existence; so anxious to live, so doomed to die. Surely some change must have taken place in our nature. Some extraneous agent must have brought death into the world with all our woes.

Turn to the word of God, and you will see who that agent was, and what were the means by which his designs were effected. You will see our first parents created immortal, and innocent, and perfect: placed by the hand of God in Eden, as responsible creatures, subject indeed to temptation, but free to resist or to comply. You will see, with sorrow and with shame, sin enter into the world, and death by sin: and the awful penalty of mortality passed upon every soul of man, from that fatal hour to this.

This revelation is confirmed, if confirmation were necessary, by a feeling which pervades every heart. As often as we shrink from the contemplation of the end of all men, we give testimony to the fearful alteration which has been brought upon our nature: every time we shudder at the thought of death, we assert the truth of those doctrines, which we have been taught, in Scripture, to believe.

2. But the love of life is also an earnest of immortality. If our heavenly Father has formed nothing in vain, and yet has allowed us to *retain* the pleasing *hope* of an hereafter, it is *probable*, at the least, arguing from analogy, that he intends it, in some mode or other, to be gratified. That it will be gratified is, indeed, a conclusion which we could never draw with certainty from reason alone. We might feel an inward horror at annihilation: but we could never *know* that our existence will be continued, after this state shall have passed away. We might be of all men most miserable: but we could never have a firm expectation beyond this life, except the word of God had commanded us to entertain it. But from that word we are assured, and one assurance alone would be sufficient, that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”^a

^a 1 Cor. xv. 22.

A stedfast faith in these assurances of God, and a humble trust in the mercy, which he promises to all who seek him with a reliance on his grace to assist their weak endeavours, are the only means, by which we can conquer that dread of death, which to the natural man is so difficult to understand, and so grievous to endure. And how effectual such a support *is*, even under circumstances the most arduous, many of us must have been taught, and we may hope with real benefit, by the most forcible of all instructors, example.

We may many of us have seen in others, what it should be our greatest endeavour ourselves to attain, that resignation to the will of heaven, at the close of life, which it is the peculiar privilege of true Christianity to confer. We may have marked with admiration, in the sufferings of those who were once dear to us, the natural dread of death gradually giving way to the spiritual hope of everlasting life. We may have known a mind, once active in conceiving and executing the schemes of ambition or of pleasure, brought down to see the nothingness of its previous pursuits, and to feel the overwhelming importance of those which belong to its eternal peace. We may have watched the interests, and passions, and affections of this world ceasing by degrees to

engross the attention; and the eternal world of spirits opening more and more clearly to the mental eye. We may have found the sense of their weakness adding strength to their faith, and seriousness to their repentance; and the inner man continually the more supported by the Spirit of God, as the tabernacle of the flesh approached more nearly to its dissolution. We may perhaps have witnessed, what to a favoured few has undoubtedly been vouchsafed, in their last trying hour, that inexpressibly calm, and serene, and heavenly frame of mind, the imperfect foretaste of future happiness.

If we have witnessed this, how earnest should *we* be to follow the example of those who have departed this life in the faith and fear of God, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when we shall say, There is no pleasure in them.

Sooner or later, we must all think on these things, much and seriously. A man may *live* without religion: for the sense of religion may be choked by the cares, or business, or pleasures of the world, and for a time appear as if it existed not: but without religion a man cannot *die*: unless, indeed, he die that cheerless and hopeless death, which is of all evils the most to be dreaded and deprecated. The examples, which we may have seen, will indeed have been

seen in vain, if they produce in us no serious thought, no repentance, no amendment.

Many have praised and envied the death of the righteous; and prayed earnestly that their last end might be like his. But they should remember, that such a death is the privilege of those only, who by patient continuance in well doing have sought for glory, and honour, and immortality. Many have witnessed the death of the unrighteous; but it has been with feelings of horror too dreadful to be expressed. For who shall justly describe those sensations, with which the inevitable approach of death is accompanied to that man, who has made no preparation for his latter end, feels no hope for his eternal state—who reviews, with the agony of a guilty conscience, crimes unrepented, and a life mispent; or, in the sullen calmness of despair, looks backward without consolation, and forward without hope. To him, who in this life only has his hope, the approach of death is dreadful indeed. Anticipating a fate which *must* arrive, however repugnant; struggling against an enemy whose power is too great to be long resisted, although his dominion is so dreaded, “all that” such “a man hath will he give for his life.” But as life must terminate, and at no distant period, miserable above that of all others must his existence be.

Let it be our earnest and constant prayer to God, that we may all be preserved from a state so truly terrible.

3. There is yet another lesson, which we may learn from our love of life; and that a lesson of the greatest importance. If we are so anxious for a life, which all allow to be, in a greater or less degree, a life of suffering, and disappointment, what ought to be our aspirations after a life of perfect enjoyment. If we so labour for a life which perishes, how ought we to strive, for that which shall endure for ever.

We all confess that in this world we have tribulation. Sooner or later we all experience this in ourselves: and we continually witness it in those around us. Many indeed are the blessings, which the goodness of the Almighty has provided for us, even in this transitory state of existence. Yet the reflection will sometimes intrude, All these things have an end. And how soon that end may come, no one can say. No man can *promise* to himself one day of perfect happiness. The termination of all that in which he delights must soon arrive; even if he live long and see not the grave. Friends forsake, riches vanish, health fails. Enjoyment long expected terminates in disappointment: anticipated pleasure is exchanged for pain. Yet with all this alloy in existence, which every

one acknowledges, how do we cling to life, as to our greatest blessing. Although we know our days are uncertain, and our joys precarious, this transitory state, and these fleeting pleasures occupy by far the greatest portion of our anxiety: “all that a man hath will he” still “give for his life.”

But how different is that life, which we all profess to look for, beyond the grave. We all, in our daily service, express that we believe the life everlasting: and of that life what are the particulars, which God hath revealed for our instruction and encouragement. Those things, which are eternal, are indeed not seen, and, because they are not seen, perhaps make a less forcible impression on our minds, than they ought to do. But although not yet seen with our natural eye, we know that they will one day be both seen and felt; and they may even now be spiritually discerned by the eye of faith. Of that life, which God hath prepared for those who love him, we can only speak with reverence and awe: for we know only in part, and therefore can describe only in part. The joys of heaven no man could explain: for he, who was once caught up thither, heard but unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.^b But that those joys shall infinitely

^b 2 Cor. xii. 4.

surpass any which we can know or conceive upon earth, the word of God himself declares: "as it is written: 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."^c

For a life like this, perfect in enjoyment, and infinite in duration, what care could be too great, what anxiety too intense? Who should for a moment hesitate to sacrifice all he had, and all he hoped to possess, in order to secure so valuable an existence? Yet, unworthy as the price required is, many *do* hesitate; and many will sacrifice nothing.

"All that a man hath will he give for his life," upon *earth*; he will compass sea and land to procure medicine to heal his sickness; he will cheerfully forego his luxuries, and submit to privations, and pain; merely to prolong, for a few short years, this anxious and precarious existence. But for a life of endless ages, in which sin and sorrow and death shall no more be found, how will he hesitate, before he will sacrifice one darling propensity, one sin that doth so easily beset him.

This conduct is irrational enough in itself: but incomparably more irrational, when considered with regard to its final consequences.

^c 1 Cor. ii. 9.

If a man neglect to preserve his present life, the alternative is death. And the afflicted soul, in the bitterness of its anguish, may sometimes look to *this* as an escape devoutly to be wished. He may *desire* to accomplish, as an hireling, his day; and regard the grave as that final abode, “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”^d

But if a man neglect to secure the *life eternal*, the dreadful alternative is eternal death. There is no middle state of ambiguous existence—no endless sleep—no eternal suspence between enjoyment and anguish. Revelation, and it is revelation *alone* that can inform us on a point so momentous, holds out to us only heaven and hell: a state more joyful than tongue can describe, or heart conceive; and that horrible state, from which even *hope* is banished, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”^e

We would not needlessly terrify the fearful, nor depress the dejected mind; we would not represent our religion as a pale, into which men are to be compelled to come; but, knowing the terrors of the Lord we would *persuade* men to consider, while it is yet time, the errors of their ways, and repent, and live.

If we are desirous to prolong our life, here

^d Job iii. 17.

^e Mark ix. 44.

is an object worthy of all our anxiety : a certain reward for our most earnest care. He that labours only to preserve this life, labours to “sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind.”^f He spends his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfieth not.^g His toils are wearisome, and continued ; and all must ultimately fail. He that labours for the life to come, labours for a reward equally certain and valuable. Let him love *that* life—it is life eternal—let him give all that he hath for it—he gives it as a ransom for his soul.

^f Hos. viii. 7.

^g Isaiah lv. 8.



LECTURE XVII.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING DOERS OF THE WORD,
AND NOT HEARERS ONLY.



JAMES I. 22—25.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man is blessed in his deed.

IT has ever been a common error to rest contented with a nominal profession of faith, while the actions are little, if at all, controlled by the principles which are maintained. To say we believe is so easy, often so profitable, that many readily assent without duly consi-

dering what they do. And many more deceive themselves with the idea that they really possess religious qualifications, of which they are found to be utterly destitute, whenever an occasion arises which puts their principles to the test.

There are few parts of Holy Scripture more directly levelled against errors of this nature, than the Epistle of St. James. It was composed for the purpose of correcting the abuses, which, even at that early period of the Church, had arisen among Christians: and sets forth, in the clearest manner, the necessity of exhibiting the reality of faith by its practical effects.

The passage just recited contains one of those precepts, enforced with great energy, and illustrated with peculiar clearness. As this illustration is perhaps less obvious, in the authorized version of the Bible, in consequence of a word introduced in one part of it, it may be desirable to notice the whole passage, and observe the nature of the comparison, which the Apostle draws.

The Apostle begins with the plain precept, "Be ye doers of the word," displaying in your lives the fruit of the faith which you have in your hearts, "and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." He then proceeds to illustrate the use which should be made of the

Holy Scriptures, by an image at once familiar and expressive. He compares the word of God to a perfect mirror, in which, if any man looks, he may discern the exact lineaments of his mind, without exaggeration or distortion. But then the use, which may be made of this instruction, will vary with the diligence of each individual to avail himself of the advantages thus afforded him. If he examine himself carelessly and casually, without waiting to study his real character, the benefits which he obtains will be as fruitless as they are transitory. But if he continue to study diligently what are the precise defects of his character, he will derive from the study the benefits which it is calculated to produce.

The unhappy state of the heedless and forgetful hearer is thus represented. "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way; and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

The second manner of looking into the Scriptures, that in which the word of God *ought* to be used, is represented in the verse immediately succeeding. But the contrast between the two passages is rendered less obvious by the introduction of the word *therein*, which

is printed in our Bibles in a different character, to intimate that the expression does not occur in the original: and the connection with the context would be more clear if the word were omitted. The term which is rendered “looketh to,”^a is in another passage rendered, “to look into;”^b and signifies properly, “stooping down so as to study attentively.” It is, in fact, the very same term used by two of the evangelists, when they describe the disciples as “stooping down” to look into the sepulchre whence Christ had risen:^c and the term “continueth” appears to indicate the stedfast and constant attention which is requisite, in order rightly to appreciate the benefits which are to be derived from the Scriptures, that perfect law of liberty, revealed to mankind, which has made all true believers “free from the law of sin and death;”^d for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”^e

The whole passage, therefore, will appear more clearly to agree with the context, if it be paraphrased somewhat in this manner: “But whoso looketh attentively into the perfect law of liberty, and remaineth by it, and continueth to look, he being not a hearer of

^a παρακύψας εἰς—.

^b 1 Pet. i. 12.

^c Luke xxiv. 12. John xx. 5.

^d Rom. viii. 2.

^e 2 Cor. iii. 7.

forgetfulness, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”^f

The contrast between the mere hearer and the doer of the word is thus evidently shewn. Before the eyes of both is held up, as a mirror, a perfect law of liberty; a law without defect in itself, and directing those who study it to a model of perfection, which elsewhere they could never discover: a law, which makes those, who obey it, free in the strictest sense, free from the slavery of sin, and the bonds, which evil passions and evil habits impose. They, who look upon this mirror imperfectly and casually, derive from it no permanent benefit. For a time they see what manner of men they are: but they go away, and straightway forget the salutary knowledge which they had thus momentarily attained. The effect is as transient as the image upon the polished surface of the mirror; and, like that image, is instantly effaced when a new object is presented. Still the fault rests only with the observer. Whoso stoopeth down, and studieth earnestly the lineaments thus displayed before his eyes; whoso knoweth what manner of man he is, and continueth to look, he being not

^f ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας, καὶ παραμείνας, οὗτος οὐκ ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος, ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου, οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται.

a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, that man shall be blessed in his *deed*. The influence of his conviction will be shewn in the change which is gradually wrought in his life and conversation. He will attain, what has been always considered a great step towards a virtuous life, a knowledge of himself: and by the grace of God will endeavour to repent, and to amend that which he is conscious has been done amiss.

The unerring word of truth then, intimates, that those, to whom the perfect law of liberty is revealed, are divided by a broad line of distinction into two very different classes. In one of these is found the forgetful hearer, in the other the doer of the word. And it is a question of a very important nature, in which of these two classes each of us is found.

It requires no long research to discover some who are only hearers of the word, and not doers. In every society there are many, who frequent the ordinary services of religion, perhaps read the Scriptures occasionally, and employ other means which should promote their growth in grace, and yet fail lamentably in not reducing into practice the duties which religion demands.—There are many others, who can scarcely be said to be even hearers of the word. They nominally profess the

Christian faith, but seldom attend the place appointed for the public worship of God; and never join in those solemn acts of Christian fellowship, which our Lord, almost in his dying words, enjoined upon all who would shew forth the Lord's death until he come. There is still one further gradation of irreligion, that of a man, who has openly thrown off all restraint, and pursues his course of a vicious life, without regard either to his real present interest or to his final salvation.

Now, all these fall under the first general class of hearers of the word, and not doers, deceiving their own selves. Even they who refuse to listen to the voice of religion, must not delude themselves with the idea that, because they will not hear, they are therefore without guilt. Baptized in the Christian name, educated in the Christian faith, living in a Christian land, able to learn that perfect law of liberty, to direct their eyes to that bright mirror which will reflect the true image of the soul, if they refuse to look, upon their own heads will fall the punishment of their sin. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, the voice of God has spoken, and still speaks, by his word revealed in the Scriptures. And he who hears not at all, as well as he who hears, but heeds not, will be left

without excuse when the great question shall finally be resolved.

There are, however, other hearers of the word, of whom better things may be hoped: they who look into the perfect law of liberty, and continue to study it, and consequently are blessed in their deeds.

The outward actions of a man afford, indeed, but an imperfect measure of his inward principles; because no man can penetrate into the recesses of his neighbour's heart, and there discern the motives by which the actions are modified, and from which they take their tone and colour. A regard for the opinion of the world, the advantages which even in this life attend at least a decent regard for the greater moral duties, may produce an apparent conformity with the precepts of religion, while truly religious motives are utterly wanting. But the difference, between the religious and the irreligious character, will principally be seen in this. The doer of the word has constantly before him the precepts of the Scriptures, and the reasons of his obedience. He may often fail in his duty—he may often lament the exceeding difficulty of obedience; the imperfection of his very best actions; the undue motives which mix themselves up with the very duties of life. But then he is not a

forgetful hearer. He continues to look earnestly and closely into the perfect law of liberty—he confesses, with David, what love he has to the law of God, that all the day long is his study in it. He does not lose sight of the image reflected from the mirror of truth; but regulates himself by the instruction which he thence obtains.

The first principal benefit, which he may expect thus to derive, is the knowledge of himself. So deceitful, as well as wicked, is the heart of man, that to obtain this knowledge is most difficult. True self-knowledge is that which, without a figure, came down from heaven. As long as men measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves,^s they cannot reasonably expect to be wise. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, has placed before his eyes the mirror of unerring truth. Every feature of his mind is displayed in its proper proportions. And if he continue to look, he will not fail to know, and to remember, what manner of man he is.

God, who revealed the Scriptures, knew what was in man. The most artful devices are ever open to his all-seeing eye. And they who read his word will often *feel* this. They

^s 2 Cor. x. 12.

will sometimes discover their own thoughts expressed in the words of Scripture. The maxims, and precepts, and the descriptions of sin, come so home to their bosoms, that they are constrained to confess the truth of the delineation; that the word of God is quick and powerful, and is a discerner of the thoughts of the heart. Every creature is thus manifest in the sight of God: "all things are naked and open unto the eye of him with whom we have to do:"^h and they who study his word shall obtain from their labours that inestimable knowledge, an acquaintance with themselves.

But the benefit of continuing to study the law of God rests not here. Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth to look, that man is blessed in his *deed*. The internal influence of religion will shew itself in the uniform tenor of his external conduct. All his duties will spring from a high source: and his behaviour will be consistent throughout. His faith will be displayed in his works: and by works will his faith be made perfect.ⁱ

Although, therefore, there may be some uncertainty in determining in any specific case, to which class of hearers a man may belong; we are justified in drawing two very important conclusions.

^h Heb. iv. 13.

ⁱ James ii. 22.

The first is, that if any man profess to be not only a hearer of the word but a doer of it, and yet live in the practice of known sin, that man is a deceiver of his own self. True it is that all do sin, and come short of the glory of God—"a just man falleth seven times,"^k says Solomon: but then by the grace of God "he riseth up again." He does not allow himself in the practice of sin. He bewails, and repents his wickedness. He strives and struggles against it. And he knows that if he fights manfully the fight of faith, he shall not labour in vain. That with the temptation, however arduous, however grievous, there will always be some way to escape, that he may be able to bear it. But the grace of God will not abound, when men *continue* in sin. Whatever the sin be, however confirmed by habit, however endeared by circumstances, however facilitated by the readiness with which it besets a man, that sin, if persisted in shews that the sinner is but a forgetful hearer of the word.

Another consequence which flows from the necessary connection between obedience and true faith is this. That the action of faith and practice is reciprocal. As a sincere obedience will display itself in a virtuous life; so such a life has a tendency to confirm and

^k Prov. xxiv. 16.

establish a wavering faith. This conclusion is expressly made in Scripture: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."¹ One main obstacle to a firm belief is found in the deceitfulness of sin. A man entangled in the ways of wickedness soon hopes, and then soon believes, that the punishment of sin may not be so dreadful, or so certain, as the Scriptures declare. It is an easy way to stifle the reproaches of conscience, if a man can persuade himself that the terrors are unfounded. Thus the sin, which arose from unbelief, strengthens the very cause which produced it: and will, if unchecked by the grace of God, go on, until it hath brought forth death.

"Be ye" then, "doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Rest not satisfied with a partial glance at the perfect law of liberty. Go not away, and straightway forget what manner of men ye are. Stoop down and stedfastly regard, and continue to study the true portrait of your own minds, which the Scriptures will present. So shall ye, not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, be blessed in your deeds.

¹ John vii. 17.

LECTURE XVIII.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

1 COR. XV. 14.

If Christ be not raised, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

THE attention of the Christian church has lately^a been directed to the important events, by which our salvation was procured; the death of the eternal Son of God for the sins of man. A pause has been made in the frivolity of pleasure, and in the tumult of worldly business, that we might have leisure to concentrate our thoughts, and fix them upon heavenly things. We have been called, in the daily service of our church, to follow our Saviour from one scene of suffering to another; to witness the insults and mockery, which he endured; the persevering cruelty of his enemies; the timor-

^a This Lecture was delivered on Easter Day.

ous inconsistency of his judge. We have seen him betrayed by one of his own chosen apostles; denied by another; forsaken by all. We have witnessed the triumph of the powers of darkness: we have seen all nature affected by the sufferings of her God: the vail of the temple rent, the earth shaken, the sun darkened by a preternatural eclipse; until, all having been accomplished which was written concerning Christ, he exclaimed, "It is finished;" and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

It is impossible that these events should have been contemplated, without exciting some feelings of more than usual seriousness. Often as many around me must have reflected upon them, they will have found in such meditations continually some new cause for wonder, some fresh claim for gratitude.

Having dwelt so long upon the humiliation of Christ, the church this day celebrates the first act of his exaltation; his triumphant resurrection from the grave, in which it was not possible he should be retained. However familiar the circumstances attending the resurrection are to our minds, their exceeding importance must ever render the consideration of them an employment of the greatest interest to every Christian: for upon the certainty of that event depends the truth of the gospel; all sure

knowledge of our own resurrection; all confident expectation of future judgment. "If Christ be not raised; then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

You will be ready, then, I am persuaded, to join with me in serious meditation on the events which we this day commemorate. You will not look for novelty, on a subject, which has engaged the attention of the Christian world from the day when our Lord burst the bands of death, until now. But you will be prepared to call to mind some of the circumstances, and some of the consequences, of the resurrection of Christ.

1. The importance of Christ's resurrection, in the scheme of the gospel dispensation, appears from the prominent part, which it occupies, in the preaching of the Apostles, immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost.

As soon as Christ was risen from the dead, a wondrous change took place in the behaviour of his disciples. They, who had before forsaken him and fled, became suddenly the intrepid preachers of his religion: and the fact of all others on which they insisted, as forming the foundation of their faith, was that the same Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified and slain, was raised to life from the dead. This was the theme of the energetic discourse, which St.

Peter delivered immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost;^b and of two addresses,^c which he soon after made. This was the fact to which the Apostles all gave witness with great power.^d This was the most prominent subject—what was delivered “first of all”^e—in the discourses of St. Paul, whether to the Jews or Gentiles.^f And when an apostle was to be added to the number of the eleven, he was studiously chosen of those which accompanied with them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, that he might be a witness with them of his resurrection.^g And with good reason was this fact thus insisted upon. For it was the fact which conferred infallible authority upon all the words and actions of Christ. Long before he came into the world it was predicted that the Holy One of God should not see corruption.^h The resurrection of the Messiah, and the very time which should elapse between his death and his rising again, were historically prefigured in the miraculous preservation of the prophet Jonah. Jesus, during his ministry, had frequently uttered predictions of the same import. “De-

^b Acts ii. 24.^c Acts iii. 15. x. 40.^d Acts iv. 33.^e 1 Cor. xv. 3.^f Acts xiii. 30, 33. xvii. 31.^g Acts i. 21, 22.^h Psalm xvi. 10. applied Acts ii. 31.

stroy this temple," said he to the Jews, "and in three days I will raise it up;" and this "he spake of the temple of his body."ⁱ As the time of his sacrifice approached, he expressed himself still more clearly to his disciples, and to the world.

When, therefore, Jesus by wicked hands was crucified and slain, then was the period, at which was to be for ever decided the important question, whether he were the Christ or not. His enemies were well aware of this: for they endeavoured, with impotent precaution, to prevent the fulfilment of God's designs. "The chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."^k They demanded, therefore, a watch; which they might set over the sepulchre, to make it as sure as they could. And this they did; sealing the stone, and setting a watch. The third day came; and how was this question decided? Two different accounts are given. The disciples assert that Jesus is actually risen from the dead; that they have beheld him, conversed with him, seen him going in and coming out among them; shewing himself alive by many infallible proofs; performing miracles, as he was wont; making direct allu-

ⁱ John ii. 19, 21.

^k Matth. xxvii. 62, 63.

sion, in his discourse, to events which had occurred before his death :¹ eating and drinking in their presence : permitting himself even to be handled and felt, that they might perceive that it was no phantom which deluded their senses ; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as he had.^m The Jews, on the other hand, assert, that the disciples had stolen him away while the soldiers slept : that the disciples—so timid that they had deserted their Lord in his agony—had suddenly attempted to surprize the strict discipline of the Roman soldiery, and succeeded in their attempt : had dared to brave the indignation of their powerful adversaries ; who yet could at once have confuted their imposture, had it been such, by evidence which could not have been gainsayed.

Here, then, it may be asked, as it has been often asked, on whose side lies the credulity ? Shall we believe the testimony of men all consistent in their account of an event, which yet they expected not to occur, before it happened—for, with all the warning which they had received, the resurrection in a great measure took the apostles by surprize—Shall we believe men standing forth with one voice in the assertion of a fact, in which they could not be mistaken ; and suffering themselves to be persecuted, and

¹ Luke xxiv. 44.

^m Luke xxiv. 39.

tormented, and put to death, rather than deny the truth of what they asserted : or shall we give credit to a tale inconsistent and contradictory : a tale evidently got up for a specific purpose, and tacitly abandoned even by those who devised it ?

But this is not all. After the day of the resurrection, Jesus *continued* upon earth. He was shewed openly, “not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God.”ⁿ “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve : after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once :”^o of whom the greater part remained for several years as living witnesses of the fact. Last of all, he was seen of one who, in consequence of that appearance, changed the whole course of his life ; was converted from a persecutor into a most ardent and persevering, yet judicious, preacher of the gospel. As long as any of these witnesses survived, so long they persisted in their assertion. What they had seen with their eyes, and looked upon, and known, and their hands had handled,^p that they declared and attested, through evil report, and good report ; through peril, and persecution, and nakedness, and famine, and the sword.

These facts, which no one dares to dispute, can be accounted for upon only one supposition ;

ⁿ Acts x. 41.

^o 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6.

^p 1 John i. 1.

that Jesus really did rise from the dead. Allow the Jews' story to be true. You account for the disappearance of the body of Jesus: but how do you account for the sudden change in the whole manner and disposition of his disciples? Whence had those men, before so timid, suddenly acquired such constancy and courage? How is it that they, who not long before his death wished to dissuade their Lord from going into Judea, because the Jews sought to stone him,^a now themselves braved danger and death, in defence of that, which was, by this supposition, untrue; and if untrue, must have been known to be so by them? On whose side then, we may ask again, on whose side is the credulity?

When we preach the resurrection of Christ, we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We know and are well assured, that as on this day "Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," was also "declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."^r

II. But it is not only as an historical fact, that the resurrection of Christ affects the assurance of our faith. It is also most important as intimately connected with our own resurrection.

^a John xi. 8.

^r Rom. i. 3, 4.

To bring life and immortality to light, was the great end of the gospel revelation. And the events of this day having indisputably established the divine authority of Christ's mission, thereby placed upon the sure foundation of truth all that he had ever declared, respecting the general resurrection. They established, fully and finally, declarations such as these. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."^s "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."^t At the same time, the resurrection of Christ, by an instance of the most striking kind, proved it to be no incredible thing that God should raise the dead. Accordingly, the disciples of Christ continually unite, in their discourses, the fact of the resurrection of Christ, with the doctrine of the general resurrection.

The rising of Christ from the dead was not an isolated miracle of wonder. As it was the triumphant conclusion of his earthly ministry, the completion of the prefigurations exhibited under the patriarchal, and Mosaic dispensations,

^s John xi. 25, 26.

^t John v. 28, 29.

and of the prophecies, whether recorded in the Old Testament, or delivered in the discourses of our Lord; so it was an example of that resurrection from death, which every soul of man shall experience. Not only “is Christ risen from the dead:” but he is also “become the first-fruits of them that slept;”^u the first who so rose from the dead as to die no more, “death having no more dominion over him:”^x opening the way to the resurrection of life, unto as many as shall be members of his spiritual body; as the offering of the first-fruits, under the law, sanctified the whole produce of the year.^y He is “the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.”^z “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living.”^a

Before the coming of our Lord in the flesh, even a future life, and much more the resurrection of the body, were facts, respecting which a great part of the world was in doubt. They who studied the Scriptures of the Old Testament might, indeed, collect sufficient intimations to encourage their hopes, upon this

^u 1 Cor. xv. 20.

^x Rom. vi. 9.

^y Rom. xi. 16.

^z Col. i. 18.

^a Rom. xiv. 9.

important point; but full assurance was still wanting. That assurance has now been given. We are told, on the infallible authority of revelation, that "God hath both raised up the Lord Jesus: and will also raise us up by his own power."^b We are taught, that the similarity which existed between the human form, assumed by our Lord, and our mortal bodies, shall be continued, by our being made like unto him. That "he which raised up Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus."^c The resurrection of Christ is made also the foundation of accurate reasoning, as well as of express assertion, to confute those who said that there was no resurrection of the dead. The apostle of the Gentiles proves, by a train of argument most convincing, expressed in language of the most energetic character, that from the fact of the resurrection of Christ, that of our own resurrection necessarily follows; that the one cannot subsist without the other; that "if Christ be not raised, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." He proceeds to shew, by illustrations drawn from the order of the natural world, how great shall be the change which shall take place, when that, which is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption: when that, which is sown in dishonour,

^b 1 Cor. vi. 14.

^c 2 Cor. iv. 14.

shall be raised in glory: when that, which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power: when that, which is sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body.^d

It is true, that upon this most awful and interesting subject, although there is sufficient to exercise our most ardent faith, and to raise our desires after a fuller knowledge, there still remains much of which we must at present be ignorant. We cannot know clearly—for we have no experience which can enable us to judge—in what that change shall consist, which at the resurrection shall take place upon our corporeal frame: how it shall be fitted for an endless duration, yet preserving its identity. We know not by what mysterious power the remains of our mortal bodies, which have been dispersed by the winds, or dissolved in the ocean, or mingled with the dust, shall again be united: we cannot conceive how the bones, which lie “scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth,”^e shall come together, bone to his bone, and be clothed again with flesh, and covered with skin from above, and be breathed upon with the breath of life, and those dry bones shall live.^f Such knowledge is too

^d 1 Cor. xv.

^e Psalm cxli. 7.

^f Ezek. xxxvii.

wonderful and excellent for us, we cannot attain unto it. Yet, relying upon the word of truth, we doubt not that so it shall be. Confident in him, who has revealed his word, and confirmed it by his resurrection, “we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body; according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”^g

III. But there is a doctrine, still more awful, intimately connected with the events which we this day celebrate, and with the general resurrection. Mankind will not be raised from their graves, merely in order to resume a life, to which the condition of immortality will be attached: but “that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”^h Such was the conclusion which the Apostle drew from the fact of the resurrection of Christ. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given *assurance* unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”ⁱ

^g Phil. iii. 20, 21.

^h 2 Cor. v. 10.

ⁱ Acts xvii. 31.

The awful circumstances of the judgment to come, and the exceedingly fearful consequences to every soul of man, whose state for all eternity shall then be finally determined, are so fully displayed in the New Testament, are so closely connected with all the facts and doctrines of the Gospel, that no one can, with any shew of consistency, assent to the one, and deny the other. Yet, how many of those, who declare their full belief in the Scriptures, live in a practical disregard of the judgment to come. Did men actually feel the assurance which they express: did they consider with their heart, as they confess with their lips, that in the dispensations of the Almighty, as declared in his word, the future is as sure as the past; they would surely consider their ways, and return, and live.

Every man, who weighs well the proofs which establish the historical fact, will acknowledge that "the Lord is risen indeed."^k Every man, who has learned to value the Scriptures, so authenticated, and to rely upon them, as containing the words of infallible truth, will confess that "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world."^l How is it then, that so few of those, who profess the faith of Christ, live under the continual conviction, that there

^k Luke xxiv. 34.

^l Acts xvii. 31.

is coming that great and terrible day of the Lord? If Christianity be true, it is true in all its parts. The resurrection of Christ is an undoubted fact, which rests upon testimony. The coming of Christ to judgment is another undoubted fact, which rests upon the authority of his holy word. Let no Christian, then, however young and thoughtless, fall into that deadly error of supposing, that he may, with impunity, violate the express commands of God; remembering that, though the young man may rejoice in his youth, and let his heart cheer him in the days of his youth, and may walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes; yet, for all these things, God will bring him into judgment.^m

IV. But terrible would be the anticipation of the least guilty among the sons of men, if he looked forward to that great day, relying only upon what he could do for himself. Impartial self-examination will discover, in the past life of every one, many a folly and many a sin, for which no repentance, however sincere, could, by its inherent efficacy, ever atone; and when he weighs even himself in the balance, he is conscious that he is found wanting. But the resurrection of Christ not only gives assurance of future judgment; it is closely

^m Eccles. xi. 9.

connected with the spiritual blessings obtained to us by his merits. It is connected with that regeneration, without which our Lord himself declares no man shall see the kingdom of God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Peter, "which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."ⁿ It is closely connected with our justification: for as Christ "was delivered for our offences," so he "was raised again for our justification."^o It is, therefore, immediately connected with our sanctification, through the influence of God's Holy Spirit: with that purity of life, that willing obedience to the precepts of God, by which only the reality of a saving faith is made known: that we "may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in" Christ.^p

If we would partake of the benefits which, as on this day, were assured to mankind, we must comply with the conditions on which those benefits are offered. There must, even in this world, take place in us a death, and a rising again: a death unto sin, and a rising again unto righteousness. "Know ye not, that

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 3.

^o Rom. iv. 25.

^p Acts xxvi. 18.

so many of us as were baptized unto Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him, by baptism, into death, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”⁴ If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.⁵

Consider, then, what responsibility rests upon us, to avail ourselves of the benefits which have been assured to us by the resurrection of Christ. There is required of us the continual mortifying of all our corrupt affections: a constant struggle with the sin, whatever it may be, which most easily besets us. It is, indeed, an inestimable privilege which true believers attain by the Gospel dispensation. They are buried with Christ in baptism, “wherein also they are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”⁵

But then, how urgent is the appeal which

⁴ Rom. vi. 3—5.

⁵ Rom. viii. 11.

⁵ Col. ii. 12.

the Apostle makes to every Christian: and how difficult the duties which our profession imposes. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above; not on things on the earth: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."... "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry"... "Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another."... "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful."†

When we read precepts such as these, as the necessary practical results of the events, which we this day celebrate, we shall surely feel that, if we have much reason for thank-

† Col. iii. 1—15.

fulness, we have much reason also for serious reflection. Our joy will be tempered with dread. This is peculiarly the day which the Lord has made: we will therefore rejoice and be glad in it: but we shall rejoice with fear, and be glad with a holy reverence. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore we will keep the feast: but we shall keep it, “not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness: but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”^u We shall exult in that, “Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more:” and shall likewise reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”^x

^u 1 Cor. v. 7.

^x Rom. vi. 9, 11.



LECTURE XIX.

THE POWER OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN AND EARTH.



MATT. XXVIII. 18.

Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me, in heaven, and in earth.

WHEN our Saviour had completed all the prophecies of the Old Testament, and those which he had himself delivered, by his resurrection from the dead, he was seen of his disciples forty days, and shewed himself alive by many infallible proofs. Some of the deeds, which he then performed, and some of the precepts which he delivered, have been recorded for our instruction; and their study will form an appropriate sequel to the reflections suggested by the resurrection of our Lord.

Among the words which Jesus thus spake, those in the text are some of the most remarkable. “Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me, in heaven

and in earth.”—No words can be more plain to be understood than these; and few words contain more important information. They are delivered with calm dignity, as by one having authority. There is no effort, no ambiguity. Consider *who* it was who uttered them. It was no ordinary man. It was not only a prophet, such as those inspired persons, who were raised up, from time to time, to declare the will of God. It was more than a prophet. It was “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God . . . by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst”^a of Israel. It was he, who, “being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” was taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and slain. It was he, moreover, whom God had “raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”^b All that Jesus had ever said had been accomplished, in his life, and in his death, and in his rising again. He was then going in and coming out among his disciples; satisfying them that it was he himself, by the very proofs which incredulity demanded; eating and drinking in their presence; still exerting his miraculous power; greeting them with the blessings of peace;

^a Acts ii. 22.

^b Acts ii. 24.

opening their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures:^c declaring that he would send the promise of the Father upon them; which also he did. *He* it was, who in the words of truth and soberness declared, “All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.”

I. Now, observe how perfectly this emphatic declaration agrees with other parts of Scripture. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, after having expatiated upon the humility of Christ, who “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;” thus declares his glorious exaltation. “Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”^d The same Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, expresses himself in terms equally decisive. When he raised Christ from the dead, he “set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not

^c Luke xxiv. 45.

^d Phil. ii. 7, 9, 10, 11.

only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet.”^e St. Peter bore testimony to the same fact: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”^f

The words, therefore, of Christ, thus confirmed by other parts of Scripture, must be understood in their most literal and comprehensive sense: and they contain two assertions. The first is, “All power is given unto me in heaven.”

1. The first obvious deduction from this assertion is, that the person who so spake was a Divine person. We read in Scripture of various gradations of heavenly beings; all created by the Almighty, and all performing his will in their several stations. He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.^g We read of the angels and archangels; of the innumerable company of blessed spirits, who bow down from hour to hour before the eternal throne. But all these possess no intrinsic authority. They refused to receive worship from man, being, only in a higher degree, the fellow-servants of earthly prophets.^h And the delusion of worshipping

^e Eph. i. 20, 21.

^f Acts v. 31.

^g Psalm civ. 4.

^h Rev. xxii. 8, 9.

angels is pointedly condemned in Holy Scripture, as the result of intruding into things, which no man hath seen.ⁱ But high above all principalities and powers is seated He, the ineffable Creator of all things, King of kings, and Lord of lords: who only hath immortality and power. When, therefore, Christ asserts, that “all power is given unto him in heaven,” he asserts, what is frequently asserted and implied in other parts of Scripture, that he and the Father are one.—And it is to be observed, that this confirmation of the great fact was given after he had indisputably confirmed his divine mission, and his truth, by rising from the dead, and immediately before his visible ascension into those glories, which he had with the Father before the world was.

2. Christ being thus truly God, peculiarly lays claim to almighty *power*; all *power* is given unto me in heaven.

By him all things were made; and without him was not any one thing made, that was made.^k “By him all things *consist*.”^l for he upholdeth all things by the word of his power.^m He possesses all things which the Father hath.ⁿ He is the Lord of all things.^o

ⁱ Col. ii. 18.

^l Col. i. 17.

ⁿ John xvi. 15.

^k John i. 3. οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονε.

^m Heb. i. 3.

^o Acts x. 36.

He is over all things, God blessed for ever,^p “angels, and authorities, and powers, being subjected to him.”^q

These expressions of Holy Scripture are plain enough to be comprehended, if they be taken in their obvious, literal sense. All attempts to explain them away, so as to make them bend to the pre-conceived opinions of human reason, lead only to contradiction. True it is, they open a great mystery: but why should it be astonishing, that in a religion, which is from above, and speaks of such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, something should be found which we cannot entirely comprehend?—Surely it becomes us, instead of cavilling at the revelation which is given us, to meditate with wonder upon the mercy of God, who hath done so great things for man: to contemplate with thankfulness Jesus Christ, who died for us men and for our salvation, as invested with supreme power in the highest possible sense; the Creator, the preserver, the governor, of the universe.

3. But, further, when Christ declares, “All power is given unto me in heaven,” he asserts another fact, very important and most consolatory to every soul of man. Who that looks

^p Rom. ix. 5.

^q 1 Pet. iii. 22.

forward with trembling hope to those regions of happiness, which are promised to the faithful, can avoid many feelings of anxious dread, lest he should at last be found a castaway? In the midst of the most earnest aspirations after future happiness, we still find that the world, and the things of the world, cling to the soul, and often distract it. Even when we feel most convinced of the entire truth of our religion, how frequently does the secret delusion of a heart of unbelief betray to us the weakness of our fallen nature. How frequently is the avowal of faith, "Lord, I believe," immediately checked and qualified with the prayer, "help thou mine unbelief."^r There are times, when a man is more than usually aware of his responsibility; of the little which he has done, of the greatness of the duties which he ought to do.—When the spirit of a man is thus bowed down, the gospel of Christ speaks peace to him, if he relies upon its gracious promises. It points to Christ, who possesses all power, as our prevailing intercessor in heaven. It declares, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins."^s It declares, that Christ "is able also to save them to the

^r Mark. ix. 24.

^s 1 John ii. 1, 2.

uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”^t

To Christ, therefore, in his divine nature, is given *all* power in heaven: the power and supreme dominion over all created beings; and especially that power, by which he intercedes for and saves those who put their trust in him.

II. There are found, however, few, who disavow the power of Christ in heaven. It is expressed so fully and so frequently in Scripture that they, who would refuse to acknowledge it, must either deny or pervert the obvious meaning of the inspired writings. Accordingly, almost all who speak or think at all upon the nature of Christ, speak and think of him as supreme in power, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high.

But the words which we have been considering contain another assertion: All power is given unto me in earth. And this is an assertion far less regarded in practice; because it more immediately interferes with the violent and evil passions of mankind. The duties, which this power requires of man, are sufficiently plain.

1. He, who has all power in earth, requires our obedience to his commands, whenever they are made known to us.

^t Heb. vii. 25.

Now how is this duty fulfilled? The commands of our sovereign Lord have been made known to us in his Scriptures. They there stand recorded in words plain and intelligible. And no one, born in a Christian land, and educated in the Christian faith, can pretend to be ignorant of them. We have besides all taken upon ourselves the solemn responsibility of obeying them, by honouring God's holy name and his word, and walking in the same all the days of our life.—Still, how few display their sense of the power, which Christ has upon earth, by obeying uniformly, to the best of their ability, the commands which he has revealed. These commands are not made the primary rules by which our lives are usually regulated. Pleasure, interest, amusement, all claim and acquire an influence over us, which religion rarely possesses. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, all these *appear* to possess power on earth; while he, who has all power, is too frequently forgotten, or neglected. Surely this is not the conduct of men who weigh wisely what they are about to do. He who has the power on earth has a claim to worship, honour, obedience.

2. But our Lord demands also our gratitude, and love. He is not a hard master, reaping where he hath not sown, and gathering

that he hath not strawed. He claims our obedience, not only by what he *is*, but by what he has done for us. He came down from heaven, in which he possessed all power, to dwell on earth, as one of the most humble of its inhabitants. He dwelt in meanness, and obscurity; was subject to privation, and pain; to ignominy, to suffering, and to death—He conferred on every soul of man benefits, which can never be appreciated; much less repaid—He rescued every man, who will repent and believe, from the worm that dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched. By his own death he destroyed him who has the power of death. He therefore claims our obedience, because he first claims our love. He who has all power on earth, is the same who was among mankind as one who served: who took upon himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man. What reason, therefore, have we to regard him with gratitude and love, not only as our supreme Lord, but as our Redeemer.

3. The universal power of Christ upon earth affects us also very materially, by his being the spiritual head of the church. The whole collection of believers throughout the world, however varying in language, and in some of the outward forms of their religion, holding one faith, and one baptism; having one

God and Father of all, have also one Lord—The Scripture represents them as all members of the spiritual body of Christ. The apostle Paul thus commands the Ephesians; Speak the truth in love “that we may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”^u He exhorts them also in these words: “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”^x

Now, while this doctrine represents in the clearest point of view the condescension and mercy of God, it also displays the fearful responsibility of man. We are thus intimately connected with him who is purity itself. These our bodies are represented to be the habitation of that blessed Spirit, who was to be with the

^u Ephes. iv. 16, 17.

^x Ephes. ii. 19—22.

Christian church always, even unto the end of the world. What holiness of life, then, what purity, what sanctity, is required of those who profess this faith. “Know ye not,” says the apostle, “that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”^y In a subsequent part of the same epistle he repeats the same doctrine, and founds upon it a specific command. “Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God: and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”^z And again, “Ye are the temple of the living God”—“Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”^a

When, then, we are tempted to actions of impurity, let us think upon these things. Let us remember that Christ himself is the head, of which all Christians throughout the world are members: that offences of this nature are not only the express violation of God’s com-

^y 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

^z 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

^a 2 Cor. vi. 16. vii. 1.

mands, but a defilement of Christ's spiritual body.

There is still one other reflection intimately connected with the subject before us. When a man is tempted, let him consider *whom* he is tempted to disobey. During the ministry of Christ, he appeared meek and lowly of heart. He exhorted, he persuaded, he entreated men to repent. Sometimes he would dwell with awful solemnity upon the terrors of the Lord; upon death, and judgment. But more commonly, he would not break the bruized reed, nor quench the smoking flax. But when he had completed all that was given him to do, *then* shone forth the dignity of his divine nature. There is something very terrible in the calmness, with which he declares "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." We feel that it is truth—we know that it is an overwhelming truth. It sets the seal to all the declarations which Christ himself had previously made: it shews that what he had said he is also *able* to perform.

Consider, then, *these* words, ye who would be ashamed of your religion before men: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."^b

^b Mark viii. 38.

Consider this, ye who deny Christ: “Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”^c

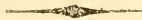
Consider this, ye also who have been subject to privation, or peril, or disgrace, for the sake of your religion. “There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”^d

These are the threatenings, and these the promises of him, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth. They who are wise will ponder these things; and they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

If we would one day witness the glorious superiority, which Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven, exercises at the right hand of God, we must in this life obey in all humility, and meekness, and purity, the commands of him, to whom is also given all power upon earth.

^c Matth. x. 33.

^d Luke xviii. 29, 30.



LECTURE XX.

THE ORIGIN AND DESIGN OF CHRISTIANITY.



TITUS II. 11—14.

The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

THE Epistle of St. Paul to Titus is a model of earnest and affectionate exhortation. It was addressed to him, when he had been set over the Church of Christ, established in the island of Crete; and contains instructions for his conduct, while it warns him of many errors, which had crept into the church. It reminds him of those, especially, who were introducing Jewish fables among the worshippers of God,

and his Christ: and commands him, with the energy, and seriousness, and fearlessness so peculiar to St. Paul, to “rebuke them sharply, that they might be sound in the faith.”^a

It formed no part, or at least a very subordinate part, of St. Paul’s intention to give, on this occasion, a systematic account of the Christian scheme. But it so happens that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, while he is laying down rules of moral conduct to be observed by all in their different stations, he displays in few words, with the utmost precision and clearness, the particulars by which the dispensation of the Gospel is characterized, the doctrines which it teaches, the inducements to obedience which it displays; and the great end of its establishment.

A person of our own nation, very eminent for his attainments and learning, towards the end of his days declared, that “notwithstanding he had been so laborious in his enquiries upon all ancient subjects, yet he could rest his soul on none save the Scriptures: and above all, that these very words gave him the most satisfaction, as comprizing the nature, end, and reward of true religion.”^b

^a Tit. i. 13.

^b This declaration was made by Selden to Archbishop Usher. See Watson’s Tracts, Vol. I. p. 209. note.

Let us direct our attention to the several particulars so important and interesting. And may the same Holy Spirit direct and guide our hearts, that in pondering upon the word of truth we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.

I. The inspired apostle, commanding Titus to exhort even slaves to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,” supports his injunction with the assertion, “for the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men.”

In these few words, we are informed of the origin, the end, and the extent, of the Christian dispensation.

1. It originated only in the free grace of the Almighty. Upon this point, respecting which reason is necessarily silent, the sacred volume declares expressly, that God hath called us “according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.”^c This grace of God forms so prominent a feature in the Christian scheme, that in some passages of Scripture the term is used for the doctrines of Christianity.^d Thus the apostle says, “This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”^e And, in the text, St. Paul

^c 2 Tim. i. 9.

^d John i. 17. Acts xiii. 43.

^e 1 Pet. v. 12.

is speaking of the Christian dispensation when he declares, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."

2. As the Gospel scheme originated in the grace of God, so it had for its *object* the bringing salvation to *all men*.

The law of Moses was but as a school-master to bring the world to Christianity;^f leading on the people of the Jews, often with reluctance, and always with constraint; holding out to them temporal rewards and punishments; and selecting them from the rest of the world, to be the depositories of the Scriptures of truth, and to perpetuate the race, from which the Saviour of the world was, in the fulness of time, to proceed. If one man had an *exclusive* creed more than another, it was the Jew. Separated by their ceremonies, and rites, and opinions, from all the world, the children of Israel confined, in idea, the favour of the Almighty entirely to themselves.

Precisely opposed to this exclusiveness, is the genius of Christianity; which is *generality*. Salvation has appeared to *all* men. There is in Christ Jesus, "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."^g All are made partakers of the same glorious privileges. To all are laid open the same

^f Gal. iii. 24.

^g Col. iii. 11.

means of grace ; to all are displayed the same hopes of glory.

II. The Apostle having thus asserted the origin and character of the Christian faith, as “the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men,” proceeds to give a summary of its leading precepts, for the regulation of our conduct in this world : “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

Our religion here teaches us at once what we should avoid, and what we should practise : to flee from that which is evil ; and to do that which is good.

1. (1) The first evil, the origin of all others, is ungodliness. To deny ungodliness is a precept, levelled, not only against those who are so foolish as to say in their heart, there is no God ; not only against those, who openly deny his name, and do despite to his word ; not only against the atheist, and the scoffer, and the blasphemer : but against all, who encourage themselves in sin, by wilfully shutting out from their thoughts all sense of religion ; and so *live* as without God in the world ; although they may believe, and tremble while they believe, that he *is*, and will hereafter avenge himself upon the impious.

Again, all infringe this command, who would *reason* themselves out of the terrors of conscience, by endeavouring to set the attributes of the Most High in opposition to one another—who delight in representing God *only* as a God of mercy, who is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, neglecting to consider Him also as a God of justice, who “will by no means clear the guilty:”^h and this, not from the errors of a faulty judgment, to which all are liable, but from the culpable perversity of a corrupt heart; endeavouring to draw an argument for continuance in sin from a misrepresentation, or wilful suppression, of the word of truth, These, and such as these, *deny not ungodliness*, and so far obey not the maxims, which the Christian religion was revealed on purpose *to teach*.

(2) The second evil, which we are required to deny, are our “worldly lusts.”

Pride—that haughty spirit that precedes a fall—anger, revenge, malice, hatred, envy, uncharitable discontent at the success of a competitor; the inordinate love of earthly things, of pleasure, or of fame; the evil passions and propensities of our nature; and “covetousness, which is idolatry”ⁱ—all these are included in what we are required by our Christian pro-

^h Exod. xxxiv. 7.

ⁱ Col. iii. 5.

fession to deny; and which we did promise and vow at our baptism so to do.—And the reason given by St. John is express and clear: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”^k

2. But our religion rests not on negative precepts. It commands us to abstain from evil: but it also commands us to *do* that which is good. It teaches us, that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

This injunction comprises our duty to ourselves, to our neighbour, and to our God.

(1) We are first taught that we should live *soberly*.

The primary duty of self-government, exceedingly difficult—for it is a struggle of a man against himself—is essential to the Christian character. Without it, religion becomes hypocrisy; and zeal for the glory of God is continually apt to degenerate into a desire to promote our own culpable schemes of advancement. It includes the regulation of our desires

^k 1 John ii. 16, 17.

—that every man “should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour:”¹ that we avoid excess of all kinds: that we “be not overcharged with surfeiting:”^m that we “walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness.”ⁿ

It includes, also, the regulation of our headstrong passions, and unruly tempers—the subduing of strife and ill-will—those little animosities, which too often embitter the cup of life, and produce, perhaps, more real misery than the great calamities of rarer occurrence.

It includes, also, the regulation of our words and thoughts—that we let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying:^o “neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”^p

All these duties are we taught when we are commanded to “live soberly.”

(2) Again, we are taught our duty to our neighbour—to live *righteously*, or justly.

Scrupulous honesty in our dealings with the world cannot, perhaps, in strictness, be pe-

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 4.

^m Luke xxi. 34.

ⁿ Rom. xiii. 13.

^o Ephes. iv. 29.

^p Ephes. v. 4.

cularly denominated a Christian virtue: because its importance for the well-being of society is so universally felt, that human laws every where endeavour to enforce it. But, if Christianity be not the first to *teach* the necessity of strict integrity, the sanctions, by which it establishes the duty, are of a higher nature than any other, and are peculiarly its own.

It commands us to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us;^a to put in practice “whatsoever things are *just*,” as well as “whatsoever things are pure:”^r to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.^s

(3) The last part of our duty, mentioned by the Apostle, as that which we are especially taught by the Gospel, is our duty towards our God; “that we should live *godly* in this present world.”

In the full sense of the expression, the command to “live godly” includes duties of the very highest nature—those which the Almighty requires from us as creatures of his hand, as children of his power, as servants of his will. These duties will be displayed, in the *love* of God—leading us to keep his commandments,

^a Matt. vii. 12. Luke vi. 31.

^r Phil. iv. 8.

^s Eph. iv. 23.

and to be careful that, while we love God, we love our brethren also: in the *fear* of God, so pervading our hearts, as to cast out all other fear: in the *faith* of God—trusting in his merciful promises, although now we cannot walk by sight, nor know *how* the mighty things, which have been done for man, shall receive their completion: in *reliance* upon God—as the friend of those who diligently seek him: in *resignation* to his will—knowing, that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,”^t even as a father the son in whom he delighteth: in *gratitude* to God—for the manifold mercies, which we are daily and hourly receiving from him; for our creation, preservation, and above all for our redemption: in *humility* towards God—conscious of the exceeding, nay infinite, superiority of a God who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil,”^u and man sinful, and vain; “deceiving, and being deceived.”

Although God seeth not as man seeth; for he looks at once upon the heart: yet there are some external acts, which are the indications to other men of that real piety, which those must have, who live godly in this present world.

To be constant in the use of public and private prayer, to partake of those holy ordi-

^t Heb. xii. 6.

^u Habak. i. 13.

nances ordained by God for our growth in grace, to search the Scriptures, as a rule of life, sacred and infallible, to honour holy men and holy things, never to encourage levity of word and manner in speaking of the Scriptures, or the works of the Almighty—these are some of the signs of real piety, seated in the hearts of those who “live godly.” These signs may, indeed, exist where piety does not: but piety cannot exist without *them*.

But godliness consists not solely nor principally in outward acts. Its seat is in the heart. It is a principle, not often seen, but always felt: regulating every word, and pervading every thought. In all the vicissitudes of life, in sorrow, and in joy, it sheds its quieting influence over the soul; it sanctifies affliction; imparts sobriety to joy; and changes this world, full of trials as it is, into a temple, in which the praise of God is continually celebrated.

III. The same Scriptures, which teach the duties of mankind, display also the motives of our obedience. They open to us scenes of eternal glory in the world to come: commanding us to look “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

1. When we are directed to look to “that blessed hope,” we are encouraged to turn our

minds with earnestness to that rest for the people of God, which is the object and end of their hope.

That holy hope which, together with faith and charity, is enumerated in the catalogue of Christian virtues, is far superior to any which can be fixed upon mere earthly pursuits. It is superior in its *object*; being fixed upon things eternal: while worldly hopes, however ardent, must be confined to subjects which soon vanish from before our eyes. It is superior in its *stability*; for it is founded upon the word of Him who is truth itself. In the full confidence of this hope, St. Paul declares, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.”^y It is also superior in its *operation*. Earthly hope, fixed upon objects which continually disappoint and elude expectation, at length, by being long deferred, makes the heart sick.^z Heavenly hope exercises a purifying influence upon the heart. “Every man that hath this *hope* in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”^a The very trials and troubles of this world are intended to strengthen in us the principle of heavenly hope: “We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tri-

^y 2 Tim. i. 12.

^z Prov. xiii. 12.

^a 1 John iii. 3.

bulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, *hope*.”^b And one principal end of the revelation, which has been made to the world, was to introduce and strengthen this confidence: “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have *hope*.”^c

2. Another object, for which the Christian is continually to look, is “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” or rather, of Jesus Christ, our great God and Saviour.

It would be foreign to our present purpose to discuss the principles, upon which it is shewn that the two attributes, God, and Saviour, are here both predicated of the same subject, Jesus Christ. They, who are familiar with the language in which the New Testament is written, well know that the words of St. Paul imply this meaning.^d We nowhere

^b Rom. v. 3, 4.

^c Rom. xv. 4.

^d προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα, καὶ ἐπιφανείαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The article not being repeated before σωτῆρος, it is impossible to understand Θεοῦ and σωτῆρος otherwise than of one person.—See Middleton, “Doctrine of the Greek Article,” in locum.

In the brief Second Epistle of Peter, there occur three passages, which, being evidently similar to one another in construction, illustrate this, and other cases of the same nature.

indeed, read that God the Father, who is “invisible,”^e will so appear. Whereas the term, here rendered “appearing,”^f always indicates some coming of Jesus Christ; either his first coming in the flesh,^g or his future coming to judge the world.^h This, accordingly, is the interpretation which has been put upon the words, in the earliest ages of the Christian church.ⁱ

We are, then, commanded to look for the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, as an encouragement to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

It is only the true Christian, who can regard this most solemn of all events with feelings of delightful, although anxious, expectation. The preaching of temperance, and right-

2 Pet. i. 1. Ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

2 Pet. i. 11. Εἰς . . . βασιλείαν τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

2 Pet. iii. 18. ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The mere comparison of these passages is sufficient to shew, that only *one* person is spoken of in the first instance, as well as in the two last.

^e Col. i. 15. 1 Tim. i. 17.

^f ἐπιφανεία.

^g 2 Tim. i. 10.

^h 2 Thess. ii. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 8.

ⁱ See Whitby in locum.

eousness, and judgment to come, made the profligate Felix tremble upon his throne.^k The denier of God's word, the blasphemer, the drunkard, the extortioner, the unclean, the dishonest, will find little by which their minds, in their present state, can be gratified, in learning that God shall "bring to light the hidden things of darkness," and "make manifest the counsels of the hearts:"¹ that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."^m They "that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," must regard the appearing of our Lord only as "the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."ⁿ

But "to them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality," the final restitution of all things affords a subject of encouragement and hope. With this consolation St. Paul supported himself, even under the apprehension of immediate death. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have

^k Acts xxiv. 25.

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^m 2 Cor. v. 10.

ⁿ Rom. ii. 5—8.

finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”^o St. Peter, in like manner, comforts his converts under their affliction, by referring them to this final object of their hope. “Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”^p

The Apostle Paul, after informing the Thessalonians of the circumstances of that awful day, concludes with the command, “Wherefore *comfort* one another with these words.”^q And precisely with the same view, in the comprehensive scheme which we have been considering, he represents true Christians as especially “looking to that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

IV. Jesus Christ, for whose glorious appearing we are commanded to look, being truly

^o 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^p 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

^q 1 Thess. iv. 18.

“the great God and our Saviour,” how wonderful is the dispensation, which through him has been revealed to fallen man. He, who was “in the form of God,” and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,”^r is the same “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

1. All that Christ did and suffered for our sakes was voluntarily undergone. Throughout his whole ministry, in his sufferings, and death, he “gave himself for us.” Even the sacrifice of his life was made by his own will. To Peter, who drew forth his sword in his defence, he said, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”^s And, on another occasion, he declared expressly, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”^t And this offering of himself was made for us: “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the

^r Phil. ii. 5.

^s Matth. xxvi. 53.

^t John x. 17, 18.

suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”^u

2. This voluntary oblation of himself was made by our Lord, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity:” that he might free us from the guilt of sin, and from the severe consequences attached to it; from the slavery of sin in this life,^x and not only from temporal, but from eternal death. “The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”^y

The Scripture has included all men under sin. “By one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”^z But the same Scripture declares “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”^a Such was the mercy of Christ, that, while we were yet sinners, he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.”

3. But while Christ has done so much for man, man is required to do something for himself; to shew forth the sensible effects of a holy and religious life. For Christ gave himself for us, that he might “purify unto

^u Heb. ii. 9.

^x John viii. 34, 36.

^y Rom. vi. 23.

^z Rom. v. 12.

^a 1 Cor. xv. 22.

himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

When God had redeemed the people of Israel from their Egyptian bondage, and distinguished them from the rest of the world by rites and ordinances of His own appointment, he declared to them, “Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people,”^b

In allusion to this selection of the Israelites, the apostle Paul here denominates those who are true believers in Christ as “a peculiar people,” zealous, not of outward rites and ceremonies, but of good works.

In a subsequent part of his Epistle, St. Paul again exhorts Titus to set forth the same doctrine. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”^c

Works of charity, works of beneficence, works of holiness, these are the fruits by which the faith of a man can be made manifest: and such are the fruits required. After all that we can do, it is true we are but unprofitable servants; we can claim nothing as a reward. But they are the only evidence which we can

^b Exod. xix. 5.

^c Tit. iii. 8.

give of the reality of our professions: and as such we are assured they will be mercifully accepted by God, through the mediation of Christ.

Since our Lord has given himself for us, he claims on our part the willing dedication of ourselves to his service. He claims not merely our passive abstaining from evil, but our active exertions to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Such are the peculiarities of the Christian faith into which we have all been baptized, and according to which we all profess to live: Arising from the free grace of God, and bringing salvation to all men—teaching us to flee from that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good—opening to our view the most glorious prospects, the blessed hope of heaven, and the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ—Declaring his wonderful mercy, in giving himself for us; and the end of the commandment, our redemption from all iniquity, our purification, and sanctification.

These glad tidings are disclosed to man. But he is free to accept, or to refuse them. If he accept them, and persevere in his obedience unto the end, there is laid up for him “a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give” him “at that day.”^d If he

^d 2 Tim. iv. 8.

refuse, upon his own head will the punishment fall. - And how severe that just vengeance will be, the Scriptures declare in language which we can neither misunderstand nor overlook.

May that God whose mercies are infinite, and who wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, so direct and rule *our* hearts, that we may be redeemed by the merits of Christ Jesus, and become purified to him as a peculiar people, zealous of good works.



APPENDIX.

NOTE A. LECTURE IV. p. 67.

On the change produced in the time of rotation of a mass, in consequence of its condensation, or expansion.

THE particular instance, adduced in the text for the sake of illustration, is purposely limited. The conclusion depends upon these principles.

Suppose a mass M , either rigid or not, to revolve uniformly about an axis passing through the center of gravity, with an angular velocity a .

Let m be one particle, at the perpendicular distance x from the axis of rotation.

Then, if the body be projected upon the plane, which is perpendicular to the axis, and passes through the center of gravity,

$$\frac{x^2 a}{2} = \text{projected area described by } m, \text{ in an unit of time, about the center of gravity ;}$$

$$\therefore mx^2 a = 2 \text{ mass} \times \text{area ;}$$

$$\therefore \Sigma mx^2 a = \text{sum of all these products.}$$

Now a is common to the whole mass.

And $\Sigma mx^2 =$ moment of inertia of the whole mass, with respect to the axis of rotation passing through the center of gravity ;

$= Mk^2$: k being found by the usual process. See Whewell's Dynamics, Book III. Chap. III.

Now if the same mass be either contracted or expanded, and a represent the angular velocity with which it will *then* revolve ; and $Mk'^2 =$ moment of inertia : by the principle of conservation of areas,

$$Mk^2 a = Mk'^2 a' ;$$

$$\therefore \frac{k^2}{k'^2} = \frac{a'}{a} .$$

And if the original figure of the body be similar to its figure after the change has taken place, and r, r' be radii of the respective equatoreal sections, which are considered circular ;

$$\frac{r^2}{r'^2} = \frac{k^2}{k'^2} = \frac{a'}{a} = \frac{t}{\tau} ,$$

if t and τ are the times of revolution with the angular velocities a, a' , respectively.

If then the Earth were expanded, without altering the relative arrangement of its particles, until its radius at the equator were equal to that of the Moon's orbit, considered circular, the time of its rotation would be about

$$\frac{60^2 \cdot r^2}{r'^2} \text{ days} = 3600 \text{ days.}$$

The same conclusion will obtain, if the form of the revolving mass be altered, provided $\frac{k^2}{k'^2} = \frac{r^2}{r'^2}$.

For instance, if a sphere of uniform density, radius r , be expanded into a spheroid of uniform density, the radius of the equatoreal circular section being r' .

Since Mk^2 is the same for the spheroid, and for a sphere, the radius of which is equal to the equatoreal radius of the spheroid, we shall still have

$$\frac{r^2}{r'^2} = \frac{t}{\tau}.$$

If we suppose a small portion, n , to be detached from the surface of the equator of the revolving mass, M ; and to continue to revolve uniformly with the angular velocity a , at the distance r ; either in the manner of a planet, or as a thin ring; and that the remaining matter N is condensed into an interior mass, revolving with the angular velocity a ;

let Mk^2 = moment of inertia of the whole mass:

Nk'^2 =contracted mass.

Then, by the principle of conservation of areas,

$$Mk^2 a = Nk'^2 a + nr^2 a;$$

$$\therefore Nk'^2 a = a (Mk^2 - nr^2)$$

$$= a \{ (N+n) k^2 - nr^2 \};$$

$$\therefore \frac{a}{a} = \frac{k^2}{k'^2} - \frac{n}{N} \frac{1}{k'^2} \cdot (r^2 - k^2).$$

For instance, suppose the Earth to be at present a sphere, or a spheroid, of uniform density; the mass of which is N . And that it had once been expanded so as to form together with the matter of the Moon, n , another sphere or spheroid, of uniform density, the radius of which at the equator, was equal to that of the Moon's orbit.

Then if r' = radius of the Earth;

r = radius of the Moon's orbit

= $60 r'$ nearly;

$$\text{also } k^2 = \frac{2}{5} \cdot r^2;$$

$$k'^2 = \frac{2}{5} \cdot r'^2;$$

$$\therefore \frac{k^2}{k'^2} = \frac{r^2}{r'^2} = 60^2.$$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{r^2 - k^2}{k^2} &= \frac{\frac{3}{5} r^2}{\frac{2}{5} r'^2} \\ &= \frac{3}{2} 60^2. \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{and } \frac{n}{N} = \frac{10}{685};$$

$$\begin{aligned} \therefore \frac{a}{a} &= 60^2 - \frac{3}{2} \cdot \frac{10}{685} \cdot 60^2 \\ &= 60^2 \cdot \left\{ 1 - \frac{3}{137} \right\} \\ &= 60^2 \times .97884 \\ &= 3523.824: \end{aligned}$$

the number of days, in which the Earth would have revolved together with the Moon, upon this supposition.

If we suppose the Earth, when so expanded, to have assumed the form of a cylindrical plate, of uniform density, the radius of which was equal to that of the Moon's orbit;

$$k^2 = \frac{r^2}{2},$$

$$k'^2 = \frac{2}{5} \cdot \frac{r^2}{60^2};$$

$$\therefore \frac{k^2}{k'^2} = \frac{5}{4} \cdot 60^2, \text{ and } \frac{r^2 - k^2}{k'^2} = \frac{5}{4} \cdot 60^2;$$

$$\therefore \frac{a}{a} = \frac{5}{4} \cdot 60^2 \cdot \left\{ 1 - \frac{10}{685} \right\}$$

$$= 60^2 \times 1.231 \dots$$

$$= 4431.6 \dots$$

We may *assume* such an arbitrary arrangement of the particles, as would render true the equation

$$a = ma,$$

in a particular instance.

$$\text{Since } Mk^2 a = Nk'^2 a + nr^2 a;$$

$$mMk^2 = Nk'^2 + mn r^2;$$

$$\therefore m(N+n)k^2 = Nk'^2 + mn r^2;$$

$$\therefore k^2 = \frac{1}{N+n} \cdot \left\{ \frac{N}{m} \cdot k'^2 + nr^2 \right\}.$$

Thus, assuming the *present* form of the Earth to be a sphere of uniform density, the radius of which = $\frac{r}{60}$;

$$k'^2 = \frac{2}{5} \cdot \frac{r^2}{60^2}, \quad N = 685, \quad n = 10, \quad m = 27.3,$$

the sidereal period of the Moon.

$$k^2 = \frac{1}{695} \left\{ \frac{685}{27.3} \cdot \frac{2}{5} \cdot \frac{1}{60^2} + 10 \right\} r^2$$

$$= \frac{1}{69} \cdot r^2, \text{ nearly.}$$

If the original form of the mass were nearly spherical, this would require a nucleus of much greater density towards the center, than near the surface.

But it surpasses all probability to suppose that there could have existed, *without design*, the precise arrangement of the particles of a vortex of this nature, which would have been necessary, in order that the surface of the Sun's equator should have had the angular velocity with which the respective planets now move, when it was expanded so as successively to have been in contact with them.

NOTE B. LECTURE IV. p. 75.

On the Chronology and Astronomy of the Hindus.

It would be difficult to mention a subject upon which there exist more various, and indeed contradictory, opinions, than the Chronology of the Hindus. Sir William Jones treats their pretensions to extraordinary antiquity, as altogether chimerical. "The aggregate of the four first ages constitutes the extravagant sum of four million three hundred and twenty thousand years: which aggregate multiplied by seventy-one is the period, in which every Menu is believed to preside over the world. Such a period one might conceive would have satisfied Archytas, the measurer of the sea and earth, and the numberer of the sands; or Archimedes, who invented a notation that was capable of expressing the number of them. But the comprehensive mind of an Indian chronologer has no limits: and the reigns of fourteen Menus are only a single day of Brahma: fifty of which days have already elapsed, according to the Hindus, from the time of the Creation. All this puerility may be an astronomical riddle." Sir William Jones's Works, vol. III. p. 345.

Halhed, in his Preface to the Translation of the Gentoo Laws, p. 36, after describing the four ages, and assigning

their respective durations, and the corresponding alteration in the length of human life, from 100,000 years, to 10,000, 1,000, and finally 100 years, thus expresses himself. "Computation is lost, and conjecture overwhelmed, in the attempt to adjust such astonishing spaces of time to our own confined notions of the world's epoch. To such antiquity the Mosaic creation is but as yesterday; and to such ages the life of Methuselah is no more than a span." Still Halhed seems inclined to give some credit to this extravagant tale; observing that the duration of life in the third period corresponds nearly with the longevity of the patriarchal age. It must be remembered that Halhed was a most credulous man; and himself furnished a touchstone of his sagacity. On March 31, 1795, and April 21, of the same year, he made a speech, in the House of Commons, in favour of Brothers, a pretended prophet, who was to restore the Jews. And in a tract which he published as a "Testimony of the Authenticity of the Prophecies of Richard Brothers." London, 1795, p. 14, are found these words; "I affirm, from my own discoveries, that the prophet Daniel positively and particularly denounces annihilation to the British navy, in this war. And on proof of this proposition, in the course of my Essay, I am content to rest my whole pretensions to penetration."

All accounts of Hindu chronology agree in dividing time into four Yugas, or ages. The first, as such, is styled Satya Yuga; and when it is regarded as the age of purity, it is styled the Krita Yuga. The second, in which one-third of mankind are considered to have been reprobate, is called the Treta Yuga. The third, in which one half of the human race became depraved, is denominated the Dwapar Yuga. And the fourth, in which all mankind are corrupted, or *lessened*, as the term implies, has the name of Kali Yuga. These divisions are evidently analogous to the mythological golden, silver, brazen, and iron ages.

To these ages, by different writers, different lengths are assigned. Robertson, (Dissertation on India, Note LXVII.) mentions the following :

| | Roger, and Le Gentil, from the Brahmins of the Coroman- del Coast. | Bernier, from the Brahmins of Benares. | Col. Dow. | Halhed. |
|----------------|--|---|-------------|------------|
| Satya Yuga .. | 1,728,000 ^{YRS.} | 2,500,000. | 14,000,000. | 3,200,000. |
| Treta Yuga .. | 1,296,000. | 1,200,000. | 1,080,000. | 2,400,000. |
| Dwapar Yuga | 864,000. | 864,000. | 72,000. | 1,600,000. |
| Kali Yuga..... | | | 36,000. | 400,000. |

But the Hindu division of time is still more complicated. The following passage is from The Institutes of Menu, translated by Sir William Jones, in his Treatise on Hindu Chronology, in the Asiatic Researches, Vol. II. Art. 7. and also by the Author of "A Key to Hindu Chronology," Cambridge, 1820, Vol. I. p. 18.

"The Sun causes the division of day and night, which are of two sorts, those of men, and those of the gods— A month of mortals is a day and night of the Pitris, or Patriarchs, inhabiting the Moon: and the division of a month being into equal halves, the bright half is their day, and the dark half their night.^a A year is a day and night of the gods, or regents of the universe situated round the north pole: their day is when the Sun moves to the north (of the equator): their night, when he moves to the south,

Learn now the duration of a day and night of Brahma, with that of the ages respectively, and in order. Four thousand years of the gods sages call the Krita or Satya age. The twilight (Sandhi) preceding it consists of as many hundred years; and the twilight following it of the same number. In the other three ages, with their twilight

^a It would appear that the Hindus, when this scheme was drawn, were acquainted with the fact that the Moon always turns the same face to the Earth.

preceding and following, are thousands and hundreds diminished by one. This aggregate of four ages, amounting to twelve thousand divine years, is called an age of the gods. And by reckoning a thousand such divine ages, a day of Brahma may be known. His night has also an equal duration.

The before mentioned age of the gods, or twelve thousand of their years, being multiplied by seventy-one, constitutes what is here called a Manwantara; (or Menwantara, the time, Antara, of a Menu.) There are alternate creations and destructions of worlds through innumerable Manwantaras: the Being supremely desirable performs all this with as much ease as if in sport, again and again, for the sake of conferring happiness."

According to this scheme, we have,

The Krita or Satya Yuga = $4000 \times 360 = 1,440,000$ years.

The Sandhi (twilight at the beginning) = 144,000.

Sandhi Ansa (twilight at the end) = 144,000.

Total of Krita Yuga = 1,728,000.

If we call this $4n$, so that $n = 432,000$ years;

the three successive ages, Treta, Dwapar, and Kali, will be $3n$, $2n$, n , respectively.

And their sum, $10n$, = $12000 \times 360 =$ a Maha Yuga, a great age, or age of the gods.

And a day of Brahma = $10,000n$, a period which is also called a Kalpa (form).

A Manwantara = 71 Maha Yugas

= $710n$.

It must be observed, however, that there are Manwantaras of different lengths:

The Puranic Manwantara = $710n = 355 \times 2n$.

The Manwantara of Meva = $714n = 357 \times 2n$.

The prophetic Manwantara = $720n = 360 \times 2n$.

So that if $2n$ were taken to represent a day and night, these periods would respectively represent years of 355, 357, and 360 days. (Key to Hindu Chronology, Vol. II. p. 408.)

There is also a Maha (great) Manwantara which
 $= 857 \times 2n$.

Davis, in the Asiatic Researches, Vol. II. Art. 15. gives an account of the Hindu Chronology, from the Surya Siddhanta.^b The system may be thus represented.

Assuming n , as before, an arbitrary period of 432,000 years, for the length of the Kali Yuga; and $2n$, $3n$, $4n$ as the respective duration of the Dwapar Yuga, Treta Yuga, and Satya Yuga;

Their sum $10n =$ a Maha Yuga, or great age.

The Manwantara consists of 71 Maha Yugas, with a Sandhi, or twilight, equal in duration to $4n$, during which it is conceived there is an universal deluge.

Hence each Manwantara = $710n + 4n = 714n$.

Again the complete Kalpa (form) is composed of 14 Manwantaras, together with a Sandhi of the same length as the former, $4n$.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Hence a Kalpa} &= 14 \text{ Manwantaras} + 4n \\ &= 14 \times 714n + 4n \\ &= 10,000n \\ &= 4,320,000,000 \text{ years.} \end{aligned}$$

^b The word Siddhanta means "A System of Astronomy," As. Res. Vol. XII. p. 223. Surya means "the Sun." Delambre, in his *Astronomie Ancienne*, Liv. II. Chap. iii. gives an account, in some instances erroneous, of the Treatise of Davis.

A Kalpa is further assumed to be only a day of Brahma;^c and his night is of the same duration. His year consists of 360 of these days and nights; and his life of a hundred of these years.

Hence the life of Brahma, according to their calculation,

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= 360 \times 20,000 \times 100n \\
 &= 720,000,000n \\
 &= 310,040,000,000,000 \text{ years.}
 \end{aligned}$$

Fifty years of Brahma's life are conceived to have expired. They imagine the Creation to have occupied 47,400 Divine years or $47,400 \times 360 = 17,064,000$ years.

The time which they assume to have elapsed since the Creation, which took place at the beginning of the Kalpa, is thus computed. They consider that we are now in the 7th Manwantara, which they call Vaivaswata, sun-born. That 27 complete Maha Yugas are expired, together with the Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, and Dwapar Yuga, of the 28th Maha Yuga. Moreover that 3102 years of the Kali Yuga had expired at the commencement of the Christian æra.

The whole time therefore will be thus represented,

| | |
|--|---|
| Sandhi, or twilight, at the beginning of the Kalpa | $= 4n$ |
| 6 Manwantaras complete | $= 6 \times 714n \dots\dots\dots = 4284n$ |
| 27 Maha Yugas of 7th Manwantara | $\dots\dots\dots = 270n$ |
| Satya Yuga of the 28th Manwantara | $\dots\dots\dots = 4n$ |
| Treta Yuga | $\dots\dots\dots = 3n$ |
| Dwapar Yuga | $\dots\dots\dots = 2n$ |
| Time from the beginning of the Kalpa to the beginning of the Kali Yuga 3102 B. C. | } $= 4567n$ |
| $= 1,972,944,000 \text{ years}^d.$ | |

^c Montucla, Histoire des Mathématiques, Part II. Liv. III. §. 2. assigns 4,320,000 years (10 n) as the length of the day of Brahma, instead of 10,000 n.

^d The time elapsed from the commencement of the current Manwantara to the beginning of the Kali Yuga = 9 n.

In the subsequent part of the paper are stated the number of revolutions of each planet, of their aphelia, nodes, &c., in the Kalpa: and an eclipse of the Moon is calculated according to the principles of the Surya Siddhanta.

That work purports to be written, according to Davis, p. 237, at the *conclusion* of the Satya Yuga.

Since, then, The Treta Yuga = $3n$,

The Dwapar Yuga = $2n$,

Time to the beginning of the Kali Yuga } = $5n$
 3102 B. C. } = 2,160,000 years.

Therefore the date of the Surya Siddhanta would be 2,163,102 B. C.^e

If, as Bentley asserts, (Hindu Astron. Part II. Sect. II. p. 116.) the work be considered to have been written at the *commencement* of the period Satya Yuga, its antiquity would be increased 1,728,000 years; and its date would be 3,891,102 B. C.

These most extravagant pretensions to antiquity for some time excited little attention. Le Gentil, to whom the world is indebted for much of its knowledge of Indian Chronology and Astronomy, (Memoires de l'Academie, 1772: Voyage dans Les Mers de l'Inde,) at first disdained to interfere with them. This chronological system, however, was intimately connected with Astronomy. And about the same time that the treatises of Sir William

It is remarkable that if n be taken to represent 100 years, and the dates from the commencement of the Kali Yuga be reckoned in true years, the beginning of the Satya Yuga would be placed B. C. 4002. Upon a supposition of this nature, the author of "A Key to the Chronology of the Hindus," endeavours to reconcile the apparently extravagant periods of the Hindus with the Chronology of the Hebrew Bible.

^e In Delambre, Astron. Ancienne, Vol. I. p. 444. The age of the Surya Siddhanta is said to be 21,648,899 years. This is probably a misprint, for 2,164,899, which agrees with the date above, if computed for A. D. 1797. It appears doubtful whether this calculation is made for the year 1788 or 1799.

Jones and Davis were published, and before they were generally known in Europe, appeared Bailly's elaborate work, entitled, "Traité de l'Astronomie Indienne et Orientale." His principal object is to prove, from the tables of Tirvalour, brought to Europe by Le Gentil, that the epoch of the Kali Yuga, 3102 B. C. was fixed by actual astronomical observations; and that there are remains of a state of science in an age of 1200 years preceding that æra. He takes frequent opportunities of advancing his favourite theory of a highly cultivated people, inhabiting the north of Asia, who were the inventors of all arts and sciences, and, to use the words of d'Alembert, "taught us every thing, except their name and their existence."

The reality of the observations, by which the epoch of the Kali Yuga was fixed, has been defended also by Playfair in the Edinburgh Transactions, 1789.

The impartial Montucla, (*Histoire des Mathématiques*, Part II. Liv. III. §. 2), touches but slightly upon the antiquity of the æra Kali Yuga; but leans to the opinion of Anquetil, that it is, in reality, the æra of the deluge, and was communicated to the Indians by the Arabians of the 9th or 10th century of the Christian æra.

Delambre (*Astronomie Ancienne*, Livre II. Chap. ii.) gives an Analysis of Bailly's Treatise, and points out the inconclusiveness of many of his deductions.

Marsden (*Phil. Trans.* 1790,) conceives that the supposed conjunction was calculated retrospectively.

J. Bentley considered the subject in two papers published in the 6th and 8th volumes of the Asiatic Researches, and concluded that the Surya Siddhanta was not written till about the year 1000 A. D. In the Edinburgh Review, vol. x. the accuracy of his conclusions respecting the recent date of the Surya Siddhanta was disputed. Bentley was much hurt at the strictures of the Reviewer, and in 1825, a little before his death, published his "Historical View of the Hindu Astronomy, from the

earliest dawn of that science in India to the present time." He there draws conclusions to this effect.

The formation of the lunar mansions, the first authentic fact in Hindu Astronomy, took place about 1425 B. C.

The solar months were formed about 1181 B. C. From that time till A. D. 538, Hindu Astronomy was divided into eight periods, each containing 247 years and one month: so that the year, at the commencement of each period, began one month later.

At the beginning of the fifth period, about the year 204 B. C. Hindu history was divided into periods for astronomical purposes. The data were fixed astronomically. The years with which each period was to begin and end having been previously fixed upon, the inventor computed the month and Moon's age on the day on which Jupiter was in conjunction with the Sun, in each year. From these conjunctions with Jupiter the name Yuga, conjunction, was given to the periods.

The first period immediately preceeding the time of their introduction was denominated the . . Kali Yuga.

The second period was denominated...Dwapar Yuga.

The third. Treta Yuga.

The fourth. Krita Yuga.

with this the Creation began.

The end of the Kali Yuga was fixed by a conjunction of the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter, June 26, 299 B. C. This, he says, was called Satya Yuga, the *true* conjunction.

Bentley computed the following table, which shews that the commencement of these periods was computed backwards, from about 200 or 300 B. C. He fixes the commencement of the system to the year 204 B. C. which is known from other circumstances to have been the commencement of the fifth astronomical period.

| Names and Orders of the four Ages. | Dates. | Error in the Hindu Tables used. |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Krita Yuga or 4 th | Apr. 19, 2352 B. C. | about 21 ^o 46— |
| Treta Yuga or 3 rd | Oct. 28, 1528 — | 13 1— |
| Dwapar Yuga or 2 nd | Sep. 15, 901 — | 6 22— |
| Kali Yuga or 1 st | Feb. 8, 540 — | 2 33— |
| End of Kali Yuga | June 26, 299 — | 0 1+ |

The gradual diminution of the error shews approximately the epoch at which the system was introduced. It is very remarkable that the æra thus fixed for the Creation corresponds with the time assigned to the deluge by Usher.

At a later æra, their history was divided into nine Manwantaras, or patriarchal periods, the dates being fixed by the computed conjunctions of Saturn with the Sun, as the Yugas had been determined by the conjunctions of Jupiter. The epoch of the Creation was thrown back to 4225 B. C.

The following Table, also computed by Bentley, shews the gradually increasing error in the computations of the Hindus, and gives, approximately, the æra when the method was introduced.

| Patriarchal Periods or Manwantaras. | Dates. | Errors in the Tables used. |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 st | Oct. 25, 4225. B. C. | 30 ^o 58' 42"— |
| 2 | Nov. 13, 3841 | 28 12 17 — |
| 3 | Apr. 11, 3358 | 24 43 14 — |
| 4 | Aug. 29, 2877 | 21 14 38 — |
| 5 | Mar. 25, 2388 | 17 42 55 — |
| 6 | Dec. 23, 2043 | 15 13 6 — |
| 7 | Jul. 2, 1528 | 11 30 8 — |
| 8 | Jan. 8, 1040 | 7 58 22 — |
| 9 | Jul. 28, 555 | 4 28 28 — |
| Ended | June 23, 31 A. D. | 14 34 — |

The error in the mean annual motion of Saturn was about $26'' +$. Therefore the year in which the computed place of Saturn would agree with the observed place would be A.D. 64: the æra when this division of the Hindu history was invented.

This division of the Hindu history was, in the year 538 A.D. superseded by that already mentioned, at the beginning of this note, in which the Creation was thrown back 1,972,947,102 before the Christian æra. This was effected by adopting the names of the periods already known, and uniting them by a dextrous but complicated combination.

The Brahmins first increased the number of Manwantaras to 14, inserting their dates in the calendar and other books. (Bentley's Hindu Astron. p. 84.) Now this increase, it will appear, was necessary to fulfil the conditions which they had assumed. These conditions were, that the length of the Dwapar Yuga, Treta Yuga, and Krita, or Satya Yuga must be in arithmetical progression, and equal $2n$, $3n$, $4n$, respectively. And their sum $10n$ is a Maha Yuga, or great age.

Also, a certain number (p) of Maha Yugas $+ 4n =$ a Manwantara (M), and a certain number (q) of Manwantaras $+ 4n =$ Kalpa, which is also to contain a thousand Maha Yugas, or $10,000n$.

That these conditions may be fulfilled, it is necessary to find two whole numbers, p and q , which will satisfy the equations

$$M = 10pn + 4n;$$

$$10,000n = qM + 4n.$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Hence } 10,000n &= q(10p + 4)n + 4n \\ &= \{10pq + 4(q + 1)\}n; \end{aligned}$$

$$\therefore 10pq + 4(q + 1) = 10,000;$$

$$\therefore (5p + 2)q = 4,998.$$

Now the only whole numbers, which will satisfy this equation, are

| Values of p . | Values of $(5p+2)$. | Values of q . |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 7 | 714 |
| 3 | 17 | 294 |
| 8 | 42 | 119 |
| 20 | 102 | 49 |
| 29 | 147 | 34 |
| 71 | 357 | 14 |

Hence, p being taken = 71, and $q = 14$, the assumed conditions are fulfilled.

The change, therefore, in the number of Manwantaras, from 9 to some other number, of which 14 was the nearest to 9, which Bentley mentions as an historical fact, was necessary to complete the scheme.

It only remained to assume a value of n , which was taken to be 432,000, and the artificial system was completed.

Several conjectures, concerning the reasons which might lead to the selection of the number 432,000, which is equal to 10 times the product of 360 by 12, may be found in Sir W. Jones's Treatise on the Chronology of the Hindus. See also Montucla Histoire des Mathématiques, Part II. Liv. III. §. 2. Vol. I. p. 429. The cycle 360×12 is composed by multiplying the months by the number of days originally ascribed to the lunar or solar year. This was the number of days in the Egyptian year, according to Herodotus: and in the Latin year, before the correction of it by Numa. The Indians had a fictitious year of 360 days, used for calculation only; on the supposition that the Sun moved through 1° in a day. Bailly, Astron. Indienne, Preface, p. 9. Davis, in As. Res. Vol. II. Art. xv. p. 228, says the Maha Yuga 4,320,000 years, is an anomalistic period of the Sun and Moon, at the end of which the Moon, with her apogee and ascending node, is found with the Sun in the first point of Aries.

The author of "A Key to the Chronology of the Hindus," is of opinion that the vast periods are only periods of moderate length represented according to the minute subdivisions of time. The lowest subdivision, a *Matre*, being one-tenth part of an English second, the number 432,000 is the number of *Matres* in a day of twelve hours. He conceives also that the different *Manwantaras* (see p. 394.) are only years of different lengths.

But whatever might cause the adoption of this particular *base*, the Hindus were thus provided with an abstract chronological system. And it was necessary to determine the commencement of one of these periods, in order to connect the system with history: and to frame an astronomical system, of such a nature that the planetary motions should begin with the *Kalpa*.

Accordingly they fixed upon Feb. 18, 3102 B. c. This they made the commencement of the *Kali Yuga* of the 28th *Maha Yuga*, of the 7th *Manwantara*. They assumed, therefore, as has already been seen (p. 395.), that since the Creation there had already then elapsed a period of 1,972,944,000 years.

Bentley explains at length (*Hindu Astron.* Part II. §. 1.) the different adjustments, which were necessary, in order to accommodate the astronomical system to the assumed conditions; and computes several tables in order to shew from internal evidence the time at which the system was introduced. He gives a table, exhibiting the gradual diminution of the errors in the positions, and in some of the elements, of the several planets, from the commencement of the *Kali Yuga*, to the year 538 of the Christian *æra*. The results of that Table, assuming the accuracy of the calculations, are most satisfactory. For instance, the errors in the Moon's place gradually diminish from $8^{\circ} 55' 33''$, to $7' 20''$: those in the position of *Venus* from $34^{\circ} 10' 37''$ to $6' 41''$. The errors in the place of *Saturn* diminish from $19^{\circ} 59' 54''$ to $36' 24''$.

The inspection of this table, combining the results of the computation for five of the planets, and the Moon, her apogee, and node, all leading to one conclusion, establishes, in his opinion, the fact, that the system was invented about A. D. 538.

The celebrated Surya Siddhanta is shewn, by a similar method, to have been composed about A. D. 1091.

The remaining part of Bentley's Work contains many curious particulars, respecting the alterations in the Hindu Astronomy, which have been since introduced at different periods.

From a comparison of these circumstances, we appear justified in concluding,

That the chronological periods of the Hindus are entirely artificial; that, as even their advocates allow, no astronomical observations are pretended to have been made, except during a period which may be reduced within the range of legitimate history, since the deluge: and that there are very strong reasons for believing that even these pretended observations are the results of calculations, principally made since the Christian æra.

Those who wish for information upon this point may advantageously consult Nare's 5th Bampton Lecture for 1805.

NOTE C. (D.) LECTURE IV. p. 80.

On the Forgeries of the Hindus.

There is a very remarkable paper in the Asiatic Researches, Vol. viii. p. 245. Art. 7. displaying the ingenuity and audacity of the forgeries which have been practised by the Brahmins. Even Sir William Jones was deceived by them. A person waited upon Mr. Bentley, and told him "that his profession was book-making, and

that he could forge any book whatever, to answer any purpose that might be required." (Bentley on Hindu Astron. p. 194.) The system of forgery in their astronomical treatises seems to be openly avowed. Bentley says that he mentioned to a Hindu Astronomer the circumstance of names, dates, and astronomical epochs being arbitrarily given to books. The Hindu acknowledged the fact, and in defence of it said: "some men make the commencement of the Kalpa the epoch from which they direct the calculations of the planets to be made, for any time required. Others make choice of the beginning of the Kali Yuga, for the same purpose. Have we not, therefore, a right to make choice of any other epoch, as two, three, or five hundred years, or more, back from our own times for the like purpose?" When asked, whether if he composed an astronomical work, and placed the epoch, from which the calculation should proceed, a thousand years back, he should put his name to it, and own the work; he replied that he could do so: but, in such cases, it was *usual* to put the name of some ancient sage to it, or that of some fictitious Astronomer, with an account of his birth, parentage, and country, in order to give it the plausible appearance of being ancient and real. See Bentley's Hindu Astronomy, p. 174, and Note, and p. 185, (misprinted 181.) Mr. Colebroke *found* an astronomical treatise on the shelf of his library, evidently framed for a particular purpose.

NOTE D. (E.) LECTURE IV. p. 83.

On the astronomical representations discovered in Egypt.

The astronomical representations which have been discovered in Egypt, have all been found sculptured or painted upon the ceilings of buildings very near Thebes. Those which contain all the signs of the zodiac are four in number, two at Denderah, (Tentyris), and two at Esne,

(Latopolis.) They are accurately delineated in the great work on Egypt, published by the French Government, and are described in a Memoir by Fourier, Secretary of the Institute at Cairo. Three of these sculptures are rectangular, and divided into two parts: the fourth, which has been transported to Paris, is of a circular form. If it be allowed that the figures represent the signs of the zodiac, and that the vernal equinox, at the period when the sculptures were executed, was in the sign which leads the procession, it will still be difficult, especially in the circular sculpture, to determine with any degree of certainty which sign is in reality the first. And since, when the vernal equinox had entered a sign, it would continue in it full two thousand years, there would be an equal ambiguity in thus determining the antiquity of the sculptures. Jollois and Devilliers (in a Memoir of the same work, 3^{me} Livraison, p. 486.) propose the date 2610 B. C. for the temple of Esnè, among other conjectures. Burkhart makes the epoch of the sculptures at Denderah 2200 B. C. and that of the monument at Esnè as remote as 5000 B. C. (Description des Pyramides de Ghizè, p. 119, referred to by Larcher, Herod. Vol. II. Suppt.)

The temple of Denderah is more recent. Francœur (Uranologie, Art. 244) supposes 800 B. C. to be an approximate date; but allows that an error may exist of eleven or thirteen centuries. Visconti considers the sculpture to have been executed between the 12th and 120th years of the Christian æra: See Supplement to Larcher's Herodotus, Vol. II. p. 564. edit. 1802. Bentley, in the Appendix to his Treatise on Hindu Astronomy, endeavours to shew that the two sculptures at Denderah represent a calendar with the series of festivals for the year of Rome 708. Upon comparing his explanation of the sculptures with the minute representation of them given in the French work on Egypt, the differences are found to be so material, especially in the ceiling of the portico, that it is to be feared he was misled by an inaccurate copy of the sculptures. However correct the principle of his interpretation

may be, this error in his data must considerably diminish the confidence which can be placed in his conclusion.

The sculptured ceiling of part of the temple of Hermonthis contains the signs Taurus and Scorpio. And there is a sixth astronomical representation painted on the ceiling of a sepulchral apartment at Thebes. There is a Memoir upon this subject by E. Jomard in the work on Egypt, (Tom. 1. pp. 255, 261.) He is of opinion that the sign Taurus is pointed out as coincident with the vernal equinox, and Leo as the sign of the summer solstice: and computes that 1923 B. C. is the latest date which will answer both conditions: and 3000 B. C. the mean date. A reference to the Memoir will shew how very uncertain any conclusion must be, which is formed from such data. It is to be hoped that the recent advances, which have been made in the study of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, may lead to some more accurate knowledge of these curious vestiges of science.

NOTE E. (F.) LECTURE IV. p. 84.

Notice of the Life of Horrox.

Jeremiah Horrox was born in the County of Lancaster about A. D. 1618: and admitted of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, May 18, 1632. In 1633 he began to study Astronomy at Toxteth near Liverpool. In calculating an ephemeris from the Lansberg Tables, he observed that they indicated the apparent latitude of the planet Venus for Nov. 24, 1639, to be less than the semi-diameter of the Sun. The disappointment of Gassendi in observing the transit of Venus predicted by Kepler for Dec. 6, 1631, and his want of confidence in the Lansberg Tables, made him consult the Tables constructed by Kepler, according to which the conjunction would happen at 8^h 1^m A. M. at Manchester. His own corrections induced him to consider 5^h 57^m P. M. as the probable instant of conjunction. Not confident,

however, in the data, upon which his calculation was founded, he began to observe on the 23rd of November. His own account of his observation, on Sunday the 24th of November, is this: "Observavi enim die 24 solis exortu ad horam usque nonam, item paulo ante decimam ipsoque demum meridie et horâ 1 pomeridianâ (ad) 2: aliis temporibus ad majora avocatus quæ utique ob hæc parerga negligi non decuit." "Venus in Sole Visa," published in Hevelius's, "Mercurius in Sole Visus," 1662 Folio.

It appears he was called away from 9 A. M. to a little past 10, and again from 2 till a little past 3, to go to church. On returning at 3^h 15^m P. M. he observed the planet just wholly entered upon the Sun's disk. He did not live to publish his observation. In a letter to his friend Crabtree dated Oct. 3, 1640, he states that he is about finishing the account; and in another letter dated Dec. 12, 1640,^f he says, "I have changed my 'Venus in Sole Visa' in some respects, but have not yet leisure to transcribe it. And if that were done, I do not yet know how I shall contrive to publish it."—In Dec. 19, 1640, he again writes, stating his intention of visiting his friend, on the 4th of the succeeding January, unless something very remarkable should happen.^g He died suddenly on the morning of the previous day, Jan. 3, 1740^o: as appears from the endorsement of his letters, by Crabtree.

NOTE F. (G.) LECTURE IV. p. 85.


On the transits of Venus, hitherto observed.

In a scientific point of view it is curious to notice the different circumstances, under which the transit of Venus was observed, in 1639, and in 1761, and 1769. Horrox and his friend Crabtree were the only two persons who

^f Wallis. Horroccii Opera Posthuma, p. 337.

^g "Nisi quid præter solitum evenierit."

observed the first. Previously to the transit in 1761, Halley had directed the notice of Astronomers to the importance of the observation for determining the Sun's horizontal parallax. And Joseph Delisle published a work upon the subject. Several months before the transit happened, Maskelyne was sent from England to St. Helena, and Mason sailed for Sumatra, Le Gentil went to India, Chappe to Siberia, Perigrè to the island Rodrigue in the Indian Ocean. Observers were also sent into Lapland and Norway, and by the Academy of Petersburg to the borders of Tartary and China. Observations were made, with different degrees of success, in Siberia, at the Cape of Good Hope, in the Indian Sea, at Madras, at Trinquèbar, at Pekin, and at St. John's, Newfoundland. Still more extensive preparations were made for observing the transit in 1769. From England observers were sent into North America, to the islands of the South Sea, and to Madras. From France observers set out for California, St. Domingo, and the East Indies. From Russia, into three different places of Russian Lapland, and into Asiatic Russia, the borders of the Caspian Sea, and other places. (See Mem. of Acad. of Petersburg, Vol. XIV.) The king of Denmark sent to Wardhuys, nearly the most northern extremity of Europe; and Planman observed at Cajanebourg in Finland. (See Montucla Histoire des Mathématiques, Part IV. Liv. v. § 11. Vol. iv. pp. 102, 112. Mém. de l'Acad. 1771, 1772, 1781. Mém. de Petersburg, 1769.)



"P. 93 "Revelation teaches man what he is }
to believe & do in order to obtain eternal life" 93. 103 }
133. ... }

"Objects too small for unassisted human }
sight are finished with the same care, & laboured } 73
with the same scrupulosity, as the greatest. "Perfection } 247
reigns in all the works of God." 73. 247-255 . }

"Some "mathematicians" by calculating the forces }
almost persuade ^{themselves} that they have unveiled } 253.
the hidden mysteries of omnipotence, "nay }
^{"of the creation"} "It is from the word of God, only, that we learn }
the moral omnipresence of the Deity" 253. ... } 253

By maintaining a Revelation from God, we }
do not "attribute to ourselves an importance } 255
in the realms of space to which we have no claim". }

"The mercy of God is eminently conspicuous in all }
his works - "he does not willingly afflict" &c. 261. } 261.

ITWP. Parkhurst. Arcus Noe 288.

102 In order to understand Scripture the languages }
in which they were written must be assiduously studied. 102 }

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