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LECTURE XIII.

2 PETER II. 15, 16.

These—are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.

OF all the evil propensities to which human nature is subject, there is no one so general, so insinuating, so corruptive, and so obstinate, as the love of money. It begins to operate early, and it continues to the end of life. One of the first lessons which children learn, and one which old men never forget, is the value of money. The covetous seek and guard it for its own sake, and the prodigal himself must first be avaricious before he can be profuse. This, of all our passions, is best able to fortify itself by reason, and is the last to yield to the force of reason. It most unremittingly engages the attention, and calls into their fullest exertion all our powers of body and of mind. Ambition and pride, those powerful motives of human conduct, are but ministering servants to avarice. Reputation and power are pursued chiefly as the means of procuring wealth; and all the fierce contentions which have distracted the world, and deluged it with blood,

may be traced up to an eager desire to obtain the territory or the treasure of another. Age, which blunts all our other appetites, only whets this; and after the heart is dead to every other joy, it lives to the dear, the inextinguishable delight of saving and hoarding.

In exact proportion to their incapacity and disinclination to make use of money, is the violence of men's thirst to possess it; and on the threshold of eternity it cleaves to them as if life were just beginning. Philosophy combats, satire exposes, religion condemns it in vain: it yields neither to argument, nor to ridicule, nor to conscience. Like the lean kine in Pharaoh's dream, it devours all that comes near it, and yet continues as hungry and meagre as ever. If a representation of the odiousness, criminality, and danger of this vile affection, can be of any use, it must be to those whose hearts are not yet hardened, whose consciences are not yet blinded by habits of indulgence in it: for if it has once gotten possession of the mind, you might as easily re-invigorate feeble age by a discourse on the advantages and joys of youth, or restore a constitution wasted through consumption, by an elaborate declamation on the blessing of health. Avarice, with the deaf adder, "will not hearken to the voice of "charmers, charming never so wisely." Psalm lviii. 5.

We have already had occasion, in the course of these exercises, to trace the character of a selfish man, and to observe the workings of the human

mind under the influence of this base and destructive passion, in the history of Laban the Syrian. There we saw every principle of generosity and gratitude, of truth and justice, of humanity and natural affection, of piety and decency, vilely sacrificed to this insatiate idol, which, like the grave, "never "says it is enough." We have in the history referred to by the apostle, in the words which I have now read, another striking and instructive instance of the dreadful operation of covetousness, in a mind enlightened by wisdom, awake to all the worthier feelings and propensities of nature, capable of forming the justest notions of right and wrong, and of conveying these notions in the clearest and strongest expressions; fully instructed and firmly persuaded respecting his duty; but, actuated by this fatal passion, deliberately deviating from the right path, seducing those whom he durst not curse, degrading the dignity of the prophet in the venality of the courtier, and shamefully bartering conscience for gain. We shall find then the words of Peter a perfect key to the relation of Moses; and whatever inconsistency shall appear in the conduct of Balaam, whatever fluctuation in opinion, whatever plausibility of language and sentiment, combined with whatever irresolution in virtue, all is explained by this one discovery of his real character, he loved "the wages of unrighteousness." We come to illustrate this position by the history itself.

Forty years almost have elapsed since the miraculous deliverance from Egypt; and the whole ge-

neration which partook of the joy of that deliverance is, because of their unbelief, well nigh extinguished. Thousands and ten thousands have dropped into the grave. The individuals which formed the congregation of Israel are lost and forgotten; but Israel still lives, the care of Providence, the object of favour. The shafts of vengeance have spent themselves, and nothing can now stem that current of promise and destiny, which is carrying God's favoured people to victory, and to the possession of Canaan. Their decampments and progress, therefore, are no longer the lingering and wanderings of a devoted people doomed to die in the wilderness; but the bold, direct, and successful progress of a warlike nation, from conquest to conquest.

A multitude so great, subsisting in a desert so long, in a manner so singular, could not but attract the notice of all the adjacent nations, who must have been anxiously solicitous which way their route was directed, and where they were to attempt a settlement at length. Being arrived at the border of the wilderness, where it is contiguous to the country of the Amorites, not imagining that any part of their inheritance was to be allotted them on this side Jordan, they petition Sihon, the king of the country, to grant them leave to pass peaceably through his territories to the place of their destination. This he roughly refuses; and, without waiting to see whether Israel meant to attempt a passage by force, he collects his whole strength, advances into the wilderness to attack them, and thereby hastens on his

own fate; for his army is smitten with the edge of the sword, and his whole land falls an easy prey to the victor. Og, king of Bashan, is rash enough to follow his example, provokes his own destruction, is subdued in his turn, and the fertile plains over which he reigned swell the triumphs of Israel.

Advancing forward to Jordan, they pitch their camp in the plains of Moab. This nation was descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham, by an incestuous commerce with his elder daughter. They had long before this been reduced into a regular form of civil government, that of monarchy, and were living in the quiet possession of a fruitful country, secured to them by the appointment of Providence, in consideration of their relation to their venerable ancestor: and Israel was expressly prohibited to disturb them, or their brethren and neighbours, the children of Ammon, the posterity of Lot by his younger daughter, in the possession of their inheritance. The report of their victories, however, over Og and Sihon, has roused the attention and the jealousy of Balak, king of Moab. Instead of employing the rational policy of courting alliance and friendship with a people so formidable, and who were neither disposed nor permitted to molest them; or of adopting the manly policy of repelling bold invaders by open war, he has recourse to the mean, timid, and contemptible arts of necromancy, or divination. For this purpose he sends messengers to Balaam, the son of Bosor, a noted enchanter of those times, with large money in their

hands, styled in Scripture, "the rewards of divination," and, "the wages of unrighteousness," and a message to this purpose: "Behold, there is a "people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover "the face of the earth, and they abide over against "me. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me "this people; for they are too mighty for me: "peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite "them, and that I may drive them out of the land: "for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, "and he whom thou cursest is cursed." Num. xxii. 5, 6. Thus Providence fulfilled the words of the oracle pronounced in the song of Moses thirty-eight years before, immediately on the passage of the Red Sea—"Then the dukes of Edom shall be "amazed; the mighty men of Moab trembling "shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of "Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall "fall upon them: by the greatness of thine arm "they shall be as still as a stone." Ex. xv. 15, 16. Now the person to whom Balak applied on this trying occasion was a man of very extraordinary character, and of very singular gifts and abilities. He seems to have united qualities the most dissimilar and opposite. He exhibits in his language and conduct a very uncommon combination and contrast of virtues and vices. What can exceed, on the one hand, the generosity and disinterestedness which he expressed and put in practice when repeatedly urged to employ his prophetic sagacity or magical skill against Israel? "If Balak would

" give me his house-full of gold and silver, I cannot " go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do " less or more." Num. xxii. 18. What can equal, on the other, the vile prostitution, for hire, of his great talents in the service of an idolatrous prince, against the people whom he knew to be favoured and protected of Heaven? We see him this day seeking and enjoying the most intimate communication with the living and true God; and to-morrow recurring to the practice of infamous and infernal arts, to accomplish a most detestable and diabolical purpose: proclaiming at one time, in language which the spirit of wisdom and prophecy alone could inspire, the security, glory, and happiness of that people whom God delighted to honour; and with the very next breath insidiously suggesting counsels which directly tended to destroy that security, to tarnish that glory, and to dissolve that happiness. In a word, we behold him fully impressed with the importance of a holy life, in order to a peaceful and happy end, and yet living in the commission of the most flagrant enormities, and prematurely cut off, with all his imperfections on his head; cleaving to the last to the mammon of unrighteousness, and yet sufficiently impressed with the loveliness of true goodness to pray in these words, " Let me die the " death of the righteous, and let my last end be like " his!" Num. xxiii. 10.

For the farther clearing up of this very singular character and history, it may be of importance to observe, that though the descendants of Abraham,

for many ages after the death of that patriarch, were distinguished as the peculiar people of God, to whom were committed the lively oracles, and "to whom "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the "covenants, and the giving of the law, and the ser-"vice of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4; yet Scripture permits us not to consider all divine knowledge as confined to that people, previous to their establishment in Canaan. The dispersion from the wild attempt of Babel necessarily conveyed in every one of its fragments some knowledge of the nature, will, and worship, of the God of their fathers; which, though in process of time obscured by tradition and forgetfulness, and disfigured by human invention, must still have retained somewhat of both its original form and substance. The example and instructions of so good a master, and of a neighbour so respectable as Abraham himself, could not but have a sensible effect on his numerous domestics, who were of various countries, and upon the princes with whom he came into connexion; and for this very end probably it was that Providence kept him wandering from place to place. By means of their intercourse with Abraham, we know that Pharaoh and Abimelech attained at least a certain degree of acquaintance with the true God. We find, in like manner, Job, at whatever period he lived, and his three friends in Arabia, and particularly Elihu of the kindred of Ram, discovering very profound knowledge in divine things; and Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, in the land of Midian, appears

evidently to have possessed the same advantage. It is not therefore matter of very great surprise, that Balaam, a stranger and an enemy to the commonwealth of Israel, should enjoy this advantage in common with many of his neighbours, and that he should have made such an indifferent use of it: this, alas! being the misery of multitudes who are favoured with a still clearer light than he was. Neither will it excite wonder, if we find superstitious and idolatrous rites gradually blending with the worship of the great Jehovah. Laban, though not to be set down as wholly given to idolatry, long before the period now under review, had his teraphim, or household gods, which he highly prized, either as objects of religious veneration, or on account of the precious materials of which they were composed. And this too will in part account for that strange mixture which we find in the character of Balaam; his sudden transition from the acknowledgment of the God of Israel, to a participation in the profane rites employed in the worship of the idols of Balak and Moab.

But notwithstanding this odious and abominable mixture, we observe, in more than one instance, the great God winking at those times of ignorance, and condescending to make known his will, even to men who were daily insulting him by their abominations, as in the case of Pharaoh and Abimelech already mentioned; as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the grossest of idolaters, many ages afterwards; and in the case before us. All this leads to make an

obvious and an important distinction between the extraordinary gifts and the graces of God's Spirit. It is one thing to have a clear and enlightened head, and another to have an affectionate and obedient heart. It is a blessed union where they meet, but the former without the latter only renders wickedness more conspicuous, and condemnation more just. The charge, alas! does not stop at wicked, covetous Balaam: it was matter of complaint down to the days of Micah, and of prophets of a different description. "The heads" of God's people judge "for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, "and the prophets thereof divine for money." And our blessed Lord, in order to level all confidence in the possession of the choicest gifts, assures us, that many shall say unto him in the great day, "Lord, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and "in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy "name done many wonderful works? And then "will I profess unto them, I never knew you: de-"part from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 22, 23.

We observe farther, that though God was sometimes pleased to bestow the gift of prophecy upon the unworthy, the prediction, though uttered by unholy lips, was the truth of God, which no weakness, perverseness, nor disinclination of the prophet, was able either to alter or to suppress. "For the pro-"phecy came not in old time by the will of man: "but holy men of God spake as they were moved "by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. They spake

under an irresistible impulse; they spake sometimes what they understood not, and what they would have concealed if they could. Thus Caiaphas, the avowed enemy of our blessed Lord, uttered a notable prophecy concerning him, not knowing what he said. Thus Jeremiah, disgusted with the ill success of his preaching, finding the word of the Lord made a reproach and a derision daily, by the thoughtless men of his generation, resolved not to make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But, says he, "his word was in mine heart, as a burning "fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with "forbearing, and I could not stay." And Josephus, in perfect consistency with the character of Balaam, as drawn by Moses, puts into his mouth this address to the king of Moab, who upbraided him with breach of agreement, in pronouncing the warmest of benedictions, where he was expressly hired to curse: "Can you imagine, that when prompted by "the Spirit of God to disclose futurity, it depends "on us to be silent, or to speak out? He makes "our voices the vehicles of his will, without per- "mitting us a choice in the matter. I well remem- "ber for what purpose the joint entreaties of you "and the Midianites have brought me hither. I "have undertaken this journey with a fixed deter- "mination to favour your earnest wishes; but God "is more powerful than the bent of my inclination, "which aims at the gratification of your desires. "For when he takes possession of our minds, he "occupies them wholly, and leaves us nothing of

"our own. I had nothing less in my intention, "than to trumpet the praises of this mighty host, "or to display the blessings which God has in re- "serve for this favoured race. But being graciously "disposed towards them, and determined to exalt "them to the highest pinnacle of glory and felicity, "He suggested to me the predictions, which I "could not but utter." Joseph. Antiq. lib. iv. cap. 4.

Sometimes the representation of some dreadful punishment, to be instantly inflicted if they dared to falsify the oracle committed to them, might serve as a curb to their own natural and unruly propensities; and sometimes, carried wholly out of themselves, they delivered in an ecstasy what was committed to them, unconscious of what they said or did. In the prosecution of the history, we shall find Balaam under both these kinds of inspiration; both awed by fear, and wrapt into the vision of futurity in a trance.

I only make one observation more, for the clearing up of this remarkable story. It was a generally received opinion among the Gentile nations, that prophets, or diviners, had a power, by means of incantation, to inflict or to remove public calamities; that they understood the art of decoying from among their enemies, the tutelary deities who presided over them; in consequence of which they were easily and certainly discomfited. Homer makes the capture of Troy to depend on the removal of the sacred image of Minerva from its residence in the citadel of that

metropolis: and Joshua himself, in the conquest of Canaan, takes advantage of this vulgar prejudice, in order to encourage his men to proceed to victory; and to prevent the ill effects of the timid and terrifying report of his colleagues, respecting the strength of the country. "Rebel not ye against "the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; "for they are bread for us: their defence is departed "from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them "not." Num. xiv. 9. It was accordingly usual, on undertaking military expeditions, to nerve the arm, and to wet the sword of the soldier, by the tongue of the priest, and the tremendous forms of religion. They attempted to make the gods parties to their quarrels, and devoted to perdition the nations against whom they waged war. An ancient author has transmitted to us the form of execration employed on such occasions, which, on account of its relation to our subject, perhaps you will have the curiosity to hear.—It is a perfect contrast to the blessing which Balaam was obliged reluctantly to pronounce upon Israel. The priest destined to this awful employment, after presenting the usual sacrifice, advanced to the head of the army, and in the presence of the general and principal officers, pronounced aloud words to this effect: "Almighty "Father of gods and men, or if thou wouldst ra-"ther be addressed by the name of Jupiter, or if "any other appellation be more grateful to thine "ear: pour out, I conjure thee, upon this army," or "this city," according as the case required, "the

" spirit of terror and dismay: deprive of the sight " of their eyes all those who shall level their blows " at us, our legions, or troops; spread darkness over " our enemies, over their cities, over their fields, " over their armies. Look upon them as a thing " accursed: bring them under the hardest conditions " that ever an enemy was constrained to undergo. " As for me, to destruction I hereby devote them; " my curse I pour upon them, and take this prince, " these captains, this people, to be witnesses of it." Macrob. Saturnal. lib. iii. cap. 9. This ceremony being performed, and the soldiers inspirited by the sanctions of religion, they advanced to the combat in confidence of success.

It was for a purpose of this kind, that Balaam was now sent for by the confederated powers of Moab and Midian. How the latter of these two nations had been induced to join in such an embassy, we are not informed. The middle forty years of his life Moses had spent among that people; he had formed alliance with them, by marrying the daughter of Jethro, one of the princes of the country, with whom he maintained a most friendly correspondence, after he was raised to the command of the armies of Israel. He cannot, therefore, be suspected of forming a hostile design against his ancient host and relations; and it was much more natural for them to form an alliance with a man of Moses's well-known wisdom and moderation, and with a people so sensibly favoured of Heaven as Israel was, than with a nation of idolaters, and with a prince who

was reduced to employ the poor arts of incantation against his enemies. But in many cases it happens, that aiming at an over-refined wisdom and policy, men prove themselves fools. Jethro was probably by this time dead, and the Midianitish state was governed by councils very unlike those which would probably have been suggested by that wise and good man; and a deputation of their princes joins those of Balak, in an application to Balaam, to strengthen their united forces, by laying Israel under a curse.

It is melancholy to think, that from the beginning to this day, men have been more eager to bring mischief upon others, than to procure good to themselves. Had these Midianites and Moabites associated together to strengthen their borders; had they invited a prophet to come and confirm their bands of alliance, and to encourage the hearts of their soldiery by pronouncing a blessing upon themselves, they had not been reprehensible; but such is the corruption and malignity of the human heart, that it not only takes pleasure in the evil that befalls another, where our own interest is concerned, but in the very mischief that is wrought for mischief sake. The great evil is, men engage in transitory pursuits as if they were immortal; and had they the power together with the inclination, they would prosecute momentary offences with everlasting punishments. What is it to one nation, that another great nation be utterly exterminated, provided a favourite scheme of ambition, commerce, or revenge

be thereby promoted! When we hear a poor wretch, a common curser or swearer, on the most frivolous occasions imprecating eternal damnation on his fellow-creature, we are filled with horror; and yet without surprise, we behold religious sects in their zeal, and mighty empires in their pride and fury, deliberately doing the same thing. What principle so important to individuals and to states, as a principle of true religion! It is a comforter in affliction, a counsellor in darkness and uncertainty, a refuge in danger and distress, a support in death. What so seductive and mischievous as an erroneous principle of this sort! "If the light "that is in men be darkness, how great is that "darkness?" False religion is a wandering fire of the night, hurrying men over a precipice, plunging them in the gulf,—pretending to bring a tribute of glory to God by destroying mankind.—It is the spirit of the great enemy of God and man, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

It is the perilousness of the times that has tossed Balaam into notice, and consequence, and infamy. In a quieter period he had floated unnoticed on the surface, and silently increased the paltry gains of his black art, by playing on the credulity of silly women and children. But the old wizard has had the good fortune to attract the notice of princes, and has the opportunity of selling his magical spells at his own price; and he fails not to make the most of his market. With the clue afforded us in Scripture, we will attempt, in another Lecture, to follow

the various turnings and windings of that profoundest, darkest, most intricate of all labyrinths, a carnal covetous heart. We conclude the present with calling upon you:

I. To remark, and to revere the righteous judgment of God, in giving up to strong delusion those who seek and follow delusions. Every deliberate violation of God's law, every victory which a man gains over his own conscience, becomes his punishment, as it is his crime. Let not him who has wilfully deceived himself in the first instance, pretend to complain that he has been hurried into mistakes which he never intended, but could not avoid. The *first* wrong step was in his power, but not the *fourth* or *fifth*. The man needed not, unless he chose, to have set himself a running down a steep place; but, once in motion, it is not in his power to stop when he would. If therefore he plunge into the flood beneath, the fault is in himself, not in the laws of motion, which only carried on what his own will had begun. The man who has destroyed his faculties by excess, must not charge his bad memory, his erroneous judgment, or the inconveniencies in which they have involved him, upon nature, or the God of nature. No, they only establish the work of his own hands. In this view, it is perfectly just that, "to him who hath should more be given, and "from him who hath not, even that which he hath "should be taken away."

II. Let us rejoice that we have a clear and "sure

" word of prophecy," to direct and assist us in every doubtful and difficult case; and that " the testimony " of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The gift of prophecy was not always a blessing to the possessor; and, as the mere knowledge of future events, it would be the reverse of a blessing. In tender mercy and in loving kindness, God conceals futurity from men. But all that pertains to the acquisition of wisdom and the attainment of happiness; all that assures us of life and immortality, and makes us meet for the enjoyment of it, the words of this prophecy fully unfold. " The righteousness of faith " speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, " Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring " Christ down from above:) Or who shall descend " into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again " from the dead.) But what saith it? The word " is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: " that is, the word of faith which we preach, that " if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord " Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God " hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be " saved." Rom. x. 6—9. To know but this, is more than to " speak with the tongues of men " and of angels"—is more than to " have the gift " of prophecy, and to understand all mysteries and " all knowledge; and to have all faith, so as to be " able to remove mountains."—" Covet earnestly " the best gifts;" but rather cultivate the fruits of the spirit, " love, joy, peace, long-suffering, " gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, tempe-

"rance, against such there is no law." Gal. v. 22, 23.

III. While we admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in counteracting the intention of wicked Balaam, and turning the curse in his mouth into a blessing, let us bow the knee in gratitude to that great Prophet, who has wholly, and for ever done away the curse; let us give glory to "God, who "hath sent his Son Christ Jesus to bless every one "of us, in turning us from our iniquities;" and to introduce us into more than an Eden, more than a Canaan, even into the paradise of God; where there "is no more curse,"—"where God shall wipe away "all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more "death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall "there be any more pain: for the former things are "passed away." Rev. xxi. 4.

IV. While we behold "the madness of the pro-"phet"—a heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, let us tremble to think that the seeds of this very sin are implanted deeply in our own nature; that they have even discovered their baleful shoots; that they bring forth fruit unto death. Every plant which our heavenly Father had not planted, shall be plucked up and rooted out; and this is one of them. Look to it carefully, O man: watch it with a holy jealousy. It is "the root of all evil." "Love not "the world, neither the things that are in the world. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father "is not in him. 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, bu
"is of the world. And the world passeth away
"and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the wil
"of God abideth for ever." 1 John ii. 15—17.

LECTURE XIV.

NUMBERS XXII. 21.

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

THE eagerness which men discover in pursuing the objects of time and sense is a melancholy contrast to their coldness and indifference respecting the things of God, and of eternity. The carnal mind needs but a hint to attach itself to the pursuit of riches, pleasure, or honour; and when engaged, no argument is of weight sufficient to dissuade; no danger intimidates, no difficulty discourages. The understanding becomes the dupe of the passions, conscience is led hoodwinked by appetite, and the man is shamefully sunk in the brute. But the alarm must be louder than thunder, which awakens the thoughtless, the sensual, and the selfish to serious reflection; and it must be repeated every hour, else they will slumber and sleep again.

Water has in its natural coldness a tendency to congeal; and, once reduced to ice, has no principle in itself to recover from that torpid state. The cause of change must come from without. To dissolve and restore it to its liquid state, the sun must shine, the wind must blow; withdraw the action of

air and fire, and it will gradually freeze again. In like manner, without any cause from without, the human body, by a principle of corruption within itself, must speedily dissolve and be destroyed; and the human mind, by a similar internal principle of moral corruption, degenerates from depravity to depravity, till, lost to shame, fear, remorse, and at length to feeling, men come to commit iniquity with greediness, and to glory in their shame. To preserve the body in life, there must be constant supplies of nourishment administered; and to preserve the soul in health, there must be "line upon "line, precept upon precept, here a little and there "a little."

It is truly affecting to see men enlightened and persuaded, yet wedded to their lusts: clearly informed of the right path, but wilfully and deliberately persisting in error; hardening themselves against God, and yet thinking to prosper; acknowledging God in words, but in works denying him.

These observations are all strikingly exemplified in the character and conduct of Balaam, of which we attempted to give you a general idea in the last Lecture, and to which were added some observations tending to elucidate his singular history. We are now to enter on the particular detail of it, as it is delivered in the sacred record.

The Israelitish nation was now in the last year of their peregrination through the wilderness; their civil and religious government were fully settled, and the Theocracy finally established. They were

now approaching the banks of the Jordan: and by their number, order, and discipline, they were striking terror into all the neighbouring nations. Two kings, their armies, and their people, have already fallen before their victorious arms; and nothing is left to oppose their progress to Canaan but the river, the boundary itself of the promised land. They pitch their camp quietly in the plains of Moab, expecting the signal from their divine leader and commander to pass over, conquer, and take possession. Their warlike array and recent successes have alarmed the apprehensions of Balak, king of Moab, as their prosperity and prospects had excited his envy and jealousy. Diffident of his strength, either to repel invasion, if attacked by so powerful an adversary, or to attack them first and endeavour to obstruct their progress, he enters into an alliance with the people of Midian, for their mutual security and defence. And even then, still doubtful of the force of their united arms, they agree to employ the arts of divination, in aid of the sword, and they dream of conquering by the power of enchantment, those whom they were afraid to encounter in the field. To such base, such wretched shifts do princes and nations resort, to gratify pride, ambition, or revenge. For this purpose, they send a joint embassy to Balaam, the son of Beor, a noted soothsayer in the neighbourhood.

Balak and Moab had degenerated from the faith of Lot, their forefather, and were sunk into idolatry; it is therefore no wonder to see them of a

jealous and hostile spirit towards Israel their brother. A principle of religion, consisting in the fear and love of God, is the great bond of union among men; it strengthens the ties of natural affection, and even conciliates friendship between enemies; but irreligion, or what is worse, an erroneous principle of religion, turns men loose against each other, dissolves society, and fattens the earth with human blood. We cannot help recollecting, alas! that Abraham and Lot, the uncle and nephew, the progenitors of the two nations, were under the necessity of separating from each other, on account of their increasing wealth; and we see, many years after they were laid in the dust, the self-same cause whetting the spirits and the swords of their posterity, and arming them for their mutual destruction. The whole world is a possession too scanty for avarice and ambition; the success of one seems to be a diminution of the happiness of another: and even the immense ocean is crimsoned with gore, that one may enjoy sole and sullen empire; as if that vast space could not accommodate the operations of two tribes of ants on yonder mole-hill. Blessed world, where envy and strife shall rage no more; where there is bread enough and to spare, room enough and to spare; where the felicity of every one is an accession of felicity to every one!

Balaam is described in Scripture by his parentage, his country, and profession. He was the son of Beor, or Bosor, the difference of which pronunciation is accounted for, from the difference of dialect

in the Oriental languages. The father exists to us only in his name, and in the history of his son: and happy had it been for that son to have left behind him nothing too but a mere name, instead of one loaded with infamy and detestation. Pethor, the place of his residence, was a city of Aram, or Mesopotamia, the very country where Abraham himself was born, and where he resided till his seventy-fifth year: it was the native country of Rebekah, the wife of Isaac; the country where Jacob passed a great part of his youthful years; where he married; where all his children, except Benjamin, were born, and whence he obtained the name of a Syrian. Pethor was situated on the river Euphrates, called *the* River, by way of eminence or distinction, it being the largest in the country; and thence, in many passages of Scripture, styled the *great* River. The country adjacent, to a vast distance, being plain, it was favourable to the observation of the heavenly bodies; and accordingly we find the science of astronomy was early cultivated there; and the pretended science of astrology, that is, the power of foretelling future events, from the appearances and supposed influence of the stars, was speedily grafted upon it. Pride, presumption, and a little knowledge, soon arrogated to themselves a power of controlling these great luminaries, which seem in perpetual motion to encompass our earth, and of suspending or altering their influences; and ignorance, superstition, and credulity easily admitted the insolent claim, and resorted to it. This was

apparently the profession of Balaam, for in the book of Joshua, he is expressly termed "the sooth-"sayer." It is probably to his skill and power as an astrologer, that Balak had recourse for assistance against Israel; and when we come to his prophecy itself, we shall meet with some, and these not obscure, allusions to that art.

The message put into the mouths of these ambassadors is strongly expressive of terror and consternation: "There is a people come out from Egypt: "behold they cover the face of the earth, and they "abide over against me." Verse 5. The dreadful plagues inflicted on Egypt, in effecting Israel's deliverance, had been heard at the distance of Moab; and though forty years have elapsed, they are neither forgotten nor have lost their impression. Fear ever magnifies its object; "they cover the face "of the earth:" the word is, the *eye* or *sight* of the earth; their tents extend so far that the earth and they seem to have one limit, and they are marshalled so close, that no ground can be seen.—Another image, strongly expressive of the same passion, is that in the fourth verse: "Now will this "company lick up all that are round about us, as "the ox licketh up the grass of the field." "Lick "up," it is the same word which is used 1 Kings xviii. 38. to express the action of devouring fire: "Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the "burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, "and the dust, and licked up the water that was "in the trench." 1 Kings xviii. 38. The ox, as

he feeds calmly and stately along, employs his tongue only, and the grass perisheth, without pushing with the horn, or stamping with the foot, actions that denote strength and exertion, but by the easy motion of a soft and pliant film of flesh, he sweeps away all before him; thus easily and certainly, Balak apprehends, was Israel advancing to his and his people's destruction.

And how was this approaching plague to be resisted or averted? "Come now therefore, I pray "thee, curse me this people, for they are too "mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that "we may smite them, and that I may drive them "out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou "blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is "cursed." Verse 6. We have here an assemblage of all the baser and more contemptible passions of the human mind, called forth and led on by the predominant one of fear: a low, grovelling superstition, expecting from magical spells what ought to have been sought for from wisdom and valour; unprovoked violence and cruelty, in seeking the destruction of a people who were dwelling peaceably by him, and who had given such strong and recent proof of their moderation, in submitting to a tedious and difficult march round the whole land of Edom, rather than offend an unkind brother, who had refused a passage through his land, which they could have easily cut with the sword: and unmanly, abject adulation of a vile wizard, whom he supposed capable of serving his turn. On the other hand,

the two great leading passions of Balaam's soul, vanity and covetousness, were likely to be gratified to the full. How would his heart exult, to see a train of princes standing at his gate, and presents, worthy of kings to bestow, poured down at his feet! A prophet, indeed, would have known from the beginning, that the application was nugatory, and that it must come to nothing; and an honest man would have rejected it with firmness, and persevered in that rejection. But we see his heart is won from the first moment, and all that follows is a wretched struggle between inclination and conscience, in which the former at length carries off the victory.

He receives the messengers with great courtesy, and accommodates them in his house; for even a miser can be hospitable if he be sure of gaining by it. Abraham's servant, followed by a camel loaded with the good things of Canaan, can easily force open the doors of such a man as Laban, or Balaam. He affects an air of great mystery; he cannot give his response immediately. Night, the season of incantation and dreams, must intervene; and, horrible to think, the great and dreadful name of Jehovah is interposed to sanction and conceal the wicked purposes of a heart hunting after its covetousness; and he promises to report in the morning the result of his consultation. How faithfully the report was made the sequel will show.

It appears on the face of the history, that God waited not for an application from Balaam concerning this business, but whether in a dream, a vision,

or by a voice, prevented him with an inquiry concerning the deputation from Moab. In many instances, Jehovah is represented as drawing information from men's own mouths, of what evidently lay revealed to his all-seeing eye, and thus making their folly and wickedness to expose, reprove, and condemn themselves. "And God came unto Balaam, and "said, What men are these with thee?" Verse 9. This question must have put the prophet into great agitation. Awful is the voice of the Eternal, at whatever season, in whatever form, and on whatever occasion it is heard! How awful then to a bad man harbouring an ill design, shutting wilfully his own eyes, and yet flattering himself, and saying, "Doth God "see, and is there knowledge with the Most High?" That he considered the very question as ominous, and fatal to the cause of his avarice and vain-glory, is evident from the circumstantiality of his answer. It discovers a soul tremblingly alive to the voice of interest: it is minute and particular, as if by a parade of words he could deceive his Maker into an approbation of his purpose and desire. What then must have been his chagrin and disappointment, when a prohibition so peremptory and positive in a moment blasted all his prospects of gain and preferment!

"And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go "with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for "they are blessed." Verse 12. The application had two objects in view, permission to go into the land of Moab, and liberty to curse the children of Israel;

and both meet with a flat denial. He must not accompany the ambassadors to him who sent them; neither must he, either at home or abroad, in this place or in that, presume to curse, or in any shape whatever to molest that people. And as if the sternness of interdiction had not been sufficient, a reason is assigned, "for they are blessed." The commandments of God, in general, are so clear that it is impossible to misunderstand them; it is not ignorance but presumption that ruins mankind.

Balaam, however reluctant, must next morning deliver an account of the night's success; and we find he does it in a very partial and imperfect manner. When he reported the message of Balak to God, having to do with the great Searcher of hearts, with whom disguise avails nothing, he is accurate and distinct; but in carrying back the answer of God, having to do with men, who knew no more than he had a mind to communicate to them, he delivers it in terms calculated only to stimulate the eagerness of the king of Moab, by encouraging a hope that something might be extorted by dint of importunity and perseverance: or that perhaps he might be allowed to do that at a distance, which he might not do by a nearer approach. The command was clear and full, "Thou shalt not go with them:" but in the mouth of Balaam it is mutilated and perverted: "The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go "with you." Verse 13. This satisfies Balak at once that the prophet's good-will was with him; that it was not from want of inclination that the messen-

gers returned without him; and he justly concludes, that with such a proportion of the man on his side, it would not be difficult to make the rest to follow.

The father of lies himself will speak truth when it makes for his purpose; and Satan will quote Scripture if he can but deceive by it; as in his temptation of our Saviour in the wilderness. But then there is always some material circumstance disguised, perverted, or suppressed: and thereby a far different meaning is conveyed from that which was intended. The word of God, then, is handled deceitfully, not only when it is wrested, and made to speak a language not its own, but when any part of the truth is purposely, artfully, and wilfully concealed; and he "who shuns to declare the whole counsel of God," is equally criminal with him who presumes to deliver, as the word of God, what wants the stamp of his authority. Balaam simply relates, that he is not permitted to go; not a syllable of the prohibition to curse Israel, nor of the reason assigned for that prohibition.

As the message lost much by the way between God and the princes of Moab, from Balaam's manner of rehearsing it, so it loses still more between Balaam and their master, from their mutilated and partial report; so that by the time it reaches Balak, an entirely different turn and meaning are given to it. The words of the oracle were, "Thou shalt "not go with them; thou shalt not curse the peo-

"ple, for they are blessed," Verse 12: rehearsed by Balaam, "The Lord refuseth to give me leave "to go with you," Verse 13: reported by the ambassadors, "Balaam refuseth to come with us." Verse 14. Thus, by the alteration of a few circumstances, even without a direct violation of truth, by passing through a very few hands, a plain proposition is made to contradict itself: and if we add to the easiness of varying facts, by varying phrases and modes of expression, the difference, still more easily made, by the infinite diversity of tones, looks, and gesture, we shall not be surprised to find, what frequently happens, a man made to say diametrically the reverse of what he did say, and what he intended.

Balak having received this answer as the prophet's, with great colour of reason he considers it as a mere artifice, employed with a view to raise his price and importance; and he hopes to conquer Balaam's reluctance by assiduity, perseverance, presents, and flattery; for both good and bad men judge of others by themselves: and apprized, it would appear, of Balaam's weak side, ambition and avarice, he dispatches a second embassy, consisting of a greater number of persons, and of still higher rank, with this weighty and importunate address: "Thus "saith Balak, the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray "thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I "will promote thee unto very great honour, and I "will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come, "therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people." Verses 16, 17. How flattering all this to a worldly,

selfish mind! Balak puts a chart blanche into his hands; leaves him to name his own terms. All the honour which a king could bestow, all the wealth of Moab is before him; the very things which his soul lusted after. Blessed Jesus, thou chief of the prophets, even the prince of this world, the chief of tempters, when he came found nothing in thee! he found no weak side, no vulnerable part. The kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, dazzled not thine eyes: to the loudest calls of nature thou turnedst a deaf ear. The applause of men thou didst despise; thou soughtest not thine own glory, but the glory of Him that sent thee: thy "meat and drink "was to do the will of Him that sent thee."

Balaam had now been at the summit of his wishes, but for a stern, pointed command of God; which, like a drawn sword, hung by a single hair over his head. Shocking dilemma! He is goaded on by desires as impetuous as ever took possession of a proud and covetous mind; he is bridled in by a prohibition, as decisive as words could make it. For a moment we are in hope that the good principle has got the ascendant, that the fear, if not the love of God, is shed abroad in his heart. Who could speak better? "If Balak would give me his house full "of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word "of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Verse 18. It is the very sentiment of chaste and virtuous Joseph, when solicited by temptation of a different sort. But here is the difference:—Joseph fled from

temptation, and overcame: Balaam tampered with it, and fell. Even the worst of men feel themselves under a necessity, for their interest's sake, to save appearances; and something must be said, at least, to still the clamours of conscience. Unhappy man! steady himself to his own base and wicked purpose, he is weak enough to entertain the hope that the great, the unchangeable Jehovah may depart from his. Thus deceiving himself, it is no wonder to see him attempting to deceive the king of Moab's messengers into the expectation of a response more favourable to their united wishes. Accordingly, he courteously invites them to lodge with him that night also; if peradventure there might be obtained a reversal of the decree.

And now the sable curtain is drawn, and Balaam is left alone, and no eyes see him but the all-seeing eye of God. Without waiting to be consulted, and the prophet without doubt was both afraid and ashamed to venture on this second rencounter, God again prevents him, and tacitly, though not directly, charges him with having invited this second application, in the face of a positive and decided answer. Balaam and Balak are both men of this world, and having one and the same spirit to govern them, they readily understand each other. Balaam evidently courts a second address; and Balak is not slow to pay it. Now this is the very thing which gives so great and such just offence to a holy God—that two presumptuous, selfish wretches should presume to imagine that the counsels of Heaven could

be shaken, in compliance with their humour or interest. "And God came unto Balaam at night, "and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, "rise up, and go with them; but yet the word "which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." Verse 20. The word might have been rendered, "*Seeing* the men have come to call thee. Balaam, "you have carried, thus far, your point. A more "honourable embassy attends you. Your desire is "to go: you are unable to withstand the allure-"ments of riches and honour: you know the better "course, but will pursue the worse. Well, then, "fulfil thy desire. I have declared my will; but "thou preferrest thine own. I have said, *Go not;* "*curse not;* but the demon of gain, Mammon, "says, *Go* and *curse*. Obey him. Go, and take "the consequence." This is clearly the language of the permission given him to accompany the messengers. And can there be a clearer proof of the divine displeasure, than when God yields to men, and gives them their own way? "My people," says God, "would not hearken to my voice, and "Israel would none of me; so I gave them up "unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in "their own counsels. O that my people had "hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my "ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, "and turned my hand against their adversaries." Psalm lxxxii. 11—14. The wickedness of the old world at length overcame the patience of God; and he said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with

"man:" and so they were left to eat and drink, to dance and to play; but then the waters of a deluge were at no great distance: and when God says, concerning a people or an individual, "Ephraim is "joined to idols, let him alone;" short of hell, it is the worst that can befall them.

Balaam flattered himself and the Moabites, with hearing *more* from God; but, the punishment of abusing the light he had, he hears *less* than before; and the vision is obscured to the man who had wilfully shut his own eyes. He was formerly forbidden either to go, or to curse. He is now, at his peril, allowed to go: but should he be so rash as to proceed on so slender a warrant, he is, at his peril, warned to walk by the instructions which should be given him. How easily men believe, how promptly they obey, when the doctrine tallies with their prejudices; when the precept coincides with their inclinations or their interest. Balaam is weak, I ought to have said, wicked enough, to imagine his way perfectly clear. Having carried, as he thought, one essential point, all the rest he presumes will follow of course. Who so quick-sighted as a covetous man pursuing his gain? And yet who so stupid and dull as the man whose eyes the God of this world hath blinded? Balaam is up betimes in the morning, equipped for his journey, on his way for the land of Moab: "For the children of this "world are in their generation wiser than the chil-"dren of light." Luke xvi. 8. And there, for the present, we shall leave him, with this melancholy,

mortifying reflection—That a corrupted heart has infinitely greater power to pervert a sound understanding and a well-informed conscience, than an intelligent conscience and a clear head have to reform and purify a corrupted heart. If God permit, we shall continue the history next Lord's day. May grace and wisdom be granted us to make a proper use of it; and to God's holy name be praise. Amen.

LECTURE XV.

2 PETER II. 15, 16.

These—are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet.

THE ordinary powers of nature, if we consider them attentively, are no less wonderful in themselves, and are not less a proof of the power and wisdom of God, than those extraordinary gifts which have been bestowed, and those preternatural powers which have been exercised, at particular seasons and for special purposes; and which have excited the admiration and astonishment of one part of mankind, and the incredulity of another. That a company of illiterate men should suddenly, and without instruction or study, be endowed with the gift of readily speaking various languages, justly raises our wonder, and conveys to our minds a very lofty idea of that divine intelligence which can communicate such power into men: but we overlook the wonder equally great, because it is continually occurring, of the common gift of speech, and of the conveyance of thought by it; and the acquisition of language by means of letters and memory. That a dumb ass should speak with man's voice, and the

dull ass reason, fills us with surprise, because the instance is singular and unparalleled; but the gradual increase of the human body, the imperceptible expansion of the powers of the human mind, pass for a thing of course; though the hand of God be conspicuous in the one case as in the other. Nothing is incredible to them who know the Scriptures, and the power of God: nothing is incredible to him who attends, with any degree of application, to the operations of his own mind; and to what, in the ordinary course of human affairs, is every hour pressing upon his observation.

In a crowded assembly, without the utterance of a single sound, by one glance of the eye, the inmost thoughts, the most secret emotions, shall quick as lightning be conveyed from soul to soul: and the stranger be unable to intermeddle with, to partake of, the sorrow or the joy. Let the veil of night be spread ever so thick, and the use of sight suspended as if the eye-ball were extinguished, the vibration of a little film of flesh shall dissipate the gloom, and shall convey the accents of affection or of woe to the ear and the heart of sympathy. Place the diameter of the globe between my friend and me, by an art subtle as the magic spell, what I know and feel in the frozen regions of the north, shall flee on the swift wings of the wind, and touch his soul under the more clement sky of the opposite hemisphere. Knowing from experience all this to be true, history can record no fact, promise suspend before my eyes no future event, too wonderful for

me to believe. The omniscience, omnipotence, and infinite goodness of God once admitted, every difficulty vanishes. Is there any thing too hard for the Lord to perform? No: Then Sarah conceives a son at ninety years old; the dumb ass reproves the madness of his master; unlettered fishermen speak with tongues; the dead shall arise; all these things shall be dissolved, and "new heavens, and a new "earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," shall be expanded, to endure for ever and ever.

Having premised these things, not altogether foreign, we trust, to our subject, we proceed to the farther prosecution of a history, as singular, and as instructive perhaps as any in Scripture.

Balaam having obtained what he was willing to believe to be the consent of God to his journey into the land of Moab, for we easily believe what we wish, he loses not a moment in making preparation for it. He is mounted and on his journey by the first dawning of the day, as if afraid of prevention, by a revocation of the permission; ill at ease in his mind, but smothering conviction, in the exultation of having princes in his train, and in the prospect of all the riches and honour which confederated kings had to bestow. Scripture gives us the idea of a holy violence offered unto God, with which he is well pleased, and to which he graciously submits to yield; as when it is said, "The kingdom of "heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it "by force." Hence the commandment, "to strive "to enter in at the strait gate," to wrestle and make

supplication, "to pray always, and not to faint." But there is also suggested the idea of an impious, a presumptuous, and a fatal strife and contention with our Maker, in which, woe be to the man who prevails. Such was the violence which worldly-minded Balaam offered: and how could he think to prosper? God, justly displeased at his perseverance in a cause which he knew to be disapproved of Heaven, leaves him not long in uncertainty respecting his will.

The princes of Moab, it would appear, had now left him, and were proceeding with a quicker pace to apprize their master of the prophet's approach; and Balaam remains attended by only two of his own servants, when the Angel of the Lord places himself in the way for an adversary against him. We shall find, in the sequel, the person styled the Angel of the Lord, as in other places, so here, assuming the character and exercising the prerogative of Deity: for He it is that afterwards says, "The "word that *I* shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt "speak." We are to understand therefore by this designation, the mighty, the uncreated Angel, by whom God made the worlds, the Eternal Word, which was in the beginning, which was with God, and which was God, and which in the fulness of time was made flesh, and dwelt among men: "And "they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only "begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John i. 14. But never till now, did he appear in the character of an adversary. We find him, on

other occasions, appearing to direct the wandering, to protect the weak, and to succour the distressed; as in the case of Hagar, Lot, and Jacob: but the face of the Lord is set against them that do evil. And now behold him on the way to check the progress of pride, violence, and covetousness. The great enemy, foe to God and man, is termed, by way of distinction, *the* Adversary: but, lo! that awful character is assumed by a very different Being —but one infinitely greater and mightier than him; whose wrath is infinitely more terrible: who has power to save and to destroy; and, if he take upon him that form, it is still in consistency with his gracious characters of good and merciful: it is to humble the proud, to prevent and counteract the causeless curse; to disappoint malice, and make the purposes of revenge recoil upon itself: it is to support the friendless, to guard the innocent, and to relieve the miserable.

This formidable apparition was observed neither by the prophet nor by his servants. Neither the natural vision of the latter, nor the extraordinary and supernatural sagacity of the former, discerned any thing save empty space, where the dullest of brute animals descried the presence of Him who makes all nature tremble at his nod; who "giveth "understanding to the prudent, and to him that "hath no m ght increaseth strength." Is not this a striking representation of what daily comes to pass in the course of Providence? We see men soaring in the clouds, with their eyes and imagina-

tion, while with their feet they stumble and fall into the ditch that is before them; possessing every kind of sense except common-sense; pretending to superior refinement, and yet stupid and gross in the plainest and most essential things. Thus the simplicity of the Gospel was "to the Jews a stumbling-"block, and to the Greeks foolishness:" and on this very account, the condescending Saviour of mankind is represented as rejoicing in spirit, and saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and "earth, because thou hast hid these things from "the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them "unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed "good in thy sight." Matt. xi. 25, 26. Thus God destroyeth the "wisdom of the wise, and brings "to nothing the understanding of the prudent." 1 Cor. i. 19.

What an object of terror is here represented as obstructing the passage! An angel! The prince of angels, armed with a sword, and that sword drawn in his hand! What was the strength of Egypt, in that dreadful night when one of his flaming messengers walked through the midst of it, and made all its first-born to bleed to death under his stroke? How easy had it been for that arm, with one stroke of that sword, to have put an end to the life and madness of the prophet! But he chose to employ a meaner instrument, and thereby to vindicate to himself a higher praise. —

There is a striking progress described in the mode of admonition and reproof, administered to the pro-

phet by the successive actions of the dumb creature. First, "he turned aside out of the way, and went "into the field;" a plain intimation to his accustomed rider, that something extraordinary obstructed his path. Thus, in many passages of Scripture, the common instincts of the dullest animals are employed to expose the greater thoughtlessness and folly of rational beings. "Ask now the beasts," says Job, "and they shall teach thee; and the "fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak "to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes "of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth "not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath "wrought this?" Job xii. 7—9. "Hear, O hea-"vens;" says God by Isaiah, "and give ear, O "earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished "and brought up children, and they have rebelled "against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the 'ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, "my people doth not consider." Isaiah i. 2, 3. "Yea, the stork in the heaven," saith God by another prophet, "knoweth her appointed times: "and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow "observe the time of their coming; but my people "know not the judgment of the Lord." Jer. viii. 7. Thus, in the passage before us, a more indirect reproof was given to the eagerness and speed of Balaam, pricked on by the spur of covetousness and ambition, by the action of the ass in deviating from the right path; and had not the eyes of his understanding been blinded by the wages of unrighteous-

ness, this, without the vision of an angel, might have taught him that the way in which he went was perverse before God. But following only the blind impulse of a carnal mind, he wreaks, in reiterated blows upon the offending brute, the resentment which ought to have been levelled against his own rashness and presumption. Who was here most worthy of stripes? Let the adage of the wise man determine. "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the "ass, and a rod for the fool's back."

Behold the patience and long suffering of God. The ass, by dint of blows, is forced back again into the road, and the angel himself gives place and retires. Folly and obstinacy seem to have carried off the victory; but, alas, how short is the triumph of impiety! If omnipotence yield, it is only to meet the sinner on ground more difficult and dangerous. The heavenly messenger now takes his stand in a place where there was no way to escape, "a wall on "this side, and a wall on that," and a flaming sword, wielded by the arm of the great Archangel, in front to oppose. There is no way of safety but in turning back and fleeing for life, and yet he will madly push on to his own destruction. When men are once engaged in a way that is not good, difficulty only stimulates their ardour; they rush on through danger to danger, till they involve themselves in inevitable destruction; according to the fearful progress described by the prophet,—"Fear, and the "pit, and the snare shall be upon thee, O inhabi- "tant of Moab, saith the Lord. He that fleeth

" from the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that " getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the " snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, " the year of their visitation, saith the Lord. They " that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, be- " cause of the force: but a fire shall come forth out " of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sion, " and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the " crown of the head of the tumultuous ones." Jer. xlviii. 43—45.

The reproof now becomes more distinct and direct. The wretched animal, urged on by his furious rider, hemmed in with a wall on either side, and opposed in front as with a wall of fire, in making a desperate effort to pass by and advance, thrusts himself close to the wall, and crushes the prophet's foot. Thus slow, thus reluctant, is a merciful God to proceed to judgment. He first warns and threatens; then touches the extremities, if peradventure the sinner will take warning and turn back; and not till all means have been tried and found ineffectual, is he provoked to strike the deadly blow that reaches the heart.

Mark, on the other hand, by what dreadful degrees sinners harden themselves against God, till they become lost to feeling. The commission of one sin as naturally leads to another as every step down a steep place accelerates the speed of that which is to follow; and yet transgressors vainly imagine it is in their power to stop when they please, or to turn against the bias. One of the most fearful

symptoms of a reprobate mind is, when the very means of awakening, convincing, and converting, serve as opiates to the conscience, and increase that insensibility which they were meant to cure. If the constitution of the patient be so vitiated as to convert medicine into poison, dissolution cannot be at a great distance. Affliction, that wholesome though unpalatable potion, never leaves the mind exactly where it found it. A cure is either begun by it, or the distemper is confirmed. The history of Balaam is the illustration of this position. The pain of his foot has only served to whet the asperity of his disposition; and the more he is opposed, the more earnest he is to get forward. O that the children of light were thus perseverant in a good cause, and not weary of well-doing.

It is astonishing that superstition, if not the fear of God, did not now turn him back. Surely never journey had a more ominous, inauspicious beginning: but the passions by which he was actuated are among the last to be discouraged; on he drives, and the angel, in patience mixed with displeasure, continues to retreat, till at length the path becomes so narrow, that it was impossible to turn to the right hand or to the left, when the patient brute, wearied and wasted with stripes, and scared with the dreadful vision immediately before her eyes, at last sinks to the earth under her burthen.

This was the third stage of admonition and reproof. God first waves the flaming sword, but cuts

not; shakes the rod, but smites not. That being disregarded, he puts forth his hand and smites the heel, but spares the vitals. He then proceeds to block up the way, that the sinner cannot pass; but is constrained to fall down before him. Humanity is shocked as we proceed. "A righteous man re-" gardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies " of the wicked are cruel." Behold an old, simple, uncomplaining drudge, expiring under the angry blows of her unkind master. The very stones of the field are ready to cry out, and to upbraid the hard-hearted, ungrateful wretch with his cruelty. "Ba-" laam's anger was kindled, and he smote her with a " staff."

In the history of the miracle which follows, a multitude of reflections crowd upon us.—In the order and frame of nature, every creature of God has a special use and end; neither is there any schism, deficiency, or redundancy permitted in the great body of the universe. Every thing is in its place; every thing is fulfilling the purpose of its Creator; and therefore nothing ought to be mean or contemptible in our eyes.—The great Lord of all exercises a tender concern about the lowest of the brute creation, provides for them, and resents the cruelty and injustice which are offered them. "He feeds " the ravens;" " the young lions ask their meat " from God;" " he careth for oxen;" " a sparrow " falleth not to the ground without our heavenly " Father." And, lo, the dull ass findeth compassion and an avenger when under oppression, from

him whom angels worship. Who so lofty as to be beyond his reach, as to defy his power? What so little as to be beneath his notice, or shut out from his pity?—There is of consequence a return of attention and tenderness due from the human race to every order of creatures below themselves, and whose services, whatever their faculties may be, Providence permits them to employ either for pleasure or for use.—The power and wisdom which stationed every creature in its proper place, and preserves it there, can at pleasure elevate it to a higher, or depress it to a lower sphere: can confer upon it a force unknown before, or deprive it of what it formerly possessed; can break the strength of Egypt by an army of frogs or flies, or preserve Daniel unhurt in the midst of the lions; can catch the serpent in his own craftiness, and teach the dull ass speech and reason.

The cunning of Satan, and the understanding of man, look out for likely, promising, and adequate instruments to carry on their designs. The wisdom of God chooses to execute his by such as are apparently weak, unpromising, and inadequate. To seduce our first parents, the devil employed the agency of that creature which was the most sagacious of all the beasts of the field. The most stupid, in the hand of the Almighty, was sufficient to confound, and to convict, and to condemn the proudest and most highly gifted of his race. And the gospel of Christ becometh effectual unto salvation, "not

" through the wisdom of words, but by demonstra-
" tion of the Spirit; for God hath chosen the foolish
" things of the world, to confound the wise; and
" God hath chosen the weak things of the world,
" to confound the things which are mighty; and
" base things of the world, and things which are
" despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which
" are not, to bring to nought things that are: that
" no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. i. 27—29.

Finally, for we must make an end of our reflections on the subject—What creature so brutish as a rational being under the dominion of his lusts! The novelty of an ass speaking, reasoning, remonstrating, seems to have excited no astonishment in the furious prophet: he is not awakened to one sentiment of compassion, nor of godly fear, by a phenomenon so singular. The only regret he feels, is the want of a deadly instrument to prosecute his resentment to the full. Men, most vainly, and in the face of experience, imagine that such and such means of conviction would certainly work their effect. " Nay,
" but if one went from the dead they will repent;"
but the truth is too well confirmed by every day's experience to be called in question, that " if they
" hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will
" they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Luke xvi. 31. A miracle greater than even opening the ass's mouth must be performed before Balaam will be persuaded. A heart wedded to gain is not to be *reasoned* out of its favourite purpose; and un-

belief, do what you will, always finds a strong hold whereto it can resort, and which it easily renders impregnable. "Show us a sign from Heaven, and "we will believe." Well, the very petulance of incredulity is humoured, the sign is exhibited, Satan is cast out. Surely they will now believe. No such thing. "This man casteth out devils by Beelzebub, "the prince of the devils."—The eyes of Balaam are blinder, his heart more hard, than the tongue of the ass is mute.

At length, God vouchsafes to effect that by a second miracle, which had been obvious to a tender conscience, much more to a prophetic eye, without any miracle at all: and the angel stands confessed to the sight of the soothsayer, clothed in all his terror. And now violence, ambition, and covetousness stand for a while suspended, swallowed up of fear at this alarming sight. His eyes are no sooner opened to see with whom he had to contend, than he shuts them again in consternation and astonishment; "he "bowed his head and fell flat on his face." What a miserable figure a haughty man makes when caught in the snare! How vain is the expectation of fleeing from God, or of opposing him with success! How dreadful it is to meet as an adversary, him whose counsels we have slighted as a friend! Balaam has now the unspeakable mortification of discovering that he owed the preservation of his life to the slender sagacity and discernment of the poor brute whom he had treated so unmercifully: and he is again assured, without reserve or disguise, that the

design of this journey was highly odious and offensive to God. "Behold, I went out to withstand "thee, because thy way is perverse before me. And "the ass saw me, and turned from me these three "times: unless she had turned from me, surely "now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive." Verses 32, 33.

But though intimidated and confounded, his heart still cleaves to "the wages of unrighteousness." Disapprobation could not be expressed in clearer and stronger words, than had all along been employed, "Thou shalt not go, thou shalt not curse;" "I "went out to withstand thee; thy way is perverse "before me;" and yet he has the assurance to make it a matter of doubt whether God were displeased with him or not. A conscience not quite callous, a heart not totally hardened like his, would have sought instantly to retreat, thankful that his presumption had not already cost him his life; but he cannot give up the hope of getting forward. "*If* it displease thee, I will get me back again." Verse 34. "*If* it displease thee"—Could he doubt it? What kind of assurance would he have had? And yet, wonderful to be told, the angel continues once more to give way; and Balaam has still the hardiness to proceed; and the issue proves the truth of the wise man's assertion: "He that being often "reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be "destroyed, and that without remedy." Prov. xxix. 1.

The history now hastens on to the meeting of

Balaam and Balak; the one eager to prevail over his enemies by the power of enchantment; the other to possess himself of the riches and honours of Moab. The one lays aside the state of a king, and advances to his utmost border, out of respect to his expected guest. The other, with more speed tha became a prophet, hastens to partake of the prince's repast, little scrupulous whether the bill of fare consisted of things offered unto idols or not. But, happily for Israel, God their protector had put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws. He himself feels and acknowledges it, however reluctantly: "And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come "unto thee: have I now any power at all to say "any thing? The word that God putteth in my "mouth, that shall I speak." Verse 38.

The prophecy itself, one of the most beautiful passages in the sacred history, though uttered by profane lips; and the power of God therein exemplified, in making the wrath of man to praise him, will furnish useful matter for another discourse.—Let what has been said be improved as a solemn warning to observe, regard, and submit to the admonitions of God's word and providence. Woe be to that man who sees no angel standing in the way of a sinful career, till the angel of death stop him with his fatal dart. Let the checks of conscience be listened to. Has the hand or the foot been bruised, retreat in time. There is a lion in the way. He that proves too strong for his Maker, by a bold perseverance in an evil course, is only hasteniug for-

ward to his own destruction. The same person is the kindest friend, and the most formidable adversary.

God can find an instrument to punish in the meanest and most contemptible creature; therefore despise none, abuse none. Be not weary in well-doing. Take an example from Balaam, in respect of perseverance; but choose an honester and worthier object of pursuit. Honour God with your superior reason and use of speech. Behold an ass wise, and a prophet mad: blush at thy own folly, and be humble.

Let us go, as has been already suggested, and learn wisdom from the brute creation. "The ox knoweth "his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" be instructed to acknowledge the hand that feeds thee, learn attachment to thy protector, learn gratitude to thy benefactor, repay kindness with kindness.—Learn industry from the bee. "Go to the ant, thou slug-"gard; consider her ways, and be wise; which hav-"ing no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat "in the summer, and gathereth her food in the har-"vest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When "wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" Prov. vi. 6—9. "The hen gathereth her chickens under her "wings."—"There be four things which are little "upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare "their meat in the summer; the conies are but a "feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; "the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them "by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands,

"and is in kings' palaces." Prov. xxx. 24—28. May God open our eyes, and dispose our minds to receive instruction from every thing around us; and preserve us from opposing his will; and make his way straight before our face.

LECTURE XVI.

NUMBERS XXIII. 10.

Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

HUMAN conduct, as far as it is governed by the spirit of this world, exhibits a wretched and contemptible, but a dangerous and fatal, opposition to the will of God. Men would be happy in their own way; but whether they succeed in their pursuits, or whether they fail, they find themselves miserable in the end. God is conducting us, if we would but be conducted, to real and substantial happiness, but it is through a narrow gate, and along a path in many places strewed with thorns. The prosperous successes of vanity and wickedness, like a sweet poison, may afford a transient pleasure in the moment of swallowing; but lasting and unutterable anguish immediately succeeds. The bowels are torn with pain insupportable, and the man dies, dies for ever, for the indulgence and gratification of one poor instant of time. But the sacrifices we are enabled to make to God, and to the testimony of a good conscience, are like a nauseous medicine, which, by means of a short-lived disgust, rectifies the constitution, sweetens the blood, confirms

health, and prolongs a happy existence. The grievousness of affliction in due season "yields the "peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are "exercised thereby."

In whatever way men choose to live, and very different are the roads which they take, they have but one idea, one wish, one prayer, in the prospect of death and eternity. When a man finds himself on the brink of the world of spirits, it will afford him but slender consolation to reflect that he has lived long enough to amass a fortune, to enjoy a banquet, to attain a post of honour, to acquire a name. And he will feel as little pain and mortification, on the other hand, in recollecting that he has passed life in obscurity, that he has struggled with poverty, that he has endured unmerited reproach. But this is the folly and the misery of man; we eagerly imbibe and follow the spirit of this world while we live; and we fondly dream of assuming, in one propitious instant, the spirit of heaven when we come to die. We think of pasing our thirty or forty years with the gay, the giddy, and the vain; as if that could be a preparation for an eternity with God, and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Our understanding and conscience are on the side of wisdom and piety; our passions and habits, and, alas! they are more powerful, are of the party of dissipation and vice. "The fool says in his heart, There is no God;" and men reputed wise live as if there were none.

The unhappy man whose character is farther un-

folded to us in the text exhibits a most affecting example of this strange inconsistency and self-delusion. Who so enlightened as Balaam, "which "heard the words of God, which saw the vision of "the Almighty?" Who so blind as the covetous prophet, who "loved the wages of unrighteousness," whose eyes the god of this world blinded? Hear him speak; the manna of heavenly eloquence falls from his lips; behold him act, and, lo, a fiend from hell spreading snares and destruction. Under the control of God, not Moses himself thinks more affectionately, expresses affection more ardently towards Israel, than Balaam does. Under the impulse of his own passions, not Satan could plot more malignantly, nor more effectually. As the prophet of God, who so warm a friend? As the counsellor of Balak, who so dreadful an adversary? In the prospect of death, who more devout? In life, who so profligate? In judgment and opinion, who so clear and sound? In practice, who so prostitute and abandoned?

In the face of a prohibition, the clearest and fullest that words could convey, through the difficulties and dangers of a journey the most eventful upon record, Balaam is now arrived at Balak's metropolis, *Kirjath-huzoth*, the City of Streets. Greetings, such as may be supposed to pass between wicked and selfish men, being over, the sacrifice is offered up, and the banquet is prepared, according to the state of a king, and the sacredness and importance of his guest. The evening being passed

in festivity, they retire to rest; and early on the morrow, Balaam permits himself to be conducted by the Moabitish prince into the "high places of "Baal, that thence he might see the utmost parts of "the people." Here the cloven foot appears at once. Balaam was too intelligent to believe that Baal was any thing; that his sacrifices or high places were any thing: but Balak's gold being, indeed, the god whom he himself worshipped, it is to him a matter of the last indifference before what idol the superstitious monarch bowed down. Reason and religion say, "What concord can there be between "God and Belial; between him that believeth, and "an infidel? Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." But avarice will attempt any thing; submit to any thing; commit any thing; will adore the God of Israel, or bend at the altar of Baal, just as it serves the occasion. Balaam even volunteers in the service of the idol; he feeds the superstition of Balak, which it was his duty to have corrected; and, as if there had been something potent and mysterious in the number, directs *seven* altars to be erected, and a bullock and a ram to be prepared for a sacrifice upon each of the seven.

Behold how soon the reproof of a speaking, reasoning brute, the terrors of the opposing angel, and the admonitions of the heavenly vision, are disregarded and forgotten! Balak is deliberately suffered to remain the dupe of his own credulity: he is fed with the vain hope of triumph, in a way by which it could not be achieved; and an attempt is impi-

ously made to aid him in an enterprize, which Heaven had repeatedly condemned; and, dreadful to think, this is done, under all the awful forms of religious service; and a purpose too vile to be avowed, even to men, is presumptuously obtruded upon the great Jehovah, as if his determinations were to fluctuate with the vile interests and caprices of mortals. "The sacrifice of the wicked," saith the wise man, "is an abomination; how much "more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" The religion of God is, "I will have mercy and "not sacrifice." But the leading article of Balaam's creed is, "Gain is godliness:" hence he attempts to sanction cursing and cruelty, under the solemn ordinances of the blessed God.

We have observed formerly, without pretending to assign a reason for it, that the number seven is, through the whole of divine revelation, connected with many important ideas, institutions, and events, in cases depending on the sovereign authority of the great God. This leads us to conclude, that it has a meaning and design, the knowledge of which is either lost to the world, or never has yet been revealed to man. It cannot be for nothing that it presents itself so often, and in so many forms, upon the sacred page.—That God rested the seventh day from all his work and sanctified it—that on the solemn day of the atonement, under the law, the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled before and upon the mercy-seat seven times—that the altar of burnt-offering was consecrated by being anointed

seven times with the holy oil—that the consecration of Aaron to the priesthood, consisted of a service of seven days—that the leper was to be sprinkled, in order to purification, seven times; and after a separation of seven days, be admitted to his rank as a citizen—that every seventh year was ordained a year of rest, to the land of promise: and that a revolution of seven times seven years brought on the jubilee, or universal release—that seven priests, bearing so many trumpets, were commanded to begin the conquest of Canaan, by seven days encompassing Jericho; and that, upon the seventh circuit, and at the seventh blowing of the trumpets, the walls of that city should fall to the ground—that the like number of priests should be employed to precede and announce the removal of the ark, when David brought it home; and, not to multiply instances without end—that the Lamb, which John saw in vision in the midst of the throne, should be represented as having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth—that the book in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne should be sealed with seven seals—that in these, and so many more cases, which the careful reader of the Scriptures need not have pointed out to him, the Spirit of God should see meet to press upon our minds, with such peculiar emphasis, this number of perfection, as it has been called both by Jews and Heathens, though we cannot account for it, leads to this pleasing conclusion—That there are in the word of God many precious

mines of knowledge yet undiscovered; endless mysteries of wisdom, goodness, and love yet to be unveiled; depths of mercy, which the capacity of angels has not yet fathomed; heights of grace, to which the seraphim's wing hath not soared. Is it imagination, merely, to suppose that the felicity of saints in bliss may consist in diving deeper and deeper into the plan of redemption; in tracing its progress, its history, to its consummation; in reading this wonderful book, with the veil removed from our eyes; to find in it all the stores of natural, moral, and divine truth; in for ever learning, ever beginning to learn, "the love of Christ which "passeth knowledge?" I will indulge the dear, the delightful hope, that the period will come when, taught of that Spirit who is promised to "take of "the things of Christ and show them unto us," I shall discover in this blessed volume ten thousand excellencies to which I am now blind; ten thousand truths of which I have at present no perception; ten thousand beauties I am now incapable of relishing.—But to return.

It is no great wonder to find a man of so mixed a character as Balaam employing altars and victims, according to a number and quality long before sanctified by the appointment of the true God. For all the rites of idolatry may easily be traced up to divine institutions. But what signifies the form when the spirit and meaning is lost? Chemosh was the peculiar idol of the Moabites, as we learn from chap. xxi. 29; for *Baal*, that is, *lord*, was a general term,

descriptive of the whole tribe of deities, and applied by every particular nation to its respective patron; yet we find Balak easily persuaded by Balaam to offer sacrifice to Jehovah. For they who have false notions of deity cannot be very difficult in their choice of a god; and Balak probably was so weak as to imagine, that by this piece of flattery and respect, the God of the Israelites might be decoyed from them, withdraw his protection, and give them up to the sword of their enemies.

Balaam, now the sacrifice was set on fire, directs the king to stand by it, in solemn expectation of its success; he himself withdraws to an "high place," or, he went *solitary*; probably to some adjoining cleft of the rock, favourable either to meditation or to the practice of his enchantments, for observation of any preternatural signs that might be given, or for a clearer prospect of the camp to be devoted. Nothing astonishes us more than the boldness of this retreat. An ill conscience seeks concealment from the eye of God, in noise and a crowd. To what a pitch of insensibility has this man attained, who has the dreadful courage to go forth to meet an offended God in solitude! "And God met Balaam." In what manner we are not told, neither is it of any importance to know; but it is of importance to observe that "God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts "our thoughts." Insulted in the same manner, what man but would have felt resentment, and have returned insult for insult! In nothing, Father of Mer-

cies! is thy glorious superiority more conspicuous than in thy gentleness and patience. God is not a man, that he should be ruffled and discomposed, nor the son of man, that he should oppose vehemence to vehemence. The wrath of man provokes him not, the haste of man urges him not, the tardiness of man delays him not, the flattery of man sways him not.

Balaam has the confidence to advance a plea of merit for the service which he had performed, in erecting so many altars, and in offering so many victims, but he has not the assurance to avow the motive, nor directly to prefer the request to which it plainly led. Without paying the least regard to the one or to the other, God, the great God, puts the word which he would have spoken into Balaam's mouth, and sends him back to pronounce it aloud in the ear of Balak and his attendants. I see with an honest satisfaction, the disappointed, mortified enchanter, returning with downcast eyes, sullen and slow, from the solemn meeting: his schemes of malignity are checked and prohibited, all his prospects of ambition and avarice for ever blasted; behold him cursing in his heart that inflexibility of purpose which he durst neither attempt to alter or oppose. I see the expecting monarch in the midst of his seven altars, all eye to watch the moment of the prophet's return; eagerly anticipating his message from his looks, and all ear to hear it delivered in articulate sounds.

The emotions which filled the hearts of both are to be conceived not described, when the reluctant

tongue of Balaam thus pronounced the immutable decree of the Holy Oracle, while the assembled princes of Moab listened with sorrow and disappointment: "Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought "me from Aram, out of the mountains of the "east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, "defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath "not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the "Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the "rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: "lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be "reckoned among the nations. Who can count the "dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part "of Israel?" Chap. xxiii. 7—10.

The first reflection that naturally presents itself, on hearing these words, is one that has frequently occurred in the course of these exercises, and which it is impossible to repeat too often; How wonderful, how tremendous, how irresistible is the power of God, which has thus all matter, all spirit at its disposal! which can make the dumb ass speak what naturally he cannot, and obliged the mad prophet to utter what wickedly and perversely he would not: and which "out of the mouths of babes and suck-"lings perfecteth praise."—Mark how God brings to nought the counsel of the heathen; how he writes vanity upon the counsels of princes, and "maketh "diviners mad." Thus said Balak; thus did the king of Moab; how poor and contemptible compared to "Thus saith the Lord'" "The enemy

" said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide " the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; " I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy " them.—Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea " covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty " waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst " the gods! Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, " fearful in praises, doing wonders!" Exod. xv. 9—11. Mark how the slow and reluctant prophecy of Balaam accords with the predictions of former times, and with the history of periods yet to come. " Look up now," says God to Abraham, " toward " heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to num- " ber them: and he said unto him, So shall thy " seed be." Gen. xv. 5. And lo, the promise is more than fulfilled: it is infinitely exceeded by the accomplishment. " Who can count the dust of " Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of " Israel?" Look forward to the days of Solomon, when the glory of Israel was in its zenith, when the descendants of the men in the plains of Moab were multiplied as the sand on the sea shore; and thence rise higher still, to a greater promise, to a better covenant, to the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham, increased to " A great multitude, which no man " can number, of all nations and kindreds and " people and tongues, standing before the throne " and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, " and palms in their hands," Rev. vii. 9; encamped not in a fertile terrestrial plain, but expatiating through the vast regions of eternal day, and

possessing not a land flowing with milk and honey, but the pure and sublime delights of the paradise of God. How I envy Balaam the prospect which he had from the top of the rock; a rich champaign country, skirted by the silver Jordan, meeting the distant horizon; the tents of Israel spread out like the trees in the forest, and covering an innumerable multitude; a whole nation of men beloved of God, and destined to conquest; the spacious tabernacle, the habitation of the Most High, expanded in the midst, and the cloud of glory, the unequivocal proof of the presence of the great King, resting upon it. How many objects to delight the eye, to swell the imagination, to elevate the soul! No wonder the tongue of envy was charmed from its purpose. But, alas! the heart of malice and covetousness remains unchanged: a chest full of gold had been to Balaam a sight more enchanting. Place him in heaven, like Mammon, his father, according to the description of our great Poet, his attention had been fixed but on one object.

"Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
"From heaven; for even in heaven, his looks and thoughts
"Were always downward bent, admiring more
"The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
"Than ought divine or holy else enjoyed,
"In vision beatific."

The beautiful view beneath, therefore, was to Balaam what the conjugal bliss of our first parents in paradise was to Satan, according to the same

great Poet; who beholding their pure and innocent affection, "turned aside for envy," and exclaimed:

"Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two,
"Imparadis'd in one another's arms,
"The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
"Of bliss on bliss, while I to hell am thrust;
"Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
"Still unfulfill'd, with pain of longing pines."

It was a spirit and a situation not unlike to this, which suggested to the wicked prophet the words of the text: "Let me die the death of the righteous, "and let my last end be like his!" Verse 10. Unhappy Balaam! he descried from the top of the rocks goodly tents in which he had no part nor lot; he discerned the happy estate of the righteous, but chose to be a partaker with the ungodly? he admired and envied the happy end of the people of God, but felt his own end approaching without hope; he saw and approved the beauty and loveliness of virtue; he persisted to the last pursuing and cleaving to the wages of unrighteousness.

But what, I beseech you, could dictate this wish to Balaam? What but a strong and irresistible persuasion of the immortality of the soul, and an approaching unalterable state of rewards and punishments? What but a consciousness of having acted wrong, and the dreadful knowledge of his being accountable to a holy and righteous God? And is it really possible for reasonable creatures to fall into

such gross absurdity and contradiction? And can there exist such characters in the world? Let us bring the case home to ourselves. It is too evident to need a proof, that many indulge themselves in very unwarrantable practices, whose religious principles notwithstanding are exceedingly sound and just. Try them on the side of soundness in sentiment and opinion, and they talk and reason like angels from heaven: consider how they live; they are mere men of this world. They find a salvo for conscience, by making a sort of composition with their Maker, as some men find a salvo for their integrity, by putting off their good-natured creditors with a certain proportion of their debt, when they are either unwilling or unable to pay the whole. And, with equal insolence and presumption, the one vainly imagines that his Creator and Lord, the other that his credulous friend, may think themselves sufficiently satisfied with such partial payments as they think fit to render. Such of God's commands they will cheerfully obey; but as to others, why, they will make all the atonement in their power—the proud, the ambitious, the covetous, the dissolute, each in a way that shall not clash with his favourite pursuit. One will give his time, another his diligence, a third his money to God, just according as it is the article upon which he himself puts least value, and the conscious deficiency he attempts feebly to eke out, by faint hopes and half resolves, that some time or another he will exhibit a more uniform and thorough obedience to the will of God.

When the command is clear and express, to question and reason on the subject is rebellion. By this the allegiance of man in a state of innocence was assailed; and, listening to this he staggered and fell: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of "every tree of the garden?" When temptation of this sort is once listened to, men will gradually come to doubt of every thing, and learn to explain away every thing. Deliberation and doubt in the face of "Thus saith the Lord," are dishonesty and impiety: and an attempt to get rid of one uneasy text of Scripture is a direct attack on the validity of the whole.

When we see a man so intelligent as Balaam, duped by his passions into a train of folly and wickedness so gross and palpable, let us look well to ourselves. The absurdities into which we fall escape our own notice; but a discerning by-stander sees them, smiles at them, perhaps makes his advantage of them. If we are conscious of the influence of any very powerful propensity or aversion, it is a just ground of suspicion that we may be tempted to act unworthily; and it is a powerful admonition to watch our hearts narrowly on the side of that infirmity "which doth more easily "beset us."

We see in the dying struggles of Balaam's conscience, a deep, rooted concern about futurity: a concern which no one, let him say what he will, has been able to overcome. His ardent wish, "Let "me die the death of the righteous," is the invo-

luntary homage which vice pays to piety. Think what way, live what way men will, they have but one thought, one conviction, one prayer, when they come to die. After the pleasure or the advantage of a wicked action is over, who would not gladly get clear of the guilt of it? But this is the misery—the profit and pleasure quickly pass away, the guilt and pain are immortal. Could a lazy wish or two supply the place of virtue, all would be well: the conscience would go to rest, the "strong man "armed would keep the house." But the very wishes of indolence and impiety betray their own flimsiness; and Balaam feels his own prayer falling back with an oppressive weight on his guilty head. Let us be instructed to mend it a little, and to say with Paul, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth "to himself. For whether we live, we live unto "the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the "Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the "Lord's." Rom. xiv. 7, 8. "To me to live is Christ, "and to die is gain." Lord, help us so to live, as to be raised above the fear of death. Let me fall asleep in the bosom of my heavenly Father, and I shall awake in perfect peace. Happy, unspeakably happy are they who in reviewing life, and in the prospect of death, can with holy joy and confidence adopt these words of the apostle, and say, "I am "now ready to be offered, and the time of my de-"parture is at hand. I have fought the good fight, "I have 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 appear-"ing." 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

LECTURE XVII.

REVELATION II. 14.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

THE mystery of iniquity, which the human heart is daily bringing to light, is as strange and incomprehensible as any thing in the frame of nature, or in the conduct of Providence. In the first stages of a sinful career, a spectator could not conceive, the man himself cannot believe, the desperate wickedness to which he may in time be brought. The latter end is so very unlike the beginning, that it becomes matter of astonishment how the same person could possibly be so much changed, and by what steps the man was gradually transformed into the devil. Scripture represents to us a man shrinking with horror from a prophetic display of his own character, and from an anticipated view of his own conduct—"What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do "this great thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13. He viewed it then, through the calm medium of reason, humanity, and conscience, and justly reprobated what passion and opportunity afterwards prompted him to act without pity or remorse.

The progress of sin is like that of certain diseases, whose first symptoms give no alarm; to which a vigorous constitution bids a bold defiance, and which it treats with neglect; but which, through that neglect, silently fix upon some of the nobler parts, prey unseen, unobserved, upon the vitals, and the man finds himself dying before he apprehended any danger. It was but a slight cold, a tickling cough, a small difficulty of breathing; but it imperceptibly becomes an intolerable oppression, an universal weakness, an extenuating hectic, under which nature fails; the nails bend inwards, the hairs fall off, the legs swell, the eyes sink, and the cold hand of death stops the languid current at the fountain. Thus the giddy sallies of youth, the mistakes of inconsideration, the errors of inexperience, through neglect, presumption, and indulgence, become, before men are aware, habits of vice, constitutional maladies by which manhood is dishonoured, old age becomes pitiable, and death is rendered dreadful beyond expression. These considerations clearly justify and enforce the advice of the apostle, "Exhort one another daily while it is called to-day; "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitful-"ness of sin." Heb. iii. 13.

If there be a history and a character which, more powerfully than another, press this exhortation upon the conscience, it is the history and character of Balaam the son of Bosor, "who taught Balak to "cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, "to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit

"fornication."—We have traced his progress from Aram to Moab, and found him pertinaciously adhering to an impious purpose, with an understanding clearly informed as to his duty, and with a conscience perfectly awake to his situation. It is unpleasant, but God grant it may not be unprofitable, to attend him through the remainder of his wicked and abominable course.

Balak, chagrined and disappointed to hear the eulogy of Israel, from those lips which he had hired to curse them, weakly hopes to change the counsels of Heaven, by changing the place of his own view: and Balaam wickedly humours his fondness and credulity. The Moabitish prince ascribes the rapturous expressions of the prophet to the full and distinct prospect which he had of the camp of Israel, and therefore proposes to view it from a new station, whence its extremity only was visible, in the hope that a partial survey of that glory might encourage him to blast it with a curse. He conducts him accordingly into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and another preparatory sacrifice is offered up, of seven bullocks and seven rams, upon as many different altars; and the hardened wretch has the impious boldness of retiring a second time to meet God on this ungracious errand. An answer is now put into his mouth which levels a mortal blow at the hopes of his wicked employer, and the wrath of man serves but the more illustriously to praise God. Who but must shudder to hear such words as these falling from such a tongue? "Rise up,

"Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of "Zippor: God is not a man that he should lie; "neither the son of man, that he should repent: "hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he "spoke, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I "have received commandment to bless: and he "hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath "not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen "perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with "him, and the shout of a king is among them. God "brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were "the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no "enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any "divination against Israel: according to this time "it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath "God wrought! Behold, the people shall rise up "as a great lion; and lift up himself as a young "lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, "and drink the blood of the slain." Num. xxiii. 18—24. "Happy is the people that is in such a "case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the "Lord." Psalm cxliv. 15.

The time would fail to go into a particular detail of the events which justify this noble prediction. But we should do it infinite injustice to restrict its meaning to one particular nation, to transitory purposes, or to temporal events. It is gloriously descriptive of the unchangeable faithfulness, the undeviating truth, the almighty protection, the immoveable love of God to his people. It speaks the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is for-

"given, whose sin is covered; the blessedness of "the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not ini-"quity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Psalm xxxii. 1, 2. It exposes the impotence of Satan, and of all the enemies of man's salvation. It exhibits the final triumph of the church of God through the great Captain of their salvation, who unites in his person, among other wonderful extremes, the character of "the Lamb slain, to take "away the sins of the world," and of the "Lion of "the tribe of Judah," the great lion, who lifteth up himself, "and shall not lie down, until he eat of "the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." And it prefigures their last joyful encampment in the heavenly plains, where the shout of a king shall be for ever heard among them, and the glory of the Lord shall arise upon them, to set no more.

This decisive answer seems for a moment to have quashed the hopes of Balak, and he is now disposed to compound with the prophet for total silence. "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all." Verse 25. But mark the obstinate perseverance of the carnal mind in a sinful course. After all that he had seen and heard, he returns a third time to the charges and dreams of another station, of a repeated sacrifice, and an altered purpose. How mortifying is it to think that good men are so much sooner weary of well-doing, so much more easily discouraged from the pursuit of duty! But though Balaam gave directions for the building of new altars, he can no lon-

ger be the dupe of his own sinful wishes and magical arts, and therefore dares not to have recourse to them again. Such is the awful, such the glorious power of God! Magicians may for a little while amuse themselves, and deceive others by their enchantments; but Aaron's rod at length swallows up those of Egyptian wizards; and Balaam is at length constrained to resign his fruitless arts, and to acknowledge the finger of God from the top of Peor, where Baal was worshipped. He again surveys the tents of Israel where Jehovah resided, and charmed by the prospect from his malevolent design, seems to give cordially into the views of that Spirit who spake by his mouth. "And when Balaam saw "that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went "not as at other times to seek for enchantments, "but he set his face toward the wilderness. And "Balaam lift up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding "in his tents, according to their tribes; and the "Spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his "parable, and said, Balaam, the son of Beor, hath "said, and the man whose eyes are opened hath "said: He hath said, which heard the words of "God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, fall-"ing into a trance, but having his eyes open: How "goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy taber-"nacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread "forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees "of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as "cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the "water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in

" many waters, and his king shall be higher than
" Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God
" brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it
" were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up
" the nations his enemies, and shall break their
" bones and pierce them through with his arrows.
" He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great
" lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that
" blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."
Chap. xxiv. 1—9.

Our chief object at present being to illustrate the character of Balaam, and to improve it, we are to consider his prophecy chiefly in that view, abstract from the great and glorious truths which it contains. And we observe, first, That it behoved him now to be convinced by so many successive and corresponding revelations, of the steady determined purpose of Heaven in favour of Israel. In spite of all his subterfuges, after all his turnings and windings, he finds himself still brought back to the same point; a language is forced upon his tongue which his heart rejected, a glory is spread before his eyes which excited only envy and sorrow: and this renders his after conduct more unaccountable, odious, and criminal. Indeed it is a complicated transgression, containing so many circumstances of aggravation, that we should be tempted to doubt its existence, did not melancholy experience too frequently confirm the possibility of it.

We observe, secondly, That truth is not injured

by being conveyed through an impure channel, and therefore ought not to be rejected on that account. Indeed it rather confers a higher lustre upon it, just as hypocrisy pays the most honourable compliment to true religion, by assuming its sacred habit and form. The word of God shall not fail of its effect though Balaam, or though Satan should speak it. It may do good to others, while he who bears it is injured not benefited. And surely, when we hear such divine sentences coming from such unhallowed lips, a holy jealousy will be kindled, a holy watchfulness will be inculcated on all who bring the messages of God to others; as the great Apostle of the Gentiles felt and expressed, when he says, "I "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: "lest that by any means, when I have preached to "others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 27.

We are led, thirdly, to observe and to lament how rarely fine talents and ample means of doing good are in the possession of an honest, benevolent, and sanctified heart; the elevation of genius too seldom aims its flight to the feet of the Father of Lights, "from whom cometh down every good gift "and every perfect;" and affluence is frequently abused to increase that misery which it was given to relieve. But then surely men are likest God, when enlargement of understanding and plenitude of power obey the calls of goodness, and strive to diffuse more widely the gifts of an indulgent Providence; and that benevolence is the most exalted,

which aims at the highest good, and seeks to promote interests that are immortal. What then must be the malignity of that heart which, in Balaam, perverted the soundest understanding, disfigured and misled the finest abilities? How dark and dismal is that unfeeling passion, which scrupled not to devote a whole nation for the sake of a little silver and gold! How greatly do men err in the estimation which they make both of their own qualities and those of others! Those of the head are the objects of universal admiration, the subject of universal praise; those of the heart are lightly esteemed, and do not always escape censure. But apply the balance of the sanctuary, and what a reverse! A little humility outweighs a great deal of learning; faith as a grain of mustard seed preponderates against a mountain of gold; and charity, though with the simplicity of a child, brings down the scale, against the wit of men and the eloquence of angels. By all means covet earnestly the best gifts, though they fall to the lot of but a few; but rather cultivate the more precious graces which God conferreth liberally on all that ask him. Whatever you solicit, whatever you receive, see that you have the blessing which sweetens, which sanctifies, which ennobles, which improves it.

Finally, we may observe the dreadful misery of that man whose heart and head are at variance; whom inclination drags one way and conscience another; who lives with a drawn sword continually

hanging over his head by a single hair; for ever doing what he is constrained for ever to condemn; and reluctantly ready to execute the judgment of God upon himself. What dismal and unpleasant progress must he make, who sees an angel in arms opposing him at every step, and whose way is hedged about on every side with thorns of his own planting!

Balak can now refrain no longer, but smiting together his hands, in a rage exclaims, "I called thee "to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast "altogether blessed them these three times: there- "fore now flee thou to thy place. I thought to "promote thee unto great honour, but lo, the Lord "hath kept thee back from honour." Verses 10, 11. An expostulation of no pleasant complexion ensues; for what is the friendship of bad men, but a commerce of interest, a confederacy that aims only at self, and it concludes on the part of Balaam with a prediction clearer, fuller, and more pointed than ever, of Israel's glory and Moab's downfall: "And "he took up his parable and said, Balaam, the son "of Beor, hath said, and the man whose eyes are "open hath said: he hath said which heard the "words of God and knew the knowledge of the "Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, "falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I "shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, "but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of "Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and "shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all

"the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a "possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his "enemies, and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of "Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and "shall destroy him that remaineth of the city. And "when he looked on Amalek, he took up his para-"ble, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, "but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. "And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his "parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, "and thou puttest thy nest in a rock; nevertheless, "the Kenite shall be wasted until Asshur shall carry "thee away captive. And he took up his parable, "and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" Chap. xxiv. 15—23.

The burthen of this prophecy has evidently a two-fold object, the one improving upon, rising above, and extending beyond the other. Its primary and nearer object, David, God's anointed king, to crush the power of the enemy, and Moab in particular, and to perfect the conquest of the promised land. Its secondary and more remote one, though first in point of importance, "Jesus, the root and offspring "of David." In the one, Balak saw the death of all his earthly hopes, the approaching dominion of a hated power, established on the ruins of his own country. In the other, Balaam beheld the ruin of all his prospects beyond the grave; a light that should shine but to conduct him to the place of punishment; a star that should arise to shed the mildest influence on others, but only to breathe pes-

tilence and death upon himself; a Ruler who should exercise universal dominion, but who, while he presided over his willing and obedient subjects in mercy and loving-kindness, should rule rebels like him with a rod of iron. Indeed if Balaam had any presentiment of a Saviour when he uttered this prophecy, as is highly probable, his character is the most detestable, and his condition the most deplorable that can be imagined. Unhappy man, with one breath preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to a guilty world, and with the next, teaching the arts of seduction to ensnare the innocent! In words exulting in the greatest blessing which God had to bestow upon mankind, but dreadfully conscious to himself, that he had wilfully rejected the counsel of God against himself! With all the weight and importance of the soul and of eternity before his eyes, but this world steadfastly enthroned in his heart; a prophet, yet a reprobate, descending to the grave with the blood of thousands upon his head.

The twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers contains the history of the stumbling-block which "Balaam "taught Balak to cast before the children of Israel "—to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to com-"mit fornication," Rev. ii. 14; and of its dreadful success. As a prophet he could not hurt Israel; but as a politician he unhappily prevails. He was well aware where their strength lay; and unfortunately, it appears he had likewise discovered their weak side. Their God could not be prevailed on to

withdraw his protection; but may not they be persuaded, or allured, to change their allegiance? This will do the work of Satan equally well. Israel was now at ease, with the promised land under their eye, and part of it already in their possession. They were flushed with recent victory, assured of divine protection, and thereby confident of farther success. A situation full of danger; for then, when our mountain seems to us to stand most strong, we are most easily liable to be moved, cast down, destroyed. Balaam accordingly, deep read as he was in the book of human nature, suggests to Balak the diabolical counsel of attempting to decoy the people into idolatry by means of female insinuation and address. The experiment is made, and it fatally succeeds. And it is this counsel which stamps the character of Balaam with infamy indelible; as it exhibits a dissolution of moral principle, to be equalled only by him who is a murderer from the beginning.

Think what it is to advise a father to expose his daughter to prostitution; think what it is to devise and encompass the death of one fellow-creature, who has never offended us: think of the malice which aims its deadly shaft, not at the body but at the soul: think of the presumption which flies directly in the face of the great and terrible Jehovah, and which defies his power: and then think of a vile wretch recommending the prostitution of a whole nation: in cold blood plotting the destruction of myriads; and what is worse, infinitely worse

than any temporal evil, remorselessly involving them in guilt which threatened eternal ruin: and all this under the character of a prophet, whose office bound him to call the people away from their wickedness, and to save perishing souls from death; and all for what? "For so much trash as may be grasped "thus." Base passion, what canst thou not make us do? "Surely the heart is deceitful above all "things, and desperately wicked; who can know "it?"

The history of Israel's seduction, in consequence of Balaam's horrid advice, falls not within our present design, and we are forbid by decency to pursue it. The guilt of this fatal defection cost no less than twenty-four thousand lives of them who died of the plague, besides those who suffered by the hands of justice. So horrid are the sacrifices which pride, ambition, and covetousness are daily offering up! So dreadful is the havoc which ungoverned passion makes amongst the works of God!—But short is the triumph of the most successful villany: remorse embitters the enjoyment of it, and justice hastens to bring it to a period.

In the very first attack which was made upon Midian, we find Balaam in arms, supporting his pernicious counsel by the sword; but it cannot prosper: Midian is discomfited on the first onset, and the hoary traitor falls unpitied in the field, leaving behind him a name to be detested and despised of all generations, while one iota or one tittle of this book of God remains.

We shall have attended, however, to the history of this singular man in vain, unless we learn from it the infinite danger of being under the dominion of any one ungovernable passion; and unless we are persuaded to watch over, to resist, and to subdue, "the sin which doth so easily beset us." Of little avail is it that our vice is not the vice which governed, ensnared, and ruined Balaam, if it alienate the heart from God, if it dissolve the obligations of religion, disorder the understanding, and lull the conscience asleep. One disease for another, one vice for another, is but a miserable exchange. If the patient must die, it will not alleviate one pang, that he perishes by the fever rather than the hydropsy, the consumption, or any other distemper.

The unrestrained dominion of any one sinful appetite must become fatal at length. Covetousness, pride, lust, envy, malice, revenge, are the mortal distempers of the soul, which, perhaps insensibly, but most certainly, are impairing its beauty and wasting its strength. "Lust," whatever be its particular name, "having conceived, bringeth forth "sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth "death." Instead therefore of amusing or perplexing himself with inquiries into the general symptoms of disease, it concerns every man to study his own particular case; to watch against "the sin which "doth so easily beset him;" to keep himself from *his* iniquity; to discover, and to rectify the disorder of his own constitution, "the plague of his own

"heart;" that where he is naturally, or by habit, weak, he may become strong "through the grace "that is in Christ."

Let us be instructed to value qualities, whether natural or acquired, not from their currency and estimation in the world, but from their appearance in the sight of God. "As the heavens are higher "than the earth, so are my ways higher than your "ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah lv. 9. "By him actions are weighed." By his judgment we must stand or fall. Has Heaven blessed thee, O man, with extraordinary gifts? Let it be a motive to humility, not a source of pride. It is a trust of which thou must render an account; and "to whom men have committed much, of him "will they require the more." If he who buries his one talent in the ground be criminal, what shall become of that man who dissipates and destroys ten in riotous living?

There is but one road to a happy end—a holy life. There is but one ground of hope, in death, to a guilty creature—the mercy of God through a Redeemer. Abraham saw the Saviour's day afar off, he believed and rejoiced. Balaam saw it afar off, persisted in impenitence and unbelief, and died without hope. On the one, "the Star of Jacob" darted a mild and healthful influence, which cheered the path of life, and dispelled the horrors of the grave. On the other it shot a baleful fire, which drunk up the spirits, blasted present enjoyment, and increased the gloom of futurity.——Arise, O Star

of Jacob, arise upon my head with healing in thy wings! Let me walk in thy light; let me "hasten "to the brightness of thy rising!"———Christian, "arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory "of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Beloved, now "are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet ap- "pear 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." 1 John iii. 2. "For ye are "dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then "shall ye also appear with him in glory." Col. iii. 3—4.

LECTURE XVIII.

REVELATION XX. 11—13.

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And 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 and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

IT is a solemn thing for a man to be judged of his own conscience. How sweet is the approving testimony of that bosom monitor and witness! But more bitter than death are its upbraiding and reproaches. To stand at a human tribunal, with life or reputation, death or infamy depending on the issue, can never appear a light matter to one who understands and feels the value of either. Even conscious innocence and integrity, accompanied with good hope toward God, court not the eye of public inquiry, but prefer the secret, silent feast of inward peace, and of divine applause, to the public banquet of innocency proved, and proclaimed by sound of trumpet. Serious it is to reflect that your name, your words, your conduct may become matter of

record, and that ages to come may mention them with approbation and esteem, or with indignation and contempt. But every feeling of this sort is lost in the certain and more awful prospect of judgment to come. It is a light thing to be judged of man, who can only kill the body and blight the reputation, and beyond that hath nothing more that he can do; but how formidable is the judgment of Him who knows the heart, who records in "the "book of his remembrance" the actions of the life, the words that fall from the tongue, the thoughts which arise in the heart: who will bring every secret thing to light, and "render to every "man according to his works;" and who, "after "he has killed, has power to destroy body and soul "in hell."

Aided by the light which Sacred History sheds on ages and generations past, we have ventured into the solemn mansions of the dead, and conversed with those silent instructors who know not either to flatter or to fear; and whom the Spirit of God has condescended to delineate in their true colours and just proportions, that they may serve to us "for doctrine, and for reproof, and for cor-"rection, and for instruction in righteousness." We have plunged into ages beyond the flood, and contemplated human nature in its original glory; "man," as God made him, "perfect;" and man, as he made himself, lost in the multitude of his own inventions.

We contemplate the "first man, by whom came

"death,—the figure of him who should come, by "whom is the resurrection of the dead: Adam, in "whom all die: Christ, in whom all shall be made "alive."

We have attended "righteous Abel" to the altar of God, and beheld the smoke of his "more "excellent sacrifice" ascending with acceptance to Heaven: and "by which he, being dead, yet "speaketh."

We have seen the hands of "wicked Cain" besmeared with a brother's blood; and the earth refusing to cover that blood, but calling to Heaven for vengeance on the murderer; and we have seen the guilty wretch rendered a terror to himself.

We have seen all these, one after another, dropping into the grave; and in that have beheld the triumph of sin and death. But in Enoch we behold the triumph of faith and holiness, the triumph of almighty grace over sin and death, and over him who has the power of death. Our eyes follow "the holy man who walked with God," not to the "dreary house appointed for all living," but through the higher regions of the air, toward the blessed abodes of immortality, till a cloud receives him out of our sight.

We sought shelter with Noah and his little saved remnant, from that deluge which destroyed a world of ungodly men, in the ark which God commanded; which that "preacher of righteousness prepared for "the saving of his house;" and which Providence

conducted and preserved amidst the wild uproar of contending elements—and with him have perceived the wrathful storm spending its fury, and the dawning light of a day of mercy returning.

We have seen the renewed, restored world, again overspread with violence, ignorance, impiety, and idolatry: and discerned the hope of the human race ready to be extinguished in the person of a wandering, aged, childish man; in order that in the decay of exhausted, expiring nature, the world might be made to see and to acknowledge the vigour, the infallibility, the unchangeableness of God's covenant of promise. We removed with that illustrious exile from place to place, and with joy beheld his faith crowned at length with the promised seed, in whom "all the families of the earth should be "blessed."

From that "tender plant," that "root out of a "dry ground," we saw a succession of fair and fruitful branches arise, while we studied the noiseless, sequestered, contemplative life of Isaac, and the active, variegated, checquered life of Jacob his younger son.

In the affliction of Joseph we felt ourselves afflicted; in his exaltation we rejoiced, and by his virtues and piety, in every variety of human condition, we received at once instruction and reproof.

The sweet historian who had disclosed all those wonders of antiquity to our view, who opened to us all those stores of knowledge, all those sources of delight, comes forward himself at last upon the

scene, and continues to minister our pleasure and improvement, by a faithful and affecting detail of his own eventful story, and by a candid display of his own sentiments, character, and conduct. What heart is so hard as not to melt at sight of yonder weeping babe, a deserted, exposed, perishing Hebrew child, floating down the stream! What heart does not glow to see him the pride and ornament of Pharaoh's imperial court, and instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians! What bosom catches not the hallowed ardour of patriotic fire from the intrepid avenger of his country's wrongs! In whatever situation or character we view him, whithersoever we follow his steps, we feel ourselves attracted, delighted, instructed.

He furnishes us with the history of his brother Aaron and of his family, and of the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, a type of the everlasting and unchangeable priesthood of the Redeemer. We attended the venerable pair of brothers to the top of the mountain, and beheld Aaron stripped of his pontifical robes, resigning his charge, closing his eyes in death; and we heard Moses himself warned to prepare for his departure.

Not only by a display of worth and excellence, but by a delineation of vice, by the exhibition of a "heart deceitful above all things, and desperately "wicked," has he conveyed to us the means of instruction and improvement: in presenting us with the portrait of Balaam, who "loved the wages of "unrighteousness." In the character of that bad

man, we behold the humiliating union of great talents and a corrupted heart; prophetic gifts and moral depravity; knowledge of the truth and wilful adherence to error; admiration of virtue and fixed habits of vice; an earnest wish to "die the death of the righteous," and a deliberate determination to live the life of the wicked; and all this mystery of iniquity explained in one short sentence—his heart went out after its covetousness.

All these have passed in a review before us; and their existence, in succession to one another, occupies a space of two thousand five hundred years. But the text collects them, and us, and all succeeding generations of men, into one great co-existent assembly, to undergo a judgment infinitely more solemn than ever was pronounced from human tribunal; a judgment infallible, final, irreversible; which shall bring to trial, and condemn, all hasty, rash, erroneous judgments of men; shall clear injured innocence, bring to light and reward hidden worth, abase insolence and pride, detect and expose hypocrisy. Let the prospect of it direct all our inquiries, animate all our exertions, dictate all our decisions on the character and conduct of other men; and let it influence, form, and govern our own. Thus the review of preceding personages and events, and the prospect of those to come, shall be animated, improved, sanctified; thus shall we feel our interest in, and connexion with, the church of

God universal, of every age, and converse with Moses and the prophets as our contemporaries, countrymen, and friends, whom we shall shortly join, and be united to them in bonds of pure and everlasting love.—Recollecting times past, anticipating ages to come, let us draw near and consider this great sight, and may God grant us to feel and improve its influence.

The imagery of the scene is sublime and striking. "I saw a great white throne." "A throne,"—royal state, established empire, acknowledged sway, the right and power of judgment united, universal, everlasting, uncontrolable dominion.—A "great" throne. The seat of kings is raised a little above the people; that of Solomon had six steps; ivory and gold lent their combined aid to enrich and to adorn it. But what is the glory of Solomon? His throne, once the seat of wisdom, to whose oracular voice foreign potentates and their nations listened with admiration and respect, was at length dishonoured, degraded, defiled by the impurities of idolatry, and by the imprudence and apostacy of him who sat upon it; and thus deprived of one of its firmest supporters, it shook under him, and he at length dropped from it, a monument of the nothingness and vanity of human grandeur, wealth, and wisdom. Ten of its twelve props slipped from beneath it, through the imprudence of his son; and after a few convulsive struggles, it sunk at length into the dust, a poor, precarious, subordinate throne, subject to the lordly state of an Assyrian

prince. What is the glory of angels who excel in strength? Delegated power, derived splendour, imparted wisdom, dignity under authority. But behold on yonder radiant throne, One "made so much "better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance "obtained a more excellent name than they." "He "maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame "of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, "O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of right-"eousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."—"Sit on "my right hand until I make thine enemies thy "footstool." Behold "the Lord sitting upon a "throne, high and lifted up," surrounded with the seraphim, crying continually unto one another, and saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, "the whole earth is full of his goodness."

"—A great *white* throne," the emblem of purity, truth, and righteousness; itself unsullied, and purifying all that approaches it. "Righteousness and "judgment are the habitation of his throne: mercy "and truth go before his face."—"Shall not the "judge of the whole earth do right?" With the purest intention, with the highest degree of human sagacity, with the most extensive knowledge of the law, and the most determined resolution faithfully to apply it, earthly tribunals are not secure from error; craft may over-reach wisdom; hypocrisy may disguise the truth or cover falsehood; the stream of justice may be diverted or forced out of its channel, and the pellucid tide may undergo a temporary pol-

lution. The princes of this world must see with the eyes and hear with the ears of other men: the worthy and the wise may of course be kept at a distance, while demerit, wickedness, and folly bask in the sunshine of royal favour. But yonder radiant throne applies an infallible test to all that approaches it: hypocrisy drops the mask, the windings of deceit and cunning stand exposed, the brazen, imposing forehead of impudence is covered with a blush, and the stony, unfeeling, unrelenting heart is dissolved into water—modest worth rears its drooping head, conscious integrity expands its glowing bosom, and purity seeks the source from which it sprang.

Observe the difference; mark the changes which the judged undergo, as they draw nigh; see the hardened sinner, cased in sevenfold adamant, advancing with intrepid step, striving to make assurance pass for innocence. But lo the rays of that white throne have fallen upon him; the spots begin to appear, they grow blacker and blacker, he gradually becomes abominable and more abominable; odious to the beholder, a terror to himself, he shrinks from inquiry, darkness is diffused around from the brightness of that light; he calls upon the mountains to fall upon him, and upon the hills to cover him.

Not so is the humble follower of the Lamb. His countenance becomes more and more serene, his confidence increases, every blemish disappears; "the "glory of the Lord is arisen upon him," his lustre

brightens as he proceeds, at length he is united to, he is lost in, the fountain of joy.

—"I *saw* him that sat on it." "No man hath "seen God at any time." Remove that cloud, that vapour, and I am unable steadfastly to behold the face of the sun; how much more, the face of Him who arrays the sun in all his effulgence! If he raise his voice a little louder in the whirlwind, or in the thunder, I am overwhelmed and lost.

Ah! it is conscious guilt that appals me, that clothes the face of God with terror, that roars in the tempest, that raises the voice of the mighty thunder: but, "reconciled unto God," "justified "by faith," I "have peace with God," I see as I am seen, I know as I am known; "beholding with "open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord," lo, the believer is gradually "changed into the same "image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit "of the Lord." "The only begotten who is in the "bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." —

Did the pomp and wisdom of an earthly potentate dazzle and delight the eyes of a sovereign like himself, and constrain one inured to scenes of magnificence to cry out, "It was a true report that I "heard in mine own land: howbeit, I believed not "the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen "it; and behold the half was not told me!" What then will it be to see, with the beloved disciple, "a great white throne, and him who sits upon it," with the myriads of the heavenly host standing before it, rejoicing without trembling?

Grant me, gracious God, now to see thee in these thy lower works, in the wonders of thy providence, in the exceeding riches of thy grace, in the face of thy Son Christ Jesus, and thereby prepare me for seeing thee as thou art, and for being made like unto thee! Place me with thy servant Moses upon a rock, put me in a cleft of the rock, cover me with thy hand while thou passest by, remove thy hand, that I may trace thy presence in the blessings thou hast left behind thee, that I may be strengthened to meet the direct rays of thy countenance, when thou comest to "be glorified in thy saints, and admired "in all them that believe."

—"From whose face the earth and the heaven "fled away, and there was found no place for them." "All these things shall be dissolved. The heavens "shall pass away with great noise, and the elements "shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and "the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, "all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a "vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be "changed. But thou art the same." God "*spake*, "and it was done, he gave commandment, and it "stood fast."—At his word "earth and heaven rose "out of chaos," and lo, he *looks* them into nothing again; they shrink from his presence, they vanish at his nod, they cannot abide the brightness of his coming. They have fulfilled their day, they have accomplished the purpose of him who made them, they have contributed their aid toward the rearing

of a more glorious fabric, and having become unnecessary, that moment disappear.

The local and transient effects of an earthquake, of a hurricane, of an inundation, are striking, impressive, and permanent: proud cities levelled to the earth, or swallowed up of it! fertile plains overwhelmed with a briny or a fiery tide! the glory of man sought, but not to be found!—But what is this to the dissolution of a globe? Surely the balance must be destroyed, a blank in nature must take place, and wild uproar ensue. No, the vision represents a whole system passing away; that sun and all the surrounding planets, and innumerable other "planets circling other suns," lost, yet not missed; fled "as the baseless fabric of a vision," and not a wreck left behind; and yet no schism, no deficiency in the body; for the promise of the Eternal immediately repairs the loss; he makes "all things new;" "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth "righteousness."

With the heavens and the earth, the little, fading interests and distinctions of the world vanish also. Before his face all is reduced to one level, all is composed and tranquillized; every one reads his doom in the face of the Sovereign Judge. The heavens and earth have fled away, but the rational beings which peopled them remain; they are of a more enduring substance, they partake of the nature of God himself, they are immortal, eternal, like him. "I saw," says John, "the dead *small* and *great* "stand before God."

When time was, these were distinctive characters: there was the infant of days and the hoary head, the inhabitant of the palace and of the cottage, the learned and the illiterate, the slave and his master. But these marks of difference are for ever abolished. Indeed they were long before abolished. Before that great and notable day of the Lord came, before the judgment was set, or the books were opened, disease and death and the grave had levelled all the distinctions of this world; had reduced the sceptred monarch to the condition of the peasant, annulled the difference between the slave and his master. The decisive hour is now come, which is for ever to determine who is henceforth to be accounted small, and who great; the solemn hour that shall bring to light hidden worth, and thrust presumptuous pride into utter darkness; that shall exalt the good to the throne of God, and plunge the wicked into the depths of hell.

The *dead* small and great.—Even the awful distinction between the dead and the living shall then be done away. They were dead, but are alive again; "for all live to him." Behold the mouldering earth, before it be for ever dissolved, restoring to existence every particle of itself which once entered into the composition of a human being, which was once animated with the breath of life. Behold the spacious sea, before it be for ever dried up, surrendering its hidden treasure, not the silver, and gold, and jewels which its vast womb contains, but the innumerable myriads of men and women, whom it had been insatiately devouring during so many ages,

and whom it can no longer cover or conceal. The sound of the last trumpet has dispelled their long slumber. See, they emerge from their watery bed, they spring up into newness of life, their eyes again behold the light of an eternal day, they swim through regions of transparent air, they can die no more, they hasten to appear before their Judge. Behold the grim king of terrors, faithful to his trust, giving in the exact register of his wide domain, resigning his awful empire, restoring his captives to life, and liberty, and their rightful Lord: not one is lost, not one detained: and the great destroyer is at length himself destroyed.

And for what purpose this mighty preparation, this second birth of nature, this new creation of God? Behold an assembled world, from the father of the human race down to the youngest of his sons, *stand* before God. They stand as subjects in the presence of their Sovereign, as expectants before the Eternal Arbiter of their destiny. In his eyes, in their own consciences they read their doom; they stand to hear the irreversible decree; their posture speaks acknowledgment of the right of judging, of submission to authority, of acquiescence in the wisdom and justice of the Judge. But that erect attitude must quickly change into the prostration of dutiful and grateful children, or of foes subdued, of wretches condemned; for lo, *the books are opened*, and judgment begins. It is spoken after the manner of men. Earthly judges refer to statutes as the rule of their decisions, men are tried by the laws of their country, and

because human faculties are limited and imperfect, the memory unretentive, the understanding liable to error, the heart warped by partial affections, facts must be preserved in written documents; to prevent alteration or mistake, the law must be expressed in clear and distinct terms, and the cause, not the person of the party, must be held up as the object of judgment. But what need of books or of records to assist the memory of Him who is omniscience, to whom are known all his own works, and all the ways of men from the foundation of the world; whose will is the law; and who knows no distinction but that between truth and falsehood, right and wrong? What need of external evidence, of the testimony of others, when every man carries the evidence in his own bosom, and is acquitted or condemned of his own conscience? What, O man, are the contents of those awful books? The words thou art now speaking, the pursuits in which thou art now engaged, the spirit by which thou art now actuated. Thou art every day filling up the record, with thy hand enrolling thine own honour or shame and the unfolding of that day shall reveal that only which thou thyself hast written. On thyself it rests, whether the last solemn discovery is to cover thee with everlasting contempt, or to crown thee with joy unspeakable and full of glory; whether the opening of the book of life is to display thy name in golden characters to angels and men, or the register of condemnation consign thee to everlasting punishment. The book that shall be opened is

none other than the book of Scripture, the infallible rule of faith and manners, and according as thou art conformed unto, fallest short of, or exceedest that standard, so shall thy doom be.

They were judged every man according to their works. In this mixed and imperfect state, it frequently happens that the guilty escape and the innocent suffer. "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the "children's teeth are set on edge." Princes play the madman, and quarrel, and fight, and myriads of unoffending wretches pay the forfeit of that folly. But before yonder tribunal every one appears to answer for himself: every one comes to reap the fruit of his own doings. "Enter not into judgment "with thy servant, O God, for in thy sight shall "no flesh living be justified."—"If thou, Lord, "shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should "stand?" "Have mercy upon me, O God, accord-"ing to thy loving-kindness, according to the mul-"titude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgres-"sions."—"Behold, O God, our shield, and look "upon the face of thine anointed."

In meditating on this subject, let us learn to forbear from exercising this dread prerogative of the Eternal; let us refrain from judging. God has challenged this right with emphatic solemnity as his own: "Vengeance is *mine, I* will repay, saith "the Lord."—"All judgment is committed unto "the Son."—"Therefore thou art inexcusable, "O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for "wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest "thyself; for thou that judgest doeth the same

"things. But we are sure that the judgment of God "is according to truth, against them which commit "such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, "that judgest them which do such things, and "doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judg- "ment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his "goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, "not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee "to repentance? But after thy hardness and impe- "nitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath "against the day of wrath, and revelation of the "righteous judgment of God, who will render to "every man according to his deeds: to them who "by patient continuance in well-doing seek for "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; "but unto them that are contentious, and do not "obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indig- "nation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon "every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, "and also of the Gentile. But glory, honour, and "peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew "first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect "of persons with God." Rom. ii. 1—11.

But while by every serious consideration thou art restrained, ignorant fallible creature, from judging another, by every serious consideration thou art encouraged and constrained to examine and to judge thyself. It may be the means of preventing, of averting the righteous judgment of God. It will lead thee to the discovery of thy own weakness, and thereby become a source of wisdom and strength. It will unfold the deceitfulness of sin, and the treachery of thine

own heart, and lead thee in trembling hope to the blood of sprinkling which taketh away the sin of the world. It will render thee compassionate and gentle to the infirmities of others, because that thou also hast sinned. It will produce "godly sorrow, "which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to "be repented of." It will render the promises of "mercy to pardon, and of grace to help in every "time of need," precious to thy soul. It will help to regulate thy path through life, and to diminish the terrors of death.

Finally, habitual and rooted impressions of a judgment to come will serve as a support under the rash censures and unjust decisions of men. From the strife of tongues, from the hatred of a merciless world you can retire to the silent feast of a conscience void of offence; and with confidence appeal from the angry tribunal of a creature like thyself, to Him who knoweth thy heart, who seeth in secret, and who will reward thee openly. Blessed are ye "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, "and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; "for great is your reward in Heaven."—"Who "shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"—Behold that great multitude which no "man can number of all nations, and kindreds, "and people, and tongues, standing before the "throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white "robes, and palms in their hands; and crying with

"a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God, "which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the "Lamb."—"What are these which are arrayed in "white robes? and whence came they?——These "are they which came out of great tribulation, and "have washed their robes, and made them white in "the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they be- "fore the throne of God, and serve him day and "night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the "throne shall dwell among them. They shall "hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither "shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne "shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living "fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all "tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 9—27.

LECTURE XIX.

NUMBERS XXI. 4—9.

And they journeyed from mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses: Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people: and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

THE restlessness, peevishness, and discontent which men are continually expressing, prove at once the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and furnish a strong presumption of the immortality of the soul. To behold one generation after another of moping, melancholy, sullen, surly beings, in the midst of an overflowing profusion of blessings,

charging God foolishly, tormenting themselves unnecessarily, and disturbing others maliciously, clearly demonstrates that man is alienated from his Maker, is at variance with himself, and unkindly disposed towards his brother: in other words, that he is a fallen, corrupted creature. To behold men, whatever they have attained, whatever they possess, forgetting the things which are behind, and eagerly reaching forward to those which are before, the eye never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, is a presumption at least, if not a proof, that we are designed of our Creator for something which this world has not to bestow; that some principle in our nature is superior to the gross and grovelling pursuits in which we are now warmly engaged, but in which we find, and we take no rest: and thus the very misery which we feel is a presentiment of the felicity which we were created to enjoy. But, alas, our dissatisfaction with sublunary good things, "the things which are seen and temporal," is not the result of experience, nor the resignation of a mind humbled to the will of God. No, it is the miserable effect and expression of insatiable desire, of unmortified pride, of disappointed ambition. If we arrive at our object with ease, its value is diminished by the facility of acquisition; if obstacles lie in the way, and possession be removed by distance of time and space, we are quickly discouraged, and we timidly give up the pursuit. When empty, there is no end of our complaints; when full, we loathe and reject the best things: if we succeed, our

prosperity destroys us with folly, insolence, and self-indulgence; if we fail, we are undone through shame, chagrin, and resentment; if we shun the rock of "vanity" on the one side, we are sucked into the whirlpool of "vexation of spirit" upon the other.

The history of Israel is, in truth, the history of human nature. Did they discover a stubbornness which no calamity could tame and no kindness could mollify: a levity which no steadiness of discipline could fix, a perfidiousness which no plea can excuse, an ingratitude which no partiality can extenuate, a stupidity which no intelligence can account for, a timidity and a rashness which no reason can explain? Alas, we need not travel to the deserts of Arabia, nor look back to the days of the golden calf, nor of the waters of Meribah, for the persons who discovered such a spirit. We have but to look into our own hearts, we have but to review our own lives, in order to be satisfied, that such a spirit has existed, that it is shamefully odious in itself, highly offensive in the sight of God, and that we have good reason to abhor ourselves "and repent in dust and ashes."

We have pursued the history of Aaron and of Balaam, in a continued series, that we might prosecute the remainder of the history of Moses without any farther interruption; we therefore omitted in its proper place that portion of it which is partly recorded in the verses which I have read; but it is of infinitely too great importance to be passed over

wholly in silence, and therefore we look back, and bring it into view, as an useful subject of meditation this evening.

Moses had lately descended from Mount Hor, whither he had been summoned to perform the last offices of humanity to Aaron his brother: with mixed emotions, no doubt, which alternately marked the man and the believer, we behold him mourning and mortified, yet patient, composed, and resigned to the will of Heaven. In executing sentence of death upon his brother, he heard the voice of God again pronouncing his own doom: a doom in which with the ordinary feelings of humanity, he acquiesces with reluctance, but must however acquiesce. But though death was before his eyes, and could be at no great distance, it abates nothing of his ardour for the glory of God, and for the good of Israel; it breaks in upon no duty of his station, it disturbs not the benevolence, gentleness, and serenity of his temper: he lives, acts, instructs to the very last; and exhibits an instructive example of that happy firmness and equanimity of soul, removed alike from stoical indifference and contempt of death, and from fond, infirm, unreasonable attachment to life. We find him accordingly in his 120th year, and the last of his life, not only engaged in employments suitable to age, those of deliberating, advising, and instructing; but exerting all the activity and vigour of youth, in planning and executing sundry military enterprises.

We should be surprised, did we not know the

cause of it, to find Israel in the fortieth year from their deliverance out of Egypt, just where we saw them the first month, by the way of the Red Sea, journeying from Mount Hor; and even then, though every thing seemed to be pressing them forwards to the possession of Canaan, not led of their heavenly Guide directly forwards in the nearest track, but obliged to fetch a compass round the whole land of Edom, the possession allotted to, and already bestowed upon, the posterity of Esau. But Israel, and in them mankind, was thereby instructed to revere the destinations of Providence, to respect the rights, property, and privileges of others; that reason and religion, as well as sympathy and humanity, oblige a man to submit to the inconveniency of a journey somewhat more tedious and fatiguing, instead of attempting to cut a nearer passage for himself, through the bowels and blood of his brother.

The consciousness of having acted well, in taking this circuitous march round the land of Edom, and that they thus acted by the command of God, ought to have reconciled the minds of those Israelites to the little inconveniencies of the way; but their historian and leader, with his usual fidelity, informs us, that "the soul of the people was much dis-"couraged because of the way."

Men frequently do their duty with so ill a grace, that it becomes as offensive as downright disobedience; the manner of compliance has the air of a

refusal. God loves cheerfulness in every thing: a cheerful, liberal giver; a cheerful, thankful receiver; a cheerful, active doer; a cheerful, patient sufferer. And what an alleviating consideration is it, under the pressure of whatever calamity! "This burden "is imposed on me by the hand of my heavenly "Father; this is a sore evil, but God can turn it "into good."—"This affliction is not joyous, but "grievous; nevertheless afterwards it shall yield the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." When we are out of humour at one thing, we are dissatisfied with every person, and every thing; a harsh spirit and a hasty tongue spare neither God nor man. "The "people spoke against God, and against Moses. "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to "die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither "is there any water: and our soul loatheth this light "bread."

Objects viewed through the medium of passion, like those strange uncouth appearances which are seen in glasses of a certain construction, have little or no resemblance to what they are in nature and truth. They are distorted and disfigured; they are magnified to such a degree as to become hideous, or diminished so as to become imperceptible; and according to the fit of the moment, men turn the one end or the other of the perspective to the eye, and what they contemplate is accordingly removed to a great distance, and reduced to nothing, or brought *nigh*, *enlarged*, and *brightened up*. Employing this false kind of optics, Israel now considers Egypt

and all its hardships with desire and regret, and looks forward to Canaan with coldness and distrust. The miraculous stream that followed them from the rock is no water at all, and manna, angel's food, is accounted light bread. We are too little aware of the sinfulness and folly of discontent, and therefore we indulge in it without fear or reserve. We do not reflect that it is to arraign at once the wisdom and goodness of God; to rob him of the right of judgment, and madly to increase the evil which was too heavy before.

In general, the righteous Governor of the world permits this evil affection to punish itself; and can there be a greater punishment, than to leave a sullen, dissatisfied wretch to devour his own spleen? But in the instance before us, He was provoked to superadd to this mental plague a grievous external chastisement. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents "among the people, and they bit the people, and "much people of Israel died." These might be the natural production of the wilderness, but providentially armed for the occasion with a greater malignancy of poison, or produced in greater abundance, or roused to a higher degree of ferocity. For what are the instruments which God employs to avenge himself of his enemies? He needs not to create a new thing in the earth; the simplest creature can do it. Nature, animate and inanimate, is ready to take up his cause; the frost or the fire, continued a little longer, or rendered a little more intense, will soon subdue the proudest of his ad-

versaries. It is not the least of the miracles of divine mercy, that Israel had been preserved so long from the fury of those noxious insects with which the desert swarmed, as Moses justly remarks in recapitulating the history of God's goodness to that people during a forty years' pilgrimage. "Lest "thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord "thy God, which brought thee forth out of the "land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who "led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, "wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and "drought, where there was no water; who brought "thee forth water out of the rock of flint." Deut. vii. 14—15.

The rage of those dreadful creatures, which had been during so long a period by a supernatural power suppressed, now, freed from that curb, becomes a party too strong for a mighty host, flushed with recent victory. While therefore we adore and admire the goodness which multiplies the necessary and useful part of the vegetable and animal tribes with such astonishing liberality, and limits those which are noxious with such consummate wisdom and irresistible power, let us tremble to think how easily he can remove the barrier which restrains the wrath of the creature, and arm a fly with force sufficient for our destruction. But the intention of God in punishing, is correction and amendment, not ruin; returning mercy therefore meets the first symptoms of repentance, and a remedy is pointed out the moment that misery is felt; which sweetly

discloses to us the meltings of fartherly affection outrunning and preventing filial wretchedness.

But what strange method of cure have we here? The poison of a serpent counteracted, and its malignity destroyed, not by an external application, not by virtue of an antidote possessed of certain natural qualities, but by a blessing annexed to the use of an instrument in itself inadequate, and to an action of the patient himself, flowing from his own will, and called forth by the appointment and command of God. The author of that excellent book entitled the Wisdom of Solomon, has a beautiful reference to this story, when he says,

"For when the horrible fierceness of wild beasts "came upon these, and they perished with the "stings of crooked serpents, thy wrath endured not "for ever. But they were troubled for a small "season, that they might be admonished, having a "sign of salvation, to put them in remembrance of "the commandment of thy law. For he that turned "towards it was not saved by the thing that he "saw, but by thee, that art the Saviour of all. And "in this thou madest thine enemies confess, that it "is thou who deliverest from all evil." Wisdom, ch. xvi.

But the grand commentary on the history of the fiery serpents is furnished by Christ himself, in his conversation with Nicodemus, the Jewish Ruler. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that

"whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but "have eternal life." John iii. 14, 15.

From this it is evident that many particulars in the Jewish history and political economy had an interest and importance which extended far beyond the present moment, and the sensible and obvious appearance of things. And in this particular instance our blessed Lord has furnished us with an instructive example, which ought to serve as a rule, for the application of figurative, allegorical, and typical subjects. Here he enters into no detail; pursues no parallel or contrast though a multiplicity of particulars: He furnishes no wings to the imagination; but fixing on one, great, general view of the subject, renders it thereby more powerful and impressive. He was conversing with a ruler of the Jews; He was explaining to him the nature and end of his own mission; He was deducing the nature and tendency of the Gospel dispensation from the established rites of the Mosaic, and the received facts of the Jewish history, with which Nicodemus was perfectly well acquainted. In this case he refers to a noted event, and appeals from it to one which was shortly to take place, betwixt which a striking line of resemblance should be apparent—The elevation of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, for the healing of the Israelites who were perishing by the envenomed stings of the fiery serpents,—and the elevation of the Son of Man upon the cross, the propitiation for the sins of the world: that when this last display of the

divine justice and mercy should be exhibited, Nicodemus, and every intelligent and honest disciple of Moses, might be satisfied that "God had, at sun-"dry times, and in divers manners," presented as in a glass to the fathers the method of redemption by Jesus Christ.

All the application, then, which the words of the Saviour himself warrant us to make of this passage to him, is reduced to a few obvious and striking particulars. "Fools," such as the Israelites in the desert, and transgressors of the divine law in general, "because of their transgression, and be-"cause of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul "abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw "near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto "the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out "of their distresses. He sent his word and healed "them, and delivered them from their destructions." Psalm cvii. 17—20.

The root of the evil, the cause of the plague, is to be found in human perversity and disobedience. The faithful and obedient sleeps safe and secure in the lion's den: to the proud and rebellious the innoxious worm is converted into a fiery serpent, full of deadly poison.—The remedy for this sore evil is to be traced up to the divine compassion, power, and goodness.

The means of cure are not such as human wisdom would have devised, or such as the reason of man approved; they are the sovereign appointment of Heaven. The effect is preternatural, yet real; and

reason rejoices in what it could not have discovered. The sight of a lifeless serpent of metal working as an antidote to the mortal poison of one alive! Incredible, absurd! Such was the doctrine of the cross in the eyes of prejudice, and philosophy, and science, falsely so called. "For the preaching of "the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but "unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the "wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding "of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the "scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath "not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? "For after that in the wisdom of God the world "by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the "foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek "after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, "unto the Jews a stumbling-block; and unto the "Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are "called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power "of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 18—24.

The virtue flowed from the divine appointment, operating together with the believing act of the patient. To the sufferer who averts his face, or who wilfully and contemptuously shuts his eyes, that banner is displayed in vain; no virtue issues from it, he perishes in his unbelief. To the despiser, the impenitent, the careless, Christ has died in vain. In the extension of all God's acts of grace to men,

in order to produce the full effect, there must of necessity be an unity of design, and exertion between the giver and the receiver, between him who acts and him who is acted upon. Man's body is "dust of the ground," mere matter, separated from the spirit, incapable of motion or direction. Even that active, penetrating organ the eye, is but a little lump of pellucid clay, till the vital principle, the breath of God, kindle its fires and direct its rays. It is this vital principle which, proceeding from God, exists in him, and possesses the power of rising and returning to him. The believing Israelite hears, in dying agonies, the proclamation of deliverance, lifts up his drooping head, looks, and is healed; his will meets the will of God, and the cure is already performed. The perishing sinner hears the voice of the Son of God, and lives. Lifted up upon the cross he utters his voice, "Look unto me "and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I "am God, and there is none else." Is. xlv. 22. One of his fellow-sufferers hardens his heart and reviles him, turns from the Saviour with disdain, and dies impenitent,—the other hears with rapture the joyful sound, clings to the hope of salvation, prays in faith, and passes with him into paradise.

But the circumstance on which Christ chiefly rests, is Moses "*lifting up* the serpent in the "wilderness." Moses probably had not a clear apprehension of the extensive meaning and import of the act which he was performing, any more than the dying men who were the subjects of the cure. They

looked no farther than to the present moment, and for relief from a malady which affected the body. But like the high priest in later times, they were prophesying without being conscious of it. He was erecting, and the congregation in the wilderness were contemplating, an anticipated representation of the great medium of salvation, which God had appointed from the foundation of the world; and had, in a variety of other predictions, circumstantially declared and described at different periods to mankind. These predictions were slumbering unnoticed, neglected, misunderstood, even by the wise and prudent, in the sacred volume, a dead letter, till Christ, their quickening spirit, gave them life and motion, and a meaning which they had not before.

In the scene that passed in the wilderness, we behold the shadow of good things to come, a prefiguration of the death which Christ should die. He is here "evidently set forth crucified before us," according to his own words, descriptive of "the de-"cease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."— "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw "all men unto me." John xii. 32.

This same idea, we have just observed, had been suggested by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, and a similar expression is put into the Saviour's mouth by that harbinger of the Prince of Peace: "Look un-"to me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; "for I am God, and there is none else." And in another place, speaking of Gospel times, "At that

"day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes "shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah xvii. 7.

Thus was Moses, by what he did, and Isaiah, by what he wrote, pointing out to the world one and the same great object, Christ Jesus, "the end of the "law for righteousness;" the substance of the types; the accomplishment of prophecy and promise; the bruiser of the serpent's head; the restorer of defaced, defiled, degraded humanity. And thus we are taught to regard with peculiar respect an event which Providence has, in so many different ways, rendered illustriously conspicuous; the death of Christ on the accursed tree.

We shall have exhibited to you all that Moses and the prophets, all that the historian and the evangelist have suggested, on the subject of the brazen serpent, when we have led your attention to the impious and idolatrous use made of it in after times. That this illustrious instrument of Israel's deliverance in the wilderness should be carefully preserved, as a monument of the divine power and goodness, and by length of time acquire venerability and respect among the other valuable memorials of antiquity, is not to be wondered at. But every thing may be perverted; and a corrupt disposition has ever manifested itself in man to exalt into the place of God something that is not God. Accordingly we find, about eight centuries from its original fabrication, even in the days of Hezekiah, the brazen serpent exalted to divine honours, and a besotted

people rendering that homage to the means which was due only to the hand which employed it. The zeal of that pious prince, therefore, is worthy of commendation, who, in reforming the abuses of religion which prevailed at the time that he mounted the throne of Judah, abolished this among the rest. Regardless of the purpose for which it was at first framed, of the venerable hand which formed and reared it, and of the lapse of so many years which had stamped respect upon it, "he brake in pieces "the brazen serpent which Moses had made; for "unto those days the children of Israel did burn "incense to it, and he called it Nehushtan," 2 Kings xviii. 4; by way of contempt—*a piece of brass.*

On this part of the history of Moses pagan antiquity has founded the fabulous history of Esculapius, the pretended god of medicine, whose symbol was a serpent twisted round a rod. The learned have, through a variety of particulars, traced the derivation of the fable from the fact; but to repeat them, would rather minister to curiosity than to instruction and improvement. We dismiss the subject, then, with this general remark, That in more respects than is commonly apprehended, and than it has had the candour to acknowledge, is pagan literature indebted to the sacred volume; that the wisdom of Egypt, of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome, is traceable up to this source; that Moses is, of course, to be considered as the father of profane, as of sacred, learning, from whom all subsequent historians, legislators, orators, and poets have derived

the lights which directed them in their several pursuits; and to the pure source of all wisdom, the revelation from Heaven, the world is indebted for the first principles of science, morality, and religion; which appears to the attentive and discerning eye through the mist in which credulous ignorance or bold fiction have involved them.

Let us hence be encouraged to revere the Scriptures, to search and compare them; to derive our opinions of religious subjects from that sacred source, instead of forcing the truth of God into an awkward supporter of our preconceived opinions. Above all, let it be our concern to regulate our conduct by the laws which Scripture has laid down, and to comfort our hearts by the hope which it inspires, and the prospects which it has unfolded. Amen.

LECTURE XX.

NUMBERS XXVII. 12—14.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, and when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes. That is the water of Meribah in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin.

THERE is something peculiarly interesting in hearing a plain, honest, intelligent man, without vanity, or self-sufficiency, or affected humility, talking of himself; going into the detail of his own history with the same fidelity and simplicity, as if it were the history of a stranger; unfolding his heart without reserve, disclosing his faults and infirmities without palliation, recording his wise and virtuous actions without ostentation; and relating events with all their minute circumstances, according to the feelings which they excited at the moment.

It is pleasant to see an old man with his faculties unimpaired, his spirits cheerful, his temper sweet, his conscience clear, his prospects bright; enjoying life without fearing death; blending the modesty and benevolence of youth with the wisdom and

dignity of age. There is a double satisfaction in hearing such a one describe persons whom he knew, scenes in which he acted, expeditions which he conducted, schemes which he planned and executed.

And such an one was Moses, who having, by divine inspiration, made the ages and generations before the flood to pass in review, and unfolded the history of redemption in its connexion with the system of nature and the ways of Providence, during a period of two thousand five hundred years; having admitted us to his familiarity and friendly instruction during an eventful life of one hundred and twenty years, is now, with the same calmness and ease, admitting us to contemplate his behaviour in the immediate prospect, and up to the very hour of his death.

The idolatrous defection of Israel in the plains of Moab had been visited with a plague which swept away twenty-four thousand of them. Immediately on the staying of that terrible calamity, Moses is commanded, with the assistance of Eleazar the high priest, to take the number of the people from twenty years old and upwards, and to compare the muster-roll of the day, with that taken in the wilderness of Sinai thirty-eight years before. This being done with all possible accuracy, two most singular facts turn up, each singular considered separately and by itself, and both most singular, taken in their connexion one with another. In a multitude

so great, and at a distance of thirty-eight years, the whole difference is no more than one thousand eight hundred and twenty men: for at the former period, the number of men of a military age was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty, and at the latter six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty. But though the strength of the host was nearly the same, the individuals whereof it was composed were totally changed; two names alone of so many myriads stood upon both lists, Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun, for Moses himself was under sentence of condemnation; he was not to be permitted to pass over Jordan; he was already numbered with the dead.

The course of nature, it is true, is continually producing a similar effect on the human race, upon the whole; but there is a degree of exactness in this instance, not to be accounted for on common principles, and which must be resolved into a special interposition of Providence, which had pronounced the doom of death on the whole body of offenders in the moment of transgression, and at the same instant promised the reward of fidelity and obedience to those illustrious two; longevity and the possession of Canaan. Vain therefore is the hope of so much as one guilty person escaping in a crowd; groundless the fear of singular goodness suffering in the midst of many wicked.

It is related of Xerxes, king of Persia, much to the honour of his humanity, that surveying from an eminence the vast army with which he was advanc-

ing to the invasion of Greece, he burst into tears to think that in less than one hundred years they should all be cut off from the land of the living. What then, O Moses, were the emotions of thy soul, to see the event, which Xerxes but anticipated, realized before thine eyes? What was it to walk through the ranks of Israel without meeting one man who followed thee out of Egypt, with whom thou couldst mingle the tears of sympathy over so many fallen, or remind of the joy and wonder of that great deliverance? Is not that man already dead, who has survived all his contemporaries? A consideration, among many others, powerfully calculated to reconcile the mind to the thoughts of dissolution, and to impress on the soul the sentiment of the wise man concerning the world, "I hate it, I would not live al-"ways."

Long life, however, is not the less to be considered as a blessing. The love of it is a constitutional law of our nature; and the promise of it is annexed to the sanctions of the written law, as a motive to obedience: "Honour thy father and thy mother: "that thy days may be long upon the land which "the Lord thy God giveth thee:" Exod. xx. 12: and it is here bestowed as a reward on the faithful. Premature death, in like manner, is an object of natural horror, it is threatened in anger, and is inflicted as a punishment. "The wicked shall not "live half his days, and his memory shall rot." In general, a wise and merciful God hides from the

eyes of men the era of their departure out of the world. The bitterness of death consists in the foretaste, and the forerunners of that great enemy. That bitterness, in its full proportion, was wrung out and mingled in the cup of Moses. The death of every Israelite was a death-warning to him. He had lately ascended mount Hor with Aaron his brother, had stripped him of his garments, had closed his eyes to his last long sleep, and descended without him: and mount Hor is only a few steps distant from mount Abarim, and his own summons comes at length. He is respited, not pardoned, and a reprieve of forty years is now expired.

It is in that awful, that trying hour, we are at this time to trace the character, and mark the behaviour, of the man of God.

From the moment that he fell under the divine displeasure, which shortened the date of his life, we observe it lying with an oppressive weight upon his mind. The love of life manifests itself, and we behold in the prophet the man of like passions with ourselves. There is no incident of his life on which he dwells so much, and with such earnestness of interest as this. The history of his offence is again and again repeated, not in the view of extenuating the guilt of it, but to vindicate the righteous judgment of God. The excellency of this part of his narrative is its departing from the direct line of narration. He hastens forward to bring it early into view; he returns again upon his footsteps, and presents it a second time to inspection. Is he re-

minding Israel of their rebellion and disobedience? His own transgression, and the punishment of it, arise and stare him in the face. Is he encouraging them in their progress towards the promised land? He sighs to think that he himself shall never enter into it. At one time he flatters himself with the hope that justice might perhaps relent, and presumes to expostulate and entreat in terms earnest and pathetic, such as these: "O Lord God, thou hast be-"gun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy "mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven "or in earth, that can do according to thy works, "and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me "go over and see the good land that is beyond "Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." Deut. iii. 24, 25.

At another time he seems quietly to give up the cause as lost, and patiently prepares to meet his fate, and meekly resigns himself to the will of the Most High, which he was unable to alter. In a word, we see him at once the man and the believer, and a pattern well worthy of imitation in both respects.

It is impossible to observe the conflict of Moses's soul, when this cup of trembling was put into his hands, without thinking of the bitter agony in the garden, of the travail of the Redeemer's soul, of that passionate address, "Father, if it be possible, "let this cup pass from me"—of "sweat like great "drops of blood falling down to the ground," Luke xxii. 42—44; of the triumph of resignation, "never-"theless, not my will, but thine be done;" of "hu-

"miliation to death, the death of the cross." Thus it "behoved him to fulfil all righteousness." Thus he taught men to obey the law of God, to use all lawful endeavours to preserve life; and thus he inculcated submission to that sovereign will which it is unprofitable and impious to resist.

"Get thee up," said God to Moses, "into this "mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given "unto the children of Israel," Lev. xvii. 12, 13; and this is all that the law can do for the guilty; it conducts to an adjoining eminence, it spreads a distant prospect of Canaan, it can display its beauty and fertility, it can inspire the desire of possession; —but it cannot divide Jordan, it cannot lead to victory over the last enemy, it cannot make "the "comer thereunto perfect," nor establish the soul in everlasting rest. Neither Moses, the giver of the law, nor Aaron the high priest under the law, could "continue by reason of death." But the Apostle and High Priest of our profession is "entered into the holiest of all," has opened a passage through the gates of death to life and immortality; lifted up, first upon the cross, and then to his throne in the heavens, He is drawing all men unto him.

Together with the honest though fond attachment to life, which characterizes the man, and the pious resignation which marks the child of God, Moses discovers, on this occasion, that excellent spirit which sinks and loses the individual in the public. He cheerfully gives up his personal suit, and the cause of Israel henceforth engrosses him wholly,

"And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the "Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man "over the congregation, which may go out before "them, and which may go in before them, and "which may lead them out, and which may bring "them in; that the congregation of the Lord be "not as sheep which have no shepherd." Num. xxvii. 15—17.

Let modern patriots think of this, and blush at their pride and selfishness. But they are lost to all sense of decency, they keep each other in countenance by their multitude and confidence, and "glory in their shame." This noble conduct of the Jewish legislator was not the affectation of virtue and public spirit, the ostentatious boasting of a man who had no prospect, or a distant one, of being put to the trial; but it was the native greatness and superiority of a mind occupied with two grand objects, the glory of God and the good of his country; of a mind that could rejoice in the advancement of an inferior, and decrease with inward satisfaction while the other increased. Ordinary men look with an evil eye upon their successors. A prince and his heir, though that heir be his own son, generally live upon indifferent terms; but Moses sees his dignity departing from himself in his life-time, departing from his family, and given to his servant, without a murmur, without a sigh. It was enough to him that God had been pleased to adopt Joshua, for the purpose of finishing his work, of introducing Israel into their inheritance. It is no sooner inti-

mated to him, than Joshua becomes his son, his brother, his friend; and he proceeds to his installation with as much alacrity as he invested Aaron with the pontifical robes.

This solemn ceremony consists of a variety of circumstances which are well worthy of our attention; from their being of Divine appointment, from their great antiquity, from their inexplicable mysteriousness, or from their obvious significancy. Joshua was already anointed with the unction of the Spirit: he was a person of singular piety, undaunted resolution, and unshaken fidelity: he had long attended upon Moses as his minister, had accompanied him into the mount when he ascended to meet God, had traversed the land of Canaan as one of the spies, had brought up its good report, and stood firm with Caleb in resisting the timid and discouraging representation of his colleagues. He possessed all the qualities natural, acquired, and miraculously dispensed, which were requisite to the discharge of the duties of that high and important station to which Providence was now calling him. By the spirit which is said to have been in Joshua, some understand the spirit of prophecy, or supernatural powers of foreseeing and providing for future events. By taking in every circumstance, it seems rather to denote those rare gifts with which nature had so liberally endowed him; wisdom, and courage, and strength; and which Providence was now calling forth for the general benefit. But though thus amply furnished for his great undertaking, God

was pleased to command a solemn and public declaration of his choice, and that the object of it should, before the eyes of the people, be set apart by the imposition of the hands of Moses to the office assigned him.

Forms are necessary because men are not spiritual; forms are interposed, that the understanding, the heart, and the conscience may be approached through the channels of sense. And of all forms recommended by Divine authority, and by its own significant simplicity, that of the laying on of hands is one of the most ancient, the most frequently in use, and the most striking. By this solemn rite the devoted victim was set apart for death, and the guilt of the offerer was transferred, as it were, and laid upon the head of the oblation: and thus were the minister of the sanctuary, the general, the statesman, dedicated to the duties of their respective stations: thus new and extraordinary powers were conferred upon Joshua: thus Jesus took leave of his disciples, and left a blessing behind him, more precious than the mantle of Elijah.—"He led them out as far as Bethany, and "he lifted up his hands and blessed them." Luke xxiv. 50.

By laying on of the apostles' hands, miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated; and by laying on of the hands of the presbytery, Timothy was solemnly set apart for exercising the office of a bishop; and thus a great part of the Christian world continues to install its ministers in the pastoral office.

Moses was farther commanded "to cause Joshua "to stand before Eleazar the priest," who was probably to offer up sacrifice in behalf of the commander elect, and by this additional solemnity to impress both upon his own mind, and upon those of the spectators, the weight and importance of the sacred charge committed unto him. It is added, verse 20, "And thou shalt put some of mine ho- "nour upon him, that all the congregation of the "children of Israel may be obedient." This is interpreted by some commentators, of those rays of glory which are supposed to have surrounded the head of Moses ever since his descent from God in the mount, and which so dazzled the eyes of the beholder, that in speaking to the people he was under the necessity of putting a veil over his face. By the imposition of his hands upon the head of Joshua, according to the commandment, this external, sensible honour is said to have been communicated from the one to the other, and that, in consequence of it, Joshua henceforth wore a visible token of the choice of Heaven.

Conjecture and fancy blend too much in this exposition to procure for it a very high degree of respect. Juster and more sober criticism explain the passage as implying, that Moses should immediately associate Joshua with himself in the executive powers of government, should devolve upon him a share both of the respect and the care which pertained to the supreme command: that he might enjoy the satisfaction, while he yet lived, and which he

so much desired, of beholding a wise and a good man conducting the Israelitish affairs, in church and state, with discretion, and carrying on the plan of Providence to its consummation.

There is another article in the injunction laid upon Moses, respecting the appointment of his successor, which has greatly exercised and puzzled the critics. "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who "shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of "Urim, before the Lord; at his word shall they "go out, and at his word they shall come in, both "he and all the children of Israel with him, even "all the congregation." Num. xxvii. 21.

The difficulty is, What was the Urim, and the judgment of Urim, of which Eleazar was to ask counsel in behalf of Joshua, and wherein Moses differed from Joshua as to this? Urim is in general, in Scripture, found in connexion with Thummim. The words import *light* and *perfection*; and they appear to have been some part or appendage of the breast-plate, that essential article of the high-priest's dress. They were not, it is alleged, the production of human skill, like the other particulars of the sacred clothing, for there is no account of their fabrication by the hands of man: but when the breast-plate was finished, Moses, we are told, "put "into it the Urim and the Thummim," whatever they were, immediately from God.

The method of consultation has also furnished ample matter of dispute. The most approved tradition is this, for Scripture gives but few, and those

very general hints, upon the subject: the person who desired to consult the oracle, and none but public persons, and on great public occasions, were admitted to that privilege, intimated his intention to the high priest; who, at the hour of incense, arrayed in his pontifical vestments, entered the holy place, accompanied, at a little distance, by the magistrate or general who made the inquiry. The high priest placed himself with his face towards the entrance of the most holy place. The veil which separated the holy place from the holy of holies was drawn up for the occasion, so that he stood directly fronting the ark of the covenant, over-shadowed by the cherubim, where the Schechinah or visible glory resided. The inquirer then, standing behind, pronounced the question, or consultation, in a few plain words: such for example as these, "Shall I go "up against the Philistines, or shall I not go up?" This question was again repeated solemnly and distinctly by the high priest before the Lord: and on looking downwards upon the Urim in the breastplate, the answer of God was seen in characters of reflected light, from the excellent glory, and which the high priest audibly repeated in the ears of the party concerned. "Go," or "Thou shalt "not go."

When the oracle refused to give any response, as in the case of Saul, it was considered as a mark of high displeasure. God would not answer that wicked prince "by the judgment of Urim," but because he had wilfully forsaken God, an offended

God, in just displeasure, gave him up to ask counsel of hell, and to follow it to his own destruction. "We have also," Christians, "a more sure word of "prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed; "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until "the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your "hearts." 2 Peter i. 19.

Joshua being referred to this mode of consultation, and this compared with the history of Moses, point out the difference between these two leaders of Israel. —"There arose not a prophet since in Israel like un-"to Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Deut. xxxiv. 10. God manifested himself immediately unto Moses; conversed with him as a man with his friend. Joshua was kept at a greater distance, and enjoyed communion with God through the intervention of appointed means. Just as before Moses was admitted to the very summit of the mount, received within the veil of thick darkness, which at once concealed and revealed the Divine glory; while Joshua was confined to a lower region, and kept in the place and on the duty of a servant. But we must conclude.

The whole scene that has now passed in review speaks directly to the heart and conscience. It presents a striking and instructive instance of the goodness and severity of God. The faults and infirmities of his dearest children he neither overlooks, nor forgets to punish. For one offence, and seemingly a slight one, Moses is excluded from Canaan. No humiliation, penitence, or entreaty can, of them-

selves, remove the guilt nor prevent the chastisement of sin. The neglect or insult offered by a child, a brother, a friend, strikes deeper than the most violent outrage from a stranger, or an avowed enemy. The transgression of Moses at the waters of Strife was thus aggravated, and he must die for it. O my God, enter not into judgment with me, whose crimes are heightened by every circumstance of aggravation—deliberation, presumption, filial ingratitude, and in the face of solemn and repeated engagements. If Moses died the death, for once speaking unadvisedly with his lips, in the moment of passion; "if thou, Lord, art strict to "mark iniquity, where shall I stand;" how shall I escape?

But is death a punishment to a good man? No. As in the death of Moses, therefore, we behold the justice and severity of God, so, in its consequences, we behold his goodness and loving-kindness. The evil is slight and temporary; the good is unspeakably great, and eternally permanent; exclusion from Canaan is admission into the kingdom of Heaven: "to be absent from the body, is to be present "with the Lord." Faith indeed redeems not from the power of the grave, but it dissipates all the horror of the tomb; transforms it into a resting-place for the weary pilgrim; and converts the king of terrors into a minister of joy. "O death, where is "thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks "be to God, who giveth us the victory, through "Jesus Christ our Lord." "The saying that is

"written is come to pass, Death is swallowed up "of victory; mortality is swallowed up of life." "Life "and immortality are brought to light by the gos- "pel." We "know whom we have believed:" we believe in him who hath said, "I am the resurrec- "tion 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."

LECTURE XXI.

NUMBERS XXXI. 1, 2.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterwards shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

THE interest which every reader of taste and sensibility takes in the life and actions of Moses is never permitted to flag, much less totally to sink and expire. His infant cries, from the very first moment, awaken our sympathy; and his departing words, at the age of a hundred and twenty years, continue to excite our esteem and admiration. Whether employed as a minister of vengeance or of mercy, he inspires affection or commands respect.

The love of life is not only natural and innocent, but important and necessary. We are instructed to guard, to preserve, to prolong it, at once by the constitution and frame of our nature, and by manifold examples of the highest authority. And while Providence permits the farther extension of it, the reasons and end of that extension are obviously manifest. Not a single hour is added to the life of any one, merely to make up such a quantity of time. No, every moment is destined to its peculiar purpose, passes to account, calls to its proper use and

employment. To dream of premature retirement from the exercise of our faculties and functions, of mere existence without employment, is an attempt to defeat the intention of the Creator in sending us into the world: it is a degradation and perversion of the powers of the human mind: it is to be dead while we live. The inquiry of a well regulated spirit to the last, is, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me "to do?" "While any of my powers remain, how-"ever blunted, however impaired, to whom shall I "dedicate the poor remains? Enfeebled, exhausted "as I am, is there no one respect in which I can yet "glorify God, or be useful to my fellow-creatures?" And, to the last, the great Supporter of life, the Ruler of the world, has some command to give, some labour to be performed, some exercise of the hand, the head, or the heart to enjoin, some purpose of justice or of love to accomplish.

Moses has received warning to depart, but the hour of release is not yet come. And though his offence at the waters of Meribah must be punished with death, the tranquillity of his mind is not thereby discomposed, nor his intercourse with Heaven interrupted, nor his zeal in performing the duties of his station abated. The God whom he had so long and faithfully served, continues to converse with him as a man with his friend, communicates to him his designs, and employs him in the execution of them. Our lives too are forfeited: the sentence of death is upon us; under a respite of un-

known, uncertain duration, our days are passing away. Improved ever so well, they cannot indeed redeem from the grave, nor alter the immutable decree; but their improvement may alleviate the bitterness of death, and pluck out the sting. The inevitable course of Nature and the righteous decisions of a holy law, destroy not the sacred communications which subsist between a merciful God and a gracious spirit. To receive a command from an offended father, after judgment has been pronounced, partakes of the nature of a pardon; and it is no slender consolation, even under the stroke of justice, to reflect that paternal affection was pleased to regard and accept future obedience and submission, if not as an atonement for offence, at least as a mark of contrition for having transgressed. As if therefore we could wipe out the memory of the past; as if persevering labours of gratitude and love could purchase our release; as if death were to be prevented, disarmed, or destroyed by the efforts of the passing moment, let us awake and arise to the knowledge, the study, and the practice of our heavenly Father's will.

The service prescribed to Moses on this occasion, was the execution of justice on a nation of offenders. The nature of the offence has been hinted at in a former Lecture; vol. iii. 303; and we may form a judgment of its enormity, from the vengeance which pursued it. The state of Midian, at the period in question, exhibits the last stage of moral depravity corrupted people carrying on a temporary poli-

tical design by means the most scandalous and dishonourable—the dearest and most delicate interests of human nature vilely sacrificed to its worst and most disgraceful propensities—husbands countenancing the prostitution of their wives, and parents that of their daughters, in order to gratify ambition, avarice, or revenge. A nation of such a character is necessarily hastening to utter destruction, without fire from heaven, or the sword of a foreign enemy. But what vice was accelerating by its own native energy, Providence hastens to an issue by a special interposition, and "the Lord makes himself "known by the judgment which he executes."

The force which it was thought proper to employ for the extermination of this debauched race, is indication sufficient how low its character was rated. Immersed in sensuality, enervated by luxury, a handful of men was deemed sufficient to destroy them. A thousand out of every tribe of Israel, twelve thousand men in all, Moses considers as fully competent to the execution of this enterprise; and the event fully justified the estimate which he had made. It is likewise remarkable, that he neither commands in this expedition in person, nor commits the conduct of it to Joshua, or to any other of military profession; but to "Phinehas, the son of "Eleazar the priest," furnished "with the holy "instruments, and the trumpets to blow, in his "hand." We have here, therefore, the idea of a solemn public execution, rather than of regular war.

No resistance is made, no blood but that of the criminals is shed; they dare not meet in the field those whom in the secret chambers they could insnare. In vain their hoary adviser Balaam urges them to feats of arms, and sets them an example of courage: supported by five kings and their armies, he falls together with them by the sword of Israel, an awful monument how certainly, however slowly, eternal justice overtakes the sinner!

The immense booty which this easy victory transferred to the Israelites, is a farther demonstration of the feebleness and dissolution of their unwarlike enemy. They had wealth without being rich, luxury without enjoyment, policy without wisdom, kingly power without government and zeal for religion without an object of worship. Conquered the moment they were attacked, having no resource in public or private virtue; men lost to a sense of what constitutes true female dignity, women precipitating that corruption of which they were the miserable victims—they hold up to mankind a fearful but instructive example of the native, necessary, inevitable consequences of vice. Up to similar causes the downfall of still greater states may be traced; and if sin be the ruin of any kingdom, what individual offender shall dare to flatter himself with the hope of escaping the righteous judgment of God?

The severity with which judgment was executed on the Midianites helps farther to unfold their character. An effeminate, luxurious people, generally excites contempt at most; but here a holy and

just indignation is kindled. Heaven itself is up in arms against a degenerate race; and Moses, the meekest of men, accuses the exterminators of the whole race of Midian of weak and excessive lenity. How is this to be accounted for? It will be found on inquiry, that in a very dissolute state of society, vices of the most odious and atrocious kind are necessarily blended with others less offensive. The love of pleasure is the predominant character; but in order to feed and support that passion, arts the most criminal and detestable must be employed. Injustice, violence, perjury, and murder, follow in the train of lust. The moral principle is destroyed: all sense of shame is lost. The general depravity keeps every individual transgressor in countenance. Appearances are no longer attended to or kept up. Men glory in their shame. The very offices of religion are perverted into instruments of debauchery. Such, apparently, was the state of Midian at the period under review; such was that of Israel during the government and priesthood of Eli; and such was that of the Assyrian and Roman empires immediately previous to their subversion. And in such a state, is it any wonder to see Heaven and earth combined to root out and overthrow—a Holy and Righteous God employing the ministration of the gentlest of mankind to cut off the name and memory of such a people from the earth? When punishment so signal is inflicted, we may safely infer that the guilt which provoked it from such hands was enormous.

On reviewing the little army of Israel after the victory, a fact turns up unequalled in the history of mankind—not so much as one of the twelve thousand has fallen in battle: and that in attacking and destroying a nation so populous as to contain thirty-two thousand females of a particular description. Num. xxxi. 35. The hand of God was clearly visible in this, and it was thankfully acknowledged. The superfluous ornaments which lately published the shame of Midian now proclaim the piety and gratitude of Israel; and they become part of the sacred treasury of the tabernacle. Every creature of God is good in itself, and intended to do good. Use the world so as not to abuse it, and the Creator is glorified. Every day added to our life is as much a miracle of mercy, as the preservation of every individual of the twelve thousand in the day of battle. Let our gratitude declare itself in a habitual devotedness of heart and life to the God of our life and the length of our days; let us present our "bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto "God, which is our reasonable service: and be "transformed by the renewing of our mind, that "we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, "and perfect will of God." Rom. xii. 1, 2.

In the punishment inflicted on Midian, we behold a righteous God prosecuting an injury done to Israel, as an insult offered to himself. And indeed every offence against society is a direct attack of the divine authority, which has fenced the person, the fame, and the virtue of our neighbour on every side,

against all the assaults, whether of violence or of deceit. The character and conduct, in connexion with the untimely end, of the arch-seducer Balaam, are an awful and instructive instance of the justice of God in making signal guilt its own avenger, and furnish a striking illustration of the observations made by the Psalmist and his wise son: "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath "conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into "the ditch which he made. His mischief shall re- "turn upon his own head, and his violent dealing "shall come down upon his own pate. I will "praise the Lord according to his righteousness; "and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most "high." Ps. vii. 14—17. "The heathen are sunk "down in the pit that they made, in the net which "they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is "known by the judgment which he executeth: the "wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." Ps. ix. 15, 16. "For the ways of man are before "the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his "goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked "himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of "his sins. He shall die without instruction: and in "the greatness of his folly he shall go astray." Prov. v. 21—23.

—In the faint resistance made by the Midianites to a force so small, we behold the native tendency of vice to enfeeble and enervate. Sunk in effeminacy and sloth, they are overcome as soon as attack-

ed. Strong in cunning, they are destitute of true wisdom, and defective in valour. The foe that assaults, that conquers them, is within. The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous "is bold as a lion." Addictedness to the pleasures of sense gradually, though insensibly, encroaches on all the nobler principles of our nature, undermines and subverts them. Every spring of the soul is relaxed through disuse; the bodily powers become languid, and the sluggish giant becomes an easy prey to the active and vigorous child. Exercise your faculties, and they will increase and improve: neglect them, and they will quickly fall into utter decay. Fear God, maintain "a conscience void of "offence," and bid defiance to what earth and hell can do against you.

—In the free-will offering of these grateful Israelites for protection and deliverance in the day of battle, behold a laudable example of attention to the ways of Providence, and of thankful acknowledgment of them. Let friend, after the days of separation are at an end, after the hour of danger is past, reckon their numbers. Do they remain entire, not one missing, is no allay mingled with the joy of reunion? It was the hand of God that supported: he "gave his angels charge concerning you." "He "covered you with his feather; his truth was your "shield and buckler: no evil befell you, no plague "came nigh your dwelling." "Give unto the Lord "the glory due unto his name; offer unto him thanks-"giving, honour him with your substance;" pre-

sent "the calves of your lips," the devotedness of your hearts, the obedience of your lives.

—Does the punishment of this people appear to any rigorous and excessive? Let them consider that they are very incompetent judges of God's moral government; that they see but a few scattered fragments of the vast scheme of Providence; that creatures themselves ignorant, weak, and criminal, must be much disqualified to "hold the balance "and the rod;" that every transgression of the divine law merits death; that "fools" only "make a "mock at sin." Let the whole earth tremble before Him "who will by no means clear the guilty:" who has denounced "indignation and wrath, tribu- "lation and anguish against every soul of man that "doeth evil," while to the humble and contrite in heart, he proclaims his name, "The Lord, the "Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, "and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping "mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, trans- "gression, and sin," Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; "visiting the "iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the "*third* and *fourth* generation of them who hate "him; but showing mercy unto *thousands* of them "that love him and keep his commandments." Ex. xx. 5, 6.

—In the leader and commander of Israel behold, once more, a man exalted far above all temporary, all selfish concerns; occupied only with the interests of truth and justice, the duties of his station, the prosperity of his charge, the glory of Him who

had conferred it upon him. In this last object his whole soul is absorbed. He walks already on air, and beholds the world under his feet; but forgets not that he is yet in it, and that in every state, and at every period of existence, a rational being may promote, and ought to be studying how he may best promote, the honour of his Creator, by administering justice, or extending mercy to his fellow-creatures. Consider him well: and, in your sphere, with the means and ability which you enjoy, go and do likewise—and God grant us all wisdom to know and to do what is well pleasing in his sight.

LECTURE XXII.

NUMBERS XXXV. 9—15.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan, into the land of Canaan, then ye shall appoint you cities, to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the man-slayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them; that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.

HUMAN laws are generally the result of experience, not the provision of foresight. Occasion dictates the encouragement to be given, the restraint to be imposed, the punishment to be inflicted. The multiplication of new and extraordinary cases must of course swell the statute book; through change of circumstances some institutes must sink into disuse and oblivion, and others rise into existence and force. Hence the variety, the opposition, the contradiction of different codes of law, not only in different countries, but in the same country at different periods.

There are at the same time certain general and fixed principles of law applicable to every state of society: which being founded in eternal, unchangeable truth and justice, are in perpetual force, and of universal obligation. Divested of every thing arbitrary, local, and temporary, they address themselves to the understanding and the conscience of every man, and irresistibly carry conviction with them. The genius, character, and progress of any people, a sagacious observer will be able to trace, with tolerable accuracy, in their legislation, in their institutions political and religious: for those of a moral tendency never vary. It is easy to discern in the spirit of the laws what is the spirit of the nation; to discern whether liberty or despotism, moderation or tyranny, is predominant.

But the constitution of the commonwealth of Israel possesses distinctive features. It was formed by Divine Wisdom long before it had a local residence wherein to act. The laws by which Canaan was to be governed were enacted in the wilderness. Prescience made provision for cases which could not as yet have arisen. Republican equality was blended with absolute unlimited Theocracy; a liberty and a sovereignty were established in perfect harmony, and yet both to their utmost extent. The Levitical part of the constitution was adapted to this state of things. The priesthood, in respect of property and possession, was reduced below the level of their brethren; while by their office and employments, the homage paid and the provision made for

them, they were raised above their fellows. They were appointed to minister at the altar of God; and it was his will, and it was reasonable, that they should live by it.

One of the last public services in which Moses was employed, is the settlement of this branch of the political economy,—the establishment of religion, without which no state can long exist; and the appointment of a moderate but certain and steady provision for its ministers.

Forty and eight cities, in all, with their suburbs, and an extent of territory around every one, not exceeding two thousand cubits in all directions, were to be set apart for the tribe of Levi, and distributed by lot. As the lot was specially ordered by Divine Providence, the dispersion of this tribe over the whole land, there is good reason to believe, God in wisdom over-ruled favourably to the exercise of their sacred functions. Of their other privileges and immunities we are not now led to treat. The words which we have read limit our attention to an institution, in many respects singular and unexampled in the history of mankind—the appointment of six of the Levitical cities, as places of refuge for the unintentional, and therefore less criminal man-slayer. Respecting this institution, and its reason and design, the following particulars recommend themselves to our notice.

The provision here made refers to a case of singular importance to society; on which indeed the very being of society depends—the security of hu-

man life against violence. To take away the life of another is the most atrocious offence which man can commit against man. The laws of every well-regulated community have accordingly marked it as the object of just vengeance, saying, in the language of the Supreme Legislator, "Whoso sheddeth man's "blood, by man shall his blood be shed." But into the commission of this offence, as of every other, circumstances of aggravation or alleviation may enter; and every wise legislator will take these into consideration; adapting the degree of punishment to the degree of criminality, distinguishing the action as connected with or separated from the intention. To the wilful and deliberate murderer no place was to serve as a sanctuary; to him the altar itself was to afford no protection. But a man may deprive his neighbour of life without incurring the guilt of murder; and it must be imputed to him as a calamity, not a crime. To meet such a case the provision in question was made; and a refuge was provided for both the citizen and the stranger who might "unawares," without malice or intention, occasion the death of another.

This refuge, however, was not wholly unrestricted, but was subject to a variety of regulations, all calculated powerfully to impress on the minds of the people, an awful sense of the value put on the life of man by the Great Legislator: and to serve as a caution not only against deliberate violence, but even against carelessness and inattention, where the life of another was concerned. Blood lies heavily,

as it ought, on the head of him who sheddeth it, however innocently; and the consciousness of it will ever be felt as a severe punishment by a sensible heart, though no judge arise to avenge it. But punishment to a certain degree was inflicted on a man-slayer, by the very statute which appointed the refuge; and to the uneasy reflections arising from having been the unwilling instrument of a man's death, were superadded alarming apprehensions and painful restraints.

The first regulation limited the number of these cities to six, for the whole commonwealth of Israel. Hence an escape to a place of refuge must, in many instances, have been effected through much danger, exertion, and labour; and the unhappy fugitive must frequently have felt all the bitterness of death, in his solicitude to flee from it. Thus while the finger of mercy pointed to the strong hold of safety, the voice of justice exclaimed, "Flee for thy life, "look not behind thee, lest thou perish; behold, the "avenger of blood is at thy heels."

But that the danger, and the anxiety resulting from it, might be diminished as far as the limited number of the cities would admit, it was determined by the lot that these should be dispersed at the most commodious distances, over the country; and it was expressly provided, that three of them should be on each side of the Jordan, in order to facilitate and secure escape at the seasons when that river overflowed its banks, and rendered a passage tedious, difficult, or impracticable. In the same view it

has been affirmed, and it seems probable, that the roads which led to those cities were formed and maintained at the public expense, and that their breadth was very considerable: that every obstruction was removed out of the way, bridges were thrown over interposing streams, and when roads happened to cross or separate, an index, inscribed with the word *Refuge*, pointed out the right course. And thus an institution humane in its design, was rendered more so by the manner in which it was observed.

But again, the city was, in the first instance, to serve only as a temporary refuge, and afforded shelter only till inquiry was made into the fact, and till judgment was solemnly given between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, upon evidence adduced. If criminal intention was proved, there was no remedy, blood demanded blood, the prisoner must be delivered up into the hands of justice. If otherwise, public protection was granted, and he was restored to his refuge. The ordinance having it in view not to prevent and suppress the truth, but to bring it openly and fully to light.

The innocence of the prosecuted party having been made clearly to appear, he was restored indeed to his refuge, but it became at the same time his prison. Exiled from his native possession, and from all that rendered it dear; doomed to live among strangers, to subsist on their bounty, perhaps to feel their unkindness or neglect, he must drag out a comfortless existence, to an unknown, uncertain

period; or stir abroad under constant apprehension and hazard of his life. And confinement is still confinement, though in a place of safety, in a city of refuge; and ignorance and uncertainty respecting the termination of our misery are bitter ingredients in the cup of affliction. "It may outlast life," sad thought! "or consume the best and most valuable "portion of my days. Unhappy that I am, to "have introduced mourning into my neighbour's "family, and desolated my own. Though I feel "not the pangs of remorse, my heart is torn with "those of regret; and blood, though shed with-"out a crime, is a burden too heavy for me to "bear."

The last regulation on record respecting this subject, was a permission to the hapless man-slayer to "return into the land of his possession," on the death of the high priest. The reason of this ordinance does not appear; but it contains a circumstance very affecting to the prisoner himself, and affecting to all Israel. His release from confinement could be purchased only by death, the death of another; and that not of an ordinary citizen, but of the most dignified and respectable character in the republic. The weight of blood innocently shed was at length to be removed; but how? Not by the demise of him who shed it, but of "the high priest which should "be in those days." And may we not suppose a refugee of sensibility looking forward to this event with the mixed emotions of hope and sorrow? The

very cause of his enlargement makes it to partake of the nature of a punishment. He dare hardly wish for liberty, for it involved guilt deeper than what already lay upon his head; deliberate devising the death of his neighbour, and taking pleasure in it.

Now if guiltless homicide subjected the perpetrator of it to such accumulated danger, anxiety, and distress, how atrocious in the sight of God must wilful murder be? And how sacred, in the sight of man, ought to be the life of his brother, and every thing relating to its preservation and comfort, his wealth, his peace, his reputation? To attack him in any of these respects is to level a blow at his head, or, where he feels more sensibly still,

[illegible] view this law of the Mosaic institutions, and learn reverence to a clearer and more explicit dispensation: for it is too evidently "a shadow of "good things to come."

—Our Lord "man-slayer" is an affecting representation of what every man is by nature and by wicked works; an unhappy creature who has offended against his brother, violated the laws of society, broken his own peace of mind, and trampled on the divine authority, not only accidentally and unintentionally, but deliberately, presumptuously. His conscience, "like the troubled sea," cannot rest. What he feels is dreadful, what he fears is infinitely worse. With trembling Cain, he apprehends that every one who meeteth him will slay him; his

multiplied crimes cry out of the ground for vengeance upon his head—while eternal, inflexible justice, like the "avenger of blood," pursues him to the death. To flee from, or to endure the wrath of an offended God, is equally impossible. All nature is up in arms against him; he is become a terror to himself; the king of terrors aims his fatal dart, and hell follows after.

—The "refuge" provided by this statute for the unhappy man who had destroyed his brother, and troubled his own soul, prefigures the remedy prescribed by infinite wisdom for the recovery of a lost, perishing world—that dispensation of Divine Providence in which "mercy and truth are met together, "righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Fear not, guilty creature, there is hope concerning thee; thou shalt not die. The God whom thou hast offended, even He "hath found out a ransom;" He hath laid "help on One who is mighty to save, "even to the uttermost, them who come unto God "through Him." Cease from the anxious inquiry, "Who shall ascend unto heaven, to bring Christ "down from above? Who shall descend into the "deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead?" "The Word is nigh thee," and in this Word, "the "Lord brings near his righteousness," and his salvation. The name of JEHOVAH is as a strong tower, whoso runneth into it is safe. Prophets, apostles, evangelists, with one accord, point to the sanctuary, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." "Turn

"ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Here is "an highway"— the wayfaring men, though "fools, shall not err therein." The Saviour himself proclaims, "Look to me and be ye saved." "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast "out."

—The very act of flying from "the avenger of "blood," argued a consciousness of criminality and an apprehension of danger: and the course directed to a city of refuge indicated a knowledge of its appointment, and of the privileges pertaining to it. In this we behold the character of the convinced, penitent sinner, condemned of his own conscience, stripped of every plea of self righteousness, alarmed with the terrors of the "wrath to come," encouraged by the declarations of the mercy of God in Christ, approbating "salvation in no other," perceiving no way to escape but this, he flees "for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him," even to "Him "who is mighty to save" to that "blood which "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel," to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of "the world;" saying, in the words of the Psalmist, "O Lord, thou art my refuge—return unto thy rest, "O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully "with thee."—In Jehovah alone have I righteous-"ness and strength;" "he is also become my salva-"tion."

The safety of the man-slayer depended, not on being arrived at, but on remaining in the city of his refuge. To leave it prematurely was as fatal

as to be overtaken on the way that led to it. The grace of the Gospel, in like manner, is extended, not to him who, convinced of sin, and trembling with apprehension of judgment to come, has fled for refuge to the great Propitiation for sin, but to him who abideth in Christ. As there is a "believing to "the saving of the soul:" so there is a "drawing "back unto perdition:" and "no man having put "his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit "for the kingdom of God." Hence the solemn injunction and warning of Christ himself, "Abide "in me, and I in you"—"if a man abide not in "me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: "and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, "and they are burned." "He that endureth unto "the end, the same shall be saved." The Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession "lives "for ever; there is therefore no more going out:" —"In returning and rest shall we be saved, in "quietness and confidence shall be our strength."

—The sanctuary provided and opened, equally for the distressed Israelite and for "the stranger," is a happy prefiguration of the indiscriminating mercy, the unlimited extension of the gospel salvation. "In Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were "far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and "hath broken down the middle wall of partition be-"tween us."—He "came and preached peace to "you which were far off, and to them that were "nigh; and through him, we both have an access

"by one Spirit unto the Father." The Gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation, to every "one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to "the Greek." It announces "glory, honour, and "peace, to every man that worketh good, to the "Jew first, and also to the Gentile." "For there "is no respect of persons with God." Blessed dispensation, which hath abolished all invidious distinctions! "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, "circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scy-"thian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all!" Who art thou then, O man, who "judgest thy bro-"ther? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" He is a man like thyself, a criminal as thou art; for him also Christ died, and for his admission, as for thine, the door of mercy stands open, the city of refuge strengthens its walls, expands its gates.

I conclude with suggesting a few hints, which will serve to evince the glorious superiority of the object prefigured, over the figure; of "the very image of "the things," above "the shadow of good things "to come."—The institution under review was a provision for one particular species of offence and distress, and for a case which could occur but in rarer instances. Indeed the whole history of Israel furnishes not a single one. But the provisions of the "better covenant—established upon better pro-"mises," extend to every species, and to every instance of guilt and misery. They are made not only for the heedless and the unfortunate, the weak and the helpless, but for the stout-hearted and pre-

sumptuous, for deliberate offenders and back-sliding children, for the very chief of sinners. Whatever, O man, be thy peculiar "weight, and the sin that "doth more easily beset thee;" whether "the "plague of thine heart," or the error of thy life, behold "help laid for thee on One mighty to "save." "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh "away the sin of the world." Hear, and accept his kind invitation, "Come to me, all ye that labour "and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look to me and be saved all the ends of the "earth." "Him that cometh I will in nowise "cast out."—The cities of Israel served as a temporary reprieve from a sentence of death, which, though the hand of the "avenger" was restrained, the hand of nature was speedily to execute. The man-slayer might be overtaken by it in the very city of his refuge. But the believer's security under the Gospel never fails, never terminates. He is "passed from death unto life;" he "shall never "perish." There is no condemnation to them that "are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay any thing "to the charge of God's elect? It is God that jus-"tifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ "that died, yea rather that is risen again."—"I give "unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, "neither shall any pluck them out of my hand: my "Father which gave them me is greater than all, "and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's "hand."—Under the law the death of the high priest, the final era of release to the man-slayer, was

an event entirely casual, often distant, always uncertain. Under the Gospel, that death which is the sinner's deliverance, the soul's ransom, is an event for ever present, perpetually producing its effect. Christ, "by one offering, hath perfected for ever "them that are sanctified." "This man, because "he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priest-"hood."

"We ought, therefore, to give the more earnest "heed to the things which we have heard, lest at "any time we let them slip." For if the intentional murderer was to be dragged from God's altar, to suffer the punishment of his crime; and if the manslayer, who despised and neglected his refuge, fell a just sacrifice to the resentment of "the avenger of "blood," and to his own presumption and neglect of the merciful ordinance of God; "How shall we "escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "He "that despised Moses' law died without mercy, "under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer "punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought "worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of "God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, "wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, "and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" —"For if we sin wilfully, after that we have receiv-"ed the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no "more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful look-"ing for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which "shall devour the adversaries. It is a fearful thing "to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. x.

28, 29.—26, 27—31. "Seek ye the Lord while "he may be found, call ye upon him while he is "near. 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." Is. lv. 6, 7. "Behold, now is the accepted time; "behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will "heal your backslidings; behold, we come unto "thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in "vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and "from the multitude of mountains: truly in the "Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." Jer. iii. 22, 23.

LECTURE XXIII.

DEUT. I. 3.

And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them.

"Where is that thrift, that avarice of time,
"O glorious avarice! thought of death inspires?"

YOUNG.

BEHOLD this honourable thrift, this glorious avarice, exemplified in that most amiable and excellent of mankind, Moses, the man of God, who has condescended to be so long our instructor and our guide. He is now in the last month of his earthly existence; he is "ready to be offered up; "the time of his departure is at hand;" and an illustrious instance his last days exhibit, of how much may be done in a little time. Within the compass of that month, that little month, all the words of this book were spoken in the ears of Israel, and were committed to writing. The decree, the irreversible decree had gone forth, he knew that he must die; he therefore sets himself to redeem the time, and seeing his days are now few, not one of them shall be spent in vain.

The tide which carried him along to the world

of spirits is hastening to finish our course, to add us to the number of those who were, but are no more. Another month, a little month, must close our review of the life and writings of Moses. A still shorter period may close our worldly career; and when we part, it is to meet no more, till "the "dead, small and great, stand before God." Let us then seize the moments as they fly, and redeem our time. Let us drink into the spirit of Moses, and learn of him how to live, and how to die.

We see here a man living cheerfully, living usefully to the last. Two different and indeed opposite feelings are apt to betray men into the same practical error, that of mispending their time, and neglecting their opportunities—the confidence of living long on the one hand—the near prospect of death on the other. What we imagine it is in our power to do when we please, we are in great danger of never doing at all; and we feel the remorse of occasion for ever lost, ere we are well awake from the dream of a season continually at our disposal; and it is but too common, when thus overtaken, disconcerted, and confused, to give up our work in despair. Having much to do, and the time being short, we sit down, and lament our folly, and do nothing. Presumption betrays us to-day, diffidence and despondency destroy us to-morrow.

But in the last week of Moses's life, we discover nothing of the indecent hurry of a man conscious of neglect, and eager to repair it. He neither runs nor loiters; but walks with the steadiness and dig-

nity of one whose strength is as his day; who has a labour prescribed, and ability to perform it. In his youth we have a pattern of generosity, and public spirit, and courage, and greatness of mind; in his manhood, of wisdom, of diligence, of perseverance, of fidelity; and now in his old age of calmness, of devotion, of superiority to the world, of heavenly-mindedness.

Observe the excellency of his spirit, at this period, a little more particularly. He set a proper value upon life. He desired its continuance with the feelings natural to a man, he prized it as the gift of God, as the precious season of acting for God, of observing and improving the ways of his providence, of doing good to men, of preparation for eternity. He prayed for its prolongation, without fearing its end; and he thereby reproves that rashness which exposes life to unnecessary danger, that intemperance which wastes and shortens, that indolence and listlessness which dissipate it; and that vice and impiety which clothe death with terror.

In Moses we have a bright example of genuine patriotism. That most respectable quality appeared in him early, and shone most conspicuously at the last. "When he was come to years, he refused to "be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: choosing "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, "than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Heb. xi. 24, 25. For Israel's sake he was willing to encounter a thousand dangers, to endure a thousand hardships. For them he braved the wrath of a

king, sacrificed his ease, consented to be blotted out of God's book. For them he laboured, fasted, prayed; in their service was his life spent, and his dying breath was poured out in pronouncing blessings upon them. If it went well with Israel, he cared not what became of himself. Their unkindness and ingratitude excited no resentment in his breast. When they rebelled he was grieved, when they were threatened he trembled, when they suffered he bled, when they were healed he rejoiced. O how his temper and conduct reprove that pride, which perpetually aims at aggrandizing itself, which must have every thing bend and yield to it, which is ready to sacrifice thousands to its own humour or advantage; that selfishness which grasps all, sets every thing to sale, and refuses to be ashamed.

The generosity and disinterestedness of Moses eminently adorned the close of his life. He was a father, and had all the feelings of that tender relation. It was natural for him to wish and expect that his sons should be distinguished after his death, should be the heirs of his honour, and should succeed to his authority. An ordinary man would have been disposed to employ the power which he possessed to build up, to enrich, to ennoble his own family: but the will of God was declared. Joshua was the choice of Heaven; Joshua, his servant, one of another family, of another tribe. In the appointment Moses rejoices, he adopts Joshua as his son, as his associate; he sees him rise with complacency, puts his honour upon him: and thereby ex-

poses to shame that littleness of soul which enviously represses rising merit, that vice of age which can discern nothing wise and good in the young; that tenaciousness of power which would communicate no advantage with another.

What anxiety does the good man discover that Israel should act wisely, and go on prosperously after his death! There is no end to his admonitions and instructions. By word, by writing, by insinuation, by authority, in the spirit of meekness, of love, of parental care, he cautions, he warns, he remonstrates. Men naturally love to be missed, to be inquired after, to be longed for; but it was the delight of Moses in his departing moments, that his place was already supplied, that the congregation would not miss their leader, that Joshua should happily accomplish what he had happily begun. Selfish men enjoy the prospect of the disorder and mischief which their departure may occasion. Moses foresaw the revolt of Israel after his decease, and it was the grief and bitterness of his heart.

In Moses we have an instructive instance of that continuance in well-doing, that perseverance unto the end, which finds a duty for every day, for every hour; which accounts nothing done, so long as any thing remains to be done, which cheerfully spends and is spent for the service of God, and for the good of mankind. Age is ready to put in its claim, when honour is expected, and advantage to be reaped; and is as ready to plead its exemption when service is required, when danger is to be encountered, and

hardship to be undergone. But while Moses discovers the utmost readiness to share with another the emolument and respect of his office, the trouble and fatigue of it he with equal cheerfulness undertakes and supports to the very last.

In the whole of his temper and conduct, we have an ensample which at once admonishes, reproves, and encourages us. May we not, after considering the noble and excellent spirit which he discovered through the course and at the close of life, contemplate the probable state of his mind in reviewing the past, and in surveying the prospect before him: both affording unspeakable comfort, but neither wholly exempted from pain.

Pleasant it must have been to reflect, 1. On his miraculous preservation in infancy. "To what "dangers was I then exposed? Doomed to perish "by the sword from my mother's womb. Concealed "by fond parents for three months at the peril of "their life, as well as of my own. Committed at "length to the merciless stream, a prey to manifold "death—the roaring tide, hunger, the monsters of "the river, contending which should destroy me. "But I was precious in the sight of God. No plague "came nigh me; no evil befell me. The daughter of "the tyrant saved me from the rage of the tyrant. "The house of Pharaoh became my sanctuary. The "munificence of a princess recompensed the offices "of maternal tenderness. I knew not then to whom "I was indebted for protection, from what source "my comforts flowed: Let age and consciousness

" acknowledge with wonder and gratitude the " benefits conferred on infant helplessness and in- " firmity; let my dying breath utter His praise, " who preserved me from perishing as soon as I " began to breathe."

2. May we not suppose the holy man of God, by an easy transition, passing on to meditate on deliverance from still greater danger, danger that threatened his moral life—the snares of a court? " Flattered and caressed as *the son of Pharaoh's* " *daughter*, brought up in *all the learning of the* " *Egyptians*, having all *the treasures in Egypt* at " my command, at an age when the passions, *which* " *war against the soul*, are all afloat—what risk did " I run of forgetting myself, of forgetting my peo- " ple, of forgetting my God? But the grace of the " Most High prevented me. I *endured as seeing* " *him who is invisible.* I *refused to be called the* " *son of Pharaoh's daughter.* I was not ashamed " to be known for a son of Israel. I *went out to* " *see the burdens* of my brethren, I had compas- " sion on them, and comforted them; *not fearing* " *the wrath of a king*, I *smote him that did the* " *wrong*, and saved the oppressed. I *chose rather* " *to suffer affliction with the people of God, than* " *to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* I " *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches* " *than the treasures in Egypt.* To God I com- " mitted myself; and my virtue, my religion, my " honour, my inward peace were preserved."

3. What satisfaction must it have yielded Moses

in reviewing his life, to reflect on his having been made the honoured instrument, in the hand of Providence, for effecting the deliverance of an oppressed people? I found Israel labouring, "groaning, expiring in the furnace. *I beheld the tears of them that were oppressed, and they had no comforter: and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter.* Their cry reached Heaven. He who made them had mercy upon them. He was pleased to choose me out of all the myriads of Israel, to bring them *out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.* He taught my stammering tongue to speak plainly. He said to my *fearful heart, Be strong.* He armed me with his potent rod; and subjected the powers of nature to my command. The oppressor was crushed in his turn, and the oppressed went out free, full, and triumphant. And to me, even unto me, it was given to conduct this great, difficult, dangerous, glorious enterprize; and Heaven crowned it with success."

4. How pleasing must it have been to reflect that the Spirit of God had employed him to communicate so much valuable knowledge to mankind! "To me was this grace given, to trace nature up to its source; to ascend from son to father, up to the general parent of the human race; to rescue from oblivion the ages beyond the flood, and to rescue departed worth from the darkness of the grave.

"By me these venerable men, though dead, speak "and instruct the world. By me the being and per- "fections, the works and ways, the laws and de- "signs of the Great Supreme stand unfolded; the "plain and progress of his Providence, the system "of Nature, the dispensation of Grace. To my "writings shall ages and generations resort for the "knowledge of events past, and for the promises "and predictions of greater events yet to come. "*The Spirit of the* LORD *spake by me, and his word* "*was in my tongue*, and *the word of the* LORD "*endureth for ever.*"

5. What delight must it have afforded, in reviewing the past, to revive the memory of communion with God, of exalted intercourse with the Father of Spirits! "Blessed retirement from "the noise of the world and the strife of tongues; "solitude infinitely more delicious than all society! "wilderness of Horeb, school of wisdom, scene of "calm and unmixed joy, in thee I learned to com- "mune with my own heart, I forgot the sensual, "unsatisfying delights of Egypt, observed the glo- "ries of Nature, contemplated the wonders of Pro- "vidence, enjoyed the visions of the Almighty! "Happy days, when I tended the flocks of Jethro, "obeyed the dictates of inspiration, and conversed "with my heavenly Father, as a man with his "friend! I saw him in flaming yet unconsuming "fire; I heard his voice from the midst of the "burning bush, my feet stood upon holy ground. "And thou, sacred summit of Sinai, where the

"Most High imparted to me the counsels of his "will; supernaturally sustained the feeble, mortal "frame; irradiated my soul with the communications "of his love, and my countenance with beams of "light, how can I forget thee, and the forty hal- "lowed days passed on thee, in converse more sub- "lime than ever before fell to the lot of humanity! "To thee, sacred structure, reared according to the "pattern showed me in the mount, to thee I look in "rapturous recollection! Thou wert my refuge in "the hour of danger. In thee the assurances of "divine favour and support compensated, extin- "guished the unkindness of man. How often hast "thou been to me a heaven upon earth!"

—But a retrospective view of life must have presented to Moses many objects painful and humiliating; and bitter recollections must have mingled themselves with the sweet.—The repeated defections of a stiff-necked and gainsaying people, whom no kindness could melt, no threatenings deter, no promise animate, no calamity subdue: a people who had requited the care of Heaven with reiterated, unprovoked rebellions; and his own labours of love, with hatred, insult, and ingratitude.—Painful it must have been to think, that he had survived a whole people, endeared to him by every strong, by every tender tie: that he had been gradually dying for forty years together, in a condemned, devoted race, which melted away before his eyes in the wilderness: that with his own hand he had stripped

Aaron his brother of his pontifical garments, and closed his eyes. Painful to reflect on his own errors and imperfections—his criminal neglect of God's covenant, which had nearly cost him his life: his sinful delay and reluctance to accept the divine commission appointing him the deliverer of Israel; the hastiness of his spirit in defacing the work of God, by dashing the tables of the law to the ground, and breaking them in pieces; the impatience of his temper, the unadvisedness of his lips, the unguardedness of his conduct at the waters of Strife, which drew down displeasure on his head, and irreversibly doomed him to death. This uneasy retrospect would naturally lead to prospects as uneasy and distressing.—*The time of his departure is at hand;* the body must speedily be dissolved, and *the dust return to the earth as it was.* Against his admission Canaan is fenced as with a wall of fire, and a distant glimpse must supply the room of possession, and another man must finish his work. Besides the natural horror of death, there was mingled in that bitter cup, a particular sense of personal offence and of fatherly displeasure as inflicting it. Israel too, he foresaw, would after his decease revolt more and more, and call down the judgments of Heaven, and forfeit the promised inheritance—and this was to him the bitterness of death.

But by what brighter prospects was this gloom relieved, and the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death illuminated! He saw the promise of Israel hastening to its accomplishment. The "land

" flowing with milk and honey" was fully in view. The time, the set time was now come; and what powers of nature could prevent the purpose of Heaven from taking effect? " O Lord, thou art faithful " and true; *Do now as thou hast said.*" " *Lord,* " *now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, ac-* " *cording to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy* " *salvation. I have fought a good fight, I have* " *finished my course, I have kept the faith.* My " master is dismissing me from painful service; I " shall rest from my labours; I shall receive the " crown. I am passing from the imperfect, inter- " rupted communion of an earthly sanctuary, to the " pure, exalted, uninterrupted, everlasting commu- " nications of the heavenly state. I shall *see God* " *as he is. I shall be changed into the same image.* " I shall *be ever with the Lord.* I shall shine in " his likeness.—I shall be added, united to the as- " sembly of the faithful; to the venerable men of " whom I wrote, to Abel the first martyr to the truth, " to Enoch, who *walked with God,* to Noah, the " *preacher of righteousness,* to Abraham, who *be-* " *lieved,* and *was called the friend of God,* to Jo- " seph, whose bones are now at length to rest in the " Land of Promise, to Aaron, my brother by nature, " by affection, in offence, in hope.—With the natu- " ral eye I behold the fertile plains of an earthly " Canaan: but by the eye of faith I descry *another* " *country, that is, an heavenly;* watered with the " *pure river of the water of life,* where grow the " trees of life, whose *leaves are for the healing of*

" *the nations:* where there is *no more death.* My " brethren, *I die, but God will surely visit you.*— " *There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a* " *sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and unto him* " *shall the gathering of the people be.—The* LORD " *thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from* " *the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me:* " *unto him shall ye hearken. In the* LORD *shall* " *all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* " In Abraham's seed *shall all the nations of the* " *earth be blessed.*—Mortality is swallowed up of " life; O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, " where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who " giveth us the victory."

—" Let me die the death of the righteous, and " let my last end be like his."—" Mark the perfect " man, and behold the upright: for the end of that " man is peace."

LECTURE XXIV.

DEUT. XXXI. 1—8.

And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day: I can no more go out and come in; also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said.

THE last words and the last actions of eminent men are remembered, repeated, recorded with a mournful pleasure. We listen with peculiar attention to those lips, which are to speak to us no more: and the man, and the words, which we neglected while there was a prospect of their continuing longer with us, we prize, we cleave to, and wish to retain, when they are about to be taken away from us. Indeed we discover the value of nothing, till we are threatened with or feel the want of it; and we awake to a sense of the happiness which we have possessed, by the bitter reflection that it is gone from us for ever.

Farewell addresses serve to rouse both the speaker and the hearers. That man is led to weigh well those words which he is to have no future opportu-

nity of altering or amending. His eyes, his voice, his turn of thought, his expression, all will be influenced by the solemnity of his situation; and what he feels himself, he will certainly communicate to others. Wherefore is not every address considered in this light; as a last, farewell, dying speech? It may be so in truth; and if it were known to be so, would our attention be so distracted, our spirit so careless; would our language be thus cold, our zeal thus languid? Attend, my dear friends and fellow mortals. This is, beyond all controversy, to some of us, the last opportunity of the kind. The sound of this voice shall never again meet all those ears in one place. *It* may be for ever silenced; each of *them* may be for ever closed, and the ordinary tide of human affairs must certainly scatter this night persons who are never more to re-assemble, till that day when the whole human race shall be gathered together in one great multitude.

We are come hither to ponder thy dying words, O Moses, and to gird up our loins, and follow thee.

This whole book may be considered as a series of powerful, pathetic, and tender addresses, delivered at different times, within the compass of the last month of his life, by Moses to Israel, in the near and certain prospect of dissolution. Art has attempted to divide it into so many several distinct heads or branches, forming together a complete body of instruction, wonderfully adapted to the

occasion, and powerfully enforced upon the minds of the hearers by the death of their Teacher, which immediately followed.

The first great branch is a succinct and animated historical detail of the conduct of the Divine Providence towards them and their fathers, during the last forty years, commencing with their departure out of Horeb, and containing an account of their successive movements and encampings. A recapitulation of the recent events of their own lives, and of what had befallen their immediate predecessors, was obviously calculated to excite emotions suitable to their present condition. A complete generation of men had melted away before their eyes under the divine displeasure! Every removal, every encampment was marked by the death of multitudes, who had fallen, not by the sword of the enemy, but were cut off by the flaming sword of divine justice, and were not suffered to enter into the land promised to their fathers, "because of unbelief."

They saw in this at once the mercy and faithfulness, the justice and severity of God. Israel was still preserved, but every single offender had died the death. The covenant made with Abraham and with his seed stood firm, though they were threatened with utter extermination in Egypt, and were actually exterminated in the wilderness. The possession of Canaan was made sure to that chosen race, but not one of the murmurers at Kadesh-barnea was permitted to survive the threatened destruction. By an example that came so closely home to the breast

and bosom of every man, all were admonished of the absolute security and infallible success of trusting in God, and of following the leadings of his providence; all were warned of the guilt and danger of disobedience and distrust.

We see in this the reason why so great a proportion of the sacred oracles is delivered in the form of history. A fact makes its way directly to the heart, it is easily remembered and readily applied. It requires depth of understanding and closeness of attention to comprehend a doctrine, and to draw the proper inferences from it; but "the way-"faring man, though a fool," can discern the meaning, and feels the force of a plain tale of truth, and the recollection of yesterday becomes a lesson of conduct for to-day.

2dly. This valedictory address of Moses consists of a recapitulation of the laws moral, ceremonial, political, and military, which he had already delivered to them in the name of God. On this account, the division of the Pentateuch under consideration has obtained the name of *Mischné Thora*, translated by the Seventy, *Deuteronomy*, that is, the *second law*, or a repetition of the law. The men were dead who heard the voice of God speaking these tremendous words from Sinai. The men of the present generation were unborn, or but emerging from childhood, when that fiery dispensation was given: but its obligation was eternal and unchangeable. Providence therefore directed it to be rehearsed aloud in the ears of the generation follow-

ing, by the voice of a dying man, and to be by him left recorded in lasting characters, for the instruction of every future age. What was local and temporary of this dispensation has passed away: what was immutable and universal remains in all its force and importance; and shall continue, though heaven and earth were dissolved.

There is one law which Moses, in the prospect of death, presses with peculiar earnestness, as he knew it to be of special importance, and was but too well acquainted with the violent, the almost irresistible propensity of his auditory to infringe it—the law which prohibited and proscribed idolatry, that crime of complex enormity, against which the voice of the Eternal had uttered so many thunders, and which had brought on Israel so many grievous plagues. Nothing can be more energetical than the expressions he employs to expose the guilt and danger of this offence against God, nothing more dreadful than the judgments which he denounces against those who should contract it themselves, or presume to decoy others into that odious practice. He leaves them destitute of every thing like a pretext for following the nations in this impiety and absurdity, by calling to the recollection of those who were witnesses of the awful scene, and urging upon the consciences of those who were since born, "that there was no manner of similitude on "the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, "out of the midst of the fire," Deut. xiv. 15; that therefore to pretend to imitate what never was seen,

what cannot be seen, was at once ridiculous folly, and daring impious presumption. He solemnly enjoins that the tenderest and most respectable ties of nature should be disregarded in the case of those who should dare to set the example of violating the divine will in this respect; that the most intimate friends and nearest relations should become strange and hateful, if they presumed, by precept or by practice, to countenance this transgression. His own emphatic language will best express his meaning, and will show with what oppressive weight the subject lay upon his heart. "If thy brother, the "son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, "or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is "as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let "us go and serve other gods, (which thou hast not "known, thou, nor thy fathers;—namely, of the "gods of the people which are round about you, "nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the "one end of the earth even unto the other end of "the earth,) thou shalt not consent unto him, nor "hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity "him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt "thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill "him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put "him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the "people. And thou shalt stone him with stones "that he die; because he has sought to thrust thee "away from the Lord thy God, which brought "thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of "bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear,

"and shall do no more any such wickedness as this
"is, among you." Deut. xiii. 6—11. And again,
"If there be found among you within any of thy
"gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man
"or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the
"sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his
"covenant, and hath gone and served other gods,
"and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon,
"or any of the host of heaven, which I have not
"commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast
"heard of it, and inquired diligently, and behold,
"it be true, and the thing certain, that such
"abomination is wrought in Israel; then shalt
"thou bring forth that man or that woman (which
"have committed that wicked thing) unto thy gates,
"even that man, or that woman, and shall stone
"them with stones, till they die. At the mouth
"of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is
"worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth
"of one witness he shall not be put to death. The
"hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to
"put him to death, and afterward the hand
"the people: so thou shalt put the evil away
"among you." Deut. xvii. 2—7.

Did we not know, that "the heart is deceitful above
"all things, and desperately wicked:" Did we not know by fatal experience, that there is no absurdity too gross for men to adopt, no impiety too daring for them to commit, we should be astonished to think that the enactment of such laws should ever have been necessary; that having been enacted, there should be occasion to explain and enforce them by

so many awful sanctions, and that notwithstanding, in defiance of sanctions so formidable, any should have been found bold enough to transgress. ——

3dly. Moses labours in this, his last discourse, to establish the importance and necessity of knowing the divine law, and for that end of making it the subject of continual study and meditation. Every son of Israel must daily employ himself in the reading of it. The young must not plead exemption on account of his youth, nor the old plead the privilege of age. No closeness of application to secular business, no eagerness to prosecute a journey, no eminence of rank and station, no not the state and necessary duties of royalty itself, must pretend to claim a dispensation from the superior obligations of the law of the Most High. "These "words," says he, "which I command thee this "day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt "teach them diligently unto thy children, and "shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine "house, and when thou walkest by the way, and thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine "eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts "of thy house, and on thy gates." Deut. vi. 6—9. "And it shall be," speaking of the duty and office of the king who might hereafter be chosen to reign over God's people of Israel, "when he sitteth "upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall "write him a copy of this law in a book, out of "that which is before the priests the Levites. And

" it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all " the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the " Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, " and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be " not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn " not aside from the commandment, to the right " hand or to the left: to the end that he may pro- " long his days in his kingdom; he, and his chil- " dren in the midst of Israel." Deut. xvii. 18—20.

Some of the Rabbins accordingly pretend that Moses, with his own hand, transcribed thirteen copies of the Deuteronomy, one for each of the twelve tribes, and one to be laid up till the time of electing a king should arrive, to be given him to transcribe for his private and particular use.

4thly. Moses displays, with singular skill and address, the motives suggested from their peculiar circumstances, to make the law of God the object of their veneration, and the rule of their conduct; such as, first, These laws all issue from the love of God as their source, and converge towards it as their centre. Their great aim and end is, to engage us to love, with supreme affection, a God, who is supremely amiable and excellent. " And " now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require " of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in " all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the " Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all " thy soul, to keep the commandments of the " Lord, and his statutes which I command thee " this day for thy good? Behold the heaven, and

" the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the " earth also, with all that therein is. Only the " Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, " and he chose their seed after them, even you, above " all people, as it is this day." Deut. x. 12—15.

A second motive to obedience is, That the observance of the laws has a native tendency to procure and to preserve both public and private felicity; to make them respectable in the eyes of the nations, and thereby to ensure their tranquillity. " Behold, " I have taught you," says he, " statutes and judg- " ments, even as the Lord my God commanded " me, that ye should do so, in the land whither ye " go to possess it. Keep therefore, and do them, " for this is your wisdom, and your understanding in " the sight of the nations, who shall hear all these " statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a " wise and understanding people. For what nation " is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, " as the Lord our God is in all things that we call " upon him for? And what nation is there so great, " that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as " all this law which I set before you this day?" Deut. iv. 5—8.

Thirdly, The laws prescribed were imposed on them by a Being who had lavished miracles of mercy and goodness upon them and their fathers, and stood engaged to be a covenant God to their posterity to the latest generations. " For ask now " of the days that are past, which were before thee, " since the day that God created man upon the

"earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto "the other, whether there hath been any such "thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard "like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God "speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou "hast heard, and live? Or hath God essayed to go "and take him a nation from the midst of another "nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, "and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by "a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, accord- "ing to all that the Lord your God did for you in "Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, "that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; "there is none else besides him. Out of heaven he "made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct "thee; and upon earth he showed thee his great "fire, and thou heardest his words out of the midst "of the fire." Deut. iv. 32—36.

In a word, the laws of God are in themselves just and reasonable, plain and intelligible; accommodated to the nature and faculties of man, and they carry their own wisdom and utility engraven on their forehead. "For this commandment which I "command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, "neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou "shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, "and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do "it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou "shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and "bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?

"But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, "and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Deut. xxx. 11—14.

Moses, while he thus forcibly inculcates the motives of obedience, motives inspired and pressed by ever tender, by every awful consideration, finds himself under the unpleasant necessity of venting his heart in the keenest reproaches of that highly favoured but rebellious nation, for their perverseness and ingratitude; he deplores, in the bitterness of his soul, the instability and transitoriness of their good motions and purposes, their fatal proneness to revolt, the inconceivable rapidity of their vibrations from virtue to vice. That exquisitely beautiful and pathetic song with which he closes his tender expostulation, and which contains a striking abridgment of this whole address, consists in a great measure of just and severe, yet affectionate upbraidings and remonstrances upon their past conduct. "They have "corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of "his children; they are a perverse and crooked "generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O "foolish people and unwise? is not he thy Father "that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, "and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

Finally, this long, this instructive, this powerful farewell Sermon of the man of God, contains predictions clear, pointed, and strong, of the fearful judgments which should overtake that sinful people, and involve them and their posterity in utter destruction.—Many learned men, and not without the

greatest appearance of reason, have supposed that the spirit of prophecy by the mouth of Moses has foretold the final dissolution of the Jewish government, and exhibited their dispersed, reproachful, despised state to this day, until the time of their restoration to the divine favour, and of their re-establishment under the bond of the new and everlasting covenant, "a covenant established on better "promises, ordered in all things and sure." This idea seems justified by the following similar prophetic denunciations. "Of the Rock that begat "thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God "that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he "abhorred them, because of the provoking of his "sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will "hide my face from them, I will see what their end "shall be: for they are a very froward generation, "children in whom is no faith. They have moved "me to jealousy with that which is not God; they "have provoked me to anger with their vanities: "and I will move them to jealousy with those which "are not a people, I will provoke them to anger "with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in "my anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, "and shall consume the earth with her increase, "and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. "I will heap mischiefs upon them, I will spend "mine arrows upon them. They shall be burned "with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and "with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth

" of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents
" of the dust. The sword without, and terror
" within, shall destroy both the young man and the
" virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey
" hairs. I said I would scatter them into corners,
" I would make the remembrance of them to cease
" from among men." Deut. xxxii. 18—26. " Is
" not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up
" among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance,
" and recompense; their foot shall slide in due
" time: for the day of their calamity is at hand,
" and the things that shall come upon them make
" haste. For the Lord shall judge his people, and
" repent himself for his servants; when he seeth
" that their power is gone, and there is none shut
" up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their
" gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did
" eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine
" of their drink-offerings? Let them rise up, and
" help you, and be your protection. See now that
" I, even I am he, and there is no God with me:
" I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal:
" neither is there any that can deliver out of my
" hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say,
" I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword,
" and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will
" render vengeance to mine enemies, and will
" reward them that hate me. I will make mine
" arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall
" devour flesh; and that with the blood of the
" slain, and of the captives from the beginning of

"revenges upon the enemy." Deut. xxxii. 34—42. But the time to favour revolted, returning Israel, shall come at length; and together with them, the time to irradiate and deliver "the nations which "were sitting in darkness, and in the region and "shadow of death;" and the prophetic soul of Moses hastens forward to conclude the sacred song, with a grand chorus of harmonious voices, the voices of the ransomed of the Lord from every nation, every kindred and tribe, rejoicing together in one common salvation: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: "for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and "will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will "be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Deut. xxxii. 43.

How powerfully must all this have been impressed on the hearts of his audience by the sight of their venerable instructor, bending under the weight of "an hundred and twenty years:" exhausted by labours performed in the public service; no longer capable of "going out and coming in;" excluded by the inflexible decree of Heaven from any part or lot in the hand of promise; lying under the bitter sentence of impending death; his power and glory departing, and passing before his eyes to the hand of another! Why are not impressions of this sort more lasting, and more efficient? Shall "the right-"eous perish, and no man lay it to heart?" Is "the "merciful man taken away, and will none consider." "The righteous is taken away from the evil to "come." By his departure the earth is impoverished,

but heaven is enriched. Remove the veil and behold him "entering into peace;" "they shall rest in "their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." I hear a voice from Heaven saying, "Write, Bless-"ed are the dead which die in the Lord, from hence-"forth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest "from their labours; and their works do follow "them." Rev. xiv. 13.

LECTURE XXV.

DEUT. XXXI. 7, 8,

And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong, and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them: and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.

Is it not a presumption and a presentiment of immortality, that men naturally feel, design, and act as if they were immortal? In life we are in the midst of death; but it is equally true, that in the very jaws of death we live; and we fondly dream of living longer. Let the fatal moment come when it will, it comes to break in upon some scheme which we hoped to execute, to interrupt some work which we had begun, to disappoint some purpose which we had adopted. The warnings of dissolution which are sent to others, we seem to understand and feel better than those which are addressed to ourselves. One man is under sentence of condemnation, another labours under an incurable disease, one is daily exposing his life to jeopardy in the high places of the field, another is putting the knife of intemperance to his throat every hour: This man has completed his

seventieth year, and his neighbour has lived to see his children's children of the third and fourth generation.

These are all symptoms equally mortal, but no one takes the alarm to himself: every one is concerned for his neighbour's case, and flatters himself that his own is not quite so desperate. The wretch condemned to death soothes his soul to rest with the hope of a pardon, and laments the certain doom of his consumptive acquaintance: the declining man, with his foot in the grave, pities and prays for the unhappy creature who must suffer on Wednesday se'nnight. The soldier brave the death that is before his eyes in a thousand dreadful forms, in the presumption of victory! and the voluptuary thanks his kinder stars that he is likely to sleep in a sound skin. The man of seventy reckons upon fourscore, and ten years in prospect are a kind of eternity; and the grandsire amuses himself with the hope of seeing his grand-children settled in the world. Thus the pleasing illusion goes on; and men are dead indeed before they had any apprehension of dying.

The thoughtless and impious insensibility with which many advance to their latter end, is not more mournful and distressing, than the steadiness and composure of piety, and of habitual preparation, are pleasing and instructive. Blessed is the state of that man to whom life is not a burden, nor death a terror, who has "a desire to depart and to be "with Christ," but is willing "to continue in the "flesh," for the glory of God, and the good of men; who neither quits his station and duty in life in

sullen discontent, nor cleaves to the enjoyments of this world as one who has no hope beyond the grave.

But the cup of death, to the best of men, contains many bitter ingredients. Even to Moses it was far from being unmixed. To the natural horror of dying, was superadded the sense of divine displeasure; a sense of death as a particular punishment. It disappointed a hope long and fondly indulged in, the hope of being himself, and of seeing Israel, in possession of the promised and expected inheritance. And what was the bitterness of death to such a spirit as his? Moses died in the persuasion, and a melancholy one it was, that the people on whom he had bestowed so much labour, whom he had cherished with so much tender affection, whom he was so unremittingly anxious to conduct to wisdom, to virtue, and to happiness, would, after his death, swerve from the right path, provoke God to become their enemy, and thereby bring down certain destruction upon their own heads. "I know thy rebellion, and "thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with "you this day, ye have been rebellious against the "Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather "unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your "officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, "and call heaven and earth to record against them. "For I know that after my death ye will utterly "corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way "which I have commanded you: and evil will "befall you in the latter days; because ye will do "evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to

" anger through the work of your hands." Deut. xxxi. 27—29.

It is pleasant for a dying father to entertain the sweet hope that the children of his care, of his love, will remember the lessons which he taught them, will follow out his views, will support the credit of his name, will instruct and bless the world by the example of their wisdom, of their piety, of their virtues, though he is not to be the happy spectator of it: but ah, more cruel than the pangs of dissolving nature! the dreadful conviction of approaching folly and disorder; the sad prospect of discord among brethren; of profligacy and licentiousness, no longer restrained by parental gravity and authority: a fair inheritance, and an honourable name, ready to be dissipated by profusion, to be covered with shame, to be disfigured by vice, to be forfeited by treason. It is sweet to a dying pastor to contemplate the success of his ministry, the extent of his usefulness; to cheer his fainting heart with the thought of having been made the humble instrument of bringing many souls unto God, many sons unto glory: and with the well-grounded belief that his doctrine shall survive him; that though dead he shall continue to speak and to instruct. Sweet is the prospect of that day, when he shall present himself, and the joyful fruit of all his labours, to his father and his God, saying, " Behold, I and the children whom the " Lord hath given me, are for signs, and for wonders " in Israel; from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth " in mount Zion." Isaiah viii. 18. It was this

which caused the great "Author and finisher of our "faith" himself to rejoice in spirit, on the very eve of his departure out of the world. "Those that "thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them "is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture "might be fulfilled." John xvii. 12. But O how depressing to reflect, "I have laboured in vain, I "have spent my strength for nought, and in vain," Isaiah xlix. 4;—to look back upon a ministry not the "savour of life unto life, but of death unto "death," and to look forward to the dreadful progress of degeneracy and corruption, from evil to worse, till "sin, being finished, bringeth forth death;" to look forward to the still more dreadful day of doom, and to the prospect of appearing as an accuser and a witness against the despisers of that gospel, which would have saved their souls from death.

The faithful servants of God are not all equally successful, and even a Moses has the mortification of knowing assuredly, that all his pains and anxieties should prove ineffectual. The tide of corruption sometimes rushes down so impetuously, that no force can stem it; and Providence is often pleased to put honour upon the meaner and feebler instrument, that the glory may redound, not "to him "that willeth, nor to him that runneth, but to God, "who showeth mercy."—But every faithful minister, like Moses, has at least this consolation; "having "kept nothing back, but declared the whole counsel "of God, they have delivered their own souls;" they publish the truth of God, "whether men would

"hear or whether they would forbear;" and if they have not been so happy as to persuade, they have at least put to silence wicked and unreasonable men; if they have not prevailed to render them holy, they have at least rendered them inexcusable; if they have been unable to subdue the pride of the creature, they have displayed the holiness and justice of the Creator.

We find Moses taking refuge in this, when the dearer, sweeter hope was at an end—the hope of being the favoured, honoured minister of life and salvation. "I am fast approaching to the end of my career; "I have already passed the limits which God has "prescribed to the life of man. Six score of "years are fled away and gone, and these hairs "whitened by time, labour, and affliction, feelingly "inform me that my last moment is at hand, that "no more time remains but what is barely sufficient "to give you a few parting admonitions, to breathe "over you the blessing of a dying friend, and to "bid you a long farewell. After a laborious, anxious, "and painful ministry of more than forty years: "after being honoured of God to perform before "your eyes, and those of your fathers, a series of "miracles, which shall be the astonishment and "instruction of the whole world, till time ex-"pire, I was looking for the compensation of all "my troubles, the reward of all my labours, the "accomplishment of all my wishes, in your sincere "return to God, in your gratitude to your friend "and deliverer, in your fidelity and obedience to

"Jehovah, and in the prosperity and happiness "which must infallibly have flowed from them. The "paternal solicitude which I have felt, that ardent "love which emboldened me, at the hazard of my "own life, 'to stand in the breach' between you "and a holy and jealous God, to turn away his "wrath, lest he should destroy you; that fervour of "zeal which hurried me on to wish myself blotted "out of God's book, if the dearer name of Israel "might be permitted to continue written in it; all "my discourses, all my emotions, all my efforts; "my active days, my sleepless nights; these un-"ceasing sighs which I still breathe to Heaven in "your behalf, these last tears which a dying old "man sheds over a people still and ever dear to "him, and from whom to be torn asunder is the "death of deaths; these are the faithful and un-"doubted proofs of my affection for you, of my "unabated, inextinguishable zeal for your salvation. "But, alas, however earnestly I may desire it, I "dare not, cannot hope! I forsee your perfidious-"ness and rebellion; I know your perverseness and "ingratitude." "While I am yet alive with you "this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; "and how much more after my death?" Deut. xxxi. 27. "What then is left me, but the mingled and "strongly allayed satisfaction of reflecting that I am "innocent of your blood, that your salvation is in "your own hands, that if you perish, your blood "must be upon your own heads." "Gather unto "me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers,

"that I may speak these words in their ears, and "call heaven and earth to record against them." Deut. xxxi. 28.—"I call heaven and earth to re- "cord this day against you, that I have set before "you life and death, blessing and cursing; there- "fore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may "live." Chap. xxx. 19.

Having in terms such as these poured out the anguish of an overflowing heart, Moses addresses himself to his last earthly employment. The last exercise of his authority is to lay down all authority. The concluding act of his administration is to transfer the right of administration to another; and the legislator, leader, and commander expires, while the man yet lives. Imagination can hardly paint a more affecting scene. Hear the trumpet sounding the proclamation of a solemn assembly, of an holy convocation. Behold the thousands of Israel flocking together to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; every eye straining to catch a departing glance of him whom they were to behold no more, every ear eagerly attentive to drink in the last accents of that voice which the hand of death was about to silence for ever. Behold the venerable sage, in all the composure of unaffected piety, in all the dignity of wisdom, in all the respectability of age, in all the simplicity of a child, in all the serenity of a celestial spirit, in all the solemnity of death, advancing to his well known station, presenting to the people the man whom they were henceforward to acknowledge and obey as the ruler

appointed over them by Heaven. His eyes beam complacency, his tongue drops manna, as he conveys to his noble successor the plenitude of his power, the residue of his honour, a double portion of his spirit. Behold, he lifts up his hands and lays them upon the head of Joshua, with a thousand tender wishes that his burden might sit light upon him, that he might escape the pains which he himself had endured, and attain the felicity which was denied to him: with a thousand paternal exhortations to follow Providence, and fear nothing; to love Israel, to seek their good always; with a thousand fervent prayers for his prosperity and success. I see Joshua with modest reluctance shrinking back from a charge so weighty; desirous of being still a subject and a servant; accepting with regret honours of which Moses must be stripped; ready to cry out, as his master was taken away from him, "My father, my father, the chariot of "Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" 2 Kings ii. 12.—I see on every countenance a mixture of sorrow and resignation, of hope clouded with remorse and concern; they could now die for him whose life they had embittered by unkindness, levity, and ingratitude; they reproach themselves and one another, as having occasioned the death of the wisest and best of men; they cannot bear to think of surviving him.—But a voice more awful than that of man is heard, a glory more than human appears. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days "approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and

"present yourselves in the tabernacle of the con-
"gregation, that I may give him a charge. And
"Moses and Joshua went, and presented them-
"selves in the tabernacle of the congregation.
"And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a
"pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud
"stood over the door of the tabernacle." Deut. xxxi. 14, 15. What solemn moments to the whole congregation, were those which Moses and Joshua passed before the Lord, remote from the public eye! How solemn to the parties themselves! What is a charge from the mouth of a dying man, though that man be a Moses, compared to a charge from the mouth of Jehovah himself, by whom spirits are weighed, and to whom all the dread importance of eternity stands continually revealed? And this God, O my friends, is daily sounding a charge in every ear, "Occupy till I come."—"Arise ye and depart,
"for this is not your rest."—"Be sober, be vigilant;
"for your adversary the devil goeth about as a roar-
"ing lion, seeking whom he may devour."—"See
"that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
"redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

This secret conference being ended, they return to the people, and Moses publicly delivers to the Levites who bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, a copy of the law which he had transcribed with his own hand, to be laid up in the side of the ark, as a standing witness for God against a sinful people; and the business of this interesting and eventful day concludes with a public recital, from

the lips of Moses, of that tender and pathetic song which we have in the thirty-second chapter. This sacred song every Israelite was to commit to memory, to repeat frequently, and to teach it every man to his son. It was composed expressly by the command of God, and under his immediate inspiration. "Now therefore write ye this song "for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put "it in their mouths, that this song may be a wit-"ness for me against the children of Israel. Moses "therefore wrote this song the same day, and "taught it the children of Israel. And Moses "spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel "the words of this song until they were ended." Deut. xxxi. 19, 22, 30.

And a most wonderful composition it is, whether considered as the production of a lively, lofty, correct imagination; abounding with the boldest images, and conveying the noblest sentiments; adding all the graces of poetry to all the force of truth; as conveying the most useful and necessary moral and religious instruction, in a channel the most pleasing and attractive; as the address of a dying man, a dying father, a dying minister, to his friends, to his family, to his flock; abounding with the tenderest touches of nature, flowing immediately from the heart, and rushing with impetuous force to the lips; as the awful witness of the great God against a disobedient and gainsaying race; exhibiting to this hour the proof of the authenticity

of that record where it stands, of the truth and faithfulness, of the mercy and severity of the dread Jehovah, and of the certainty of the things wherein, as Christians, we have been instructed.

What can equal the boldness and sublimity of his exordium or introduction? How is the boasted eloquence of Greece and Rome left at an infinite distance behind! What a coldness in the address of Demosthenes and Cicero, compared to the fervour and elevation of the Israelitish Orator! "Ye men "of Athens." "Romans." "Conscript Fathers." If ever there was an audience that demanded respect from numbers, from importance, from situation; if ever there was a speaker prompted by duty, drawn by inclination, urged on by the spur of the occasion, Israel was that audience, Moses that speaker, on this ever memorable day. But the ardent soul of this heaven-taught Orator, with thousands upon thousands before his eyes, grasps, with a noble enthusiasm, an infinitely larger space than the plains of Moab, an audience infinitely more august than the thousands of Israel. "Give ear, "O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O "earth, the words of my mouth." Deut. xxxii. 1. This was seizing the attention at once; the solid globe, thus summoned, seems to give ear, the celestial spheres stand still to listen, angels hover on the wing to mark and record the last words of the departing prophet; what mortal ear then can be inattentive, what spirit careless? How sweetly calculated is the next sentence to compose the minds of his

hearers, roused and alarmed by the solemnity of his first address. The thunder of heaven seemed ready to burst upon their heads, after an invocation so awful; and though Moses alone spake, they were ready to die; but their fears are gently lulled to rest by the next word that he utters; he has only love in his heart, and honey upon his tongue. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain: my speech "shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the "tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Deut. xxxii. 2.—The final object of Moses being to warn, to admonish, and to reprove the perverse nation of whom he was taking leave, observe how skilfully he manages this difficult and delicate part of his task. To have come directly, and without preparation, to it, had been to give certain disgust and offence; for he had to deal with a moody, murmuring, irritable, discontented race; he therefore first fills their minds with great images, leads them to the contemplation of one object surpassingly grand; impresses it in various points of view upon their hearts and consciences, till, having lost themselves in its grandeur and immensity, they are prepared to bear, to approve, and to profit by the severe personal attack that follows: "Because I will publish "the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto "our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect; for "all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and "without iniquity, just and right is he." Deut. xxxii. 3, 4.

Having thus raised them above every mean, every selfish consideration; and placed them, and made them to feel themselves in the awful presence of the great God, "who is righteous in all his ways, and "holy in all his works," he descends abruptly, by a transition quick as lightning, to the censure which he had in view. But even then, he insinuates it, rather than charges it home; and speaks for some time, as of strangers, as of persons absent; and constitutes his auditors judges as it were of the case of others, not of their own; and by employing the address of the third person *they* and *their*, leaves them for a moment in uncertainty whom he could mean; and when he comes at length to address them in the second person, and to use the terms *thee* and *thy*, how delicately is the application qualified, by the introduction of every tender, every melting, every conciliating circumstance. "*They* "have corrupted themselves, *their* spot is not the "spot of his children: they are a perverse and "crooked generation.—Do *ye* thus requite the "Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he *thy* "Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made "thee, and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

He then goes into a recapitulation, partly historical, partly poetic, partly allegorical, at once to refresh the memory, to fire the imagination, and to exercise the invention, of the divine conduct towards them and their fathers, during many generations, that the conclusion which he was about to draw might fall with irresistible weight upon the

minds of all; that their base ingratitude and desperate folly might appear to themselves in a more odious light, when contrasted with the wisdom, goodness, and loving-kindness of the Lord. This occupies a considerable part of the chapter, from the seventh verse to the eighteenth, and a passage it is of exquisite force and beauty, as I am convinced you will also think, upon a careful perusal of it.

Constrained at last to denounce the righteous judgment of God, in order to approve his own fidelity, and if possible to prevent the ruin which he feared, he makes a display of the awful terrors of divine justice, sufficient to awaken the dead, and to confound the living; and, to increase its force and vehemence, Moses disappears, and God, the great God himself, comes forward, and in the first person utters the seven thunders of his wrath: "For a "fire is kindled in my anger, and shall burn unto "the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with "her increase, and set on fire the foundations of "the mountains. The sword without, and terror "within, shall destroy both the young man and the "virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey "hairs." Deut. xxxii. 22, 25.

The prophet, as it were, exhausted with this violent exertion, this formidable denunciation of vengeance, sinks into feeble, hopeless regret, and he reluctantly, despairingly deplores that misery which he can neither prevent nor avert. "They are a "nation void of counsel, neither is there any un-"derstanding in them. O that they were wise,

"that they understood this, that they would con-
"sider their latter end! How should one chase a
"thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight,
"except their rock had sold them, and the Lord
"had shut them up?" Deut. xxxii. 28—30.

Finally, a drawn of hope arises, and, rapt into future times, the sacred bard hails the coming day of deliverance, and exults in the prospect of the junction of the nations with the ancient people of God, in the participation of one and the same great salvation. "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people:
"for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and
"will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will
"be merciful unto his land and to his people." Deut. xxxii. 43.

Such is the structure, such the general outline of this inimitable piece of sacred poesy. If what has been said shall induce any one to study it more attentively, he will probably discover beauties which have escaped us; and the discovery will bring its own reward. How many fathers, as they afterwards rehearsed the words of this song in the ears of their children, and taught them the knowledge of it, would recollect with a mournful pleasure, that they saw and heard Moses himself recite it aloud, on the very last day of his life: and glory in relating how near him they stood, and in describing to a new generation, the form of his countenance, the deportment of his person, the tones of his voice!

That very day the warrant of death arrives. The

ministry of even a Moses is accomplished, and Providence hastens to convince the world, that, depart who will, the work of Heaven never can stand still. —We have seen him hitherto engaged in active labours for Israel and for God. We shall consider him yet once more, dismissed from his service, and concluding a life of eminent usefulness, by a death of charity, benediction, prescience, and resignation. May God impress on our minds a sense of our frailty, mortality, and accountableness, that we may redeem the time, fulfil the duties of our day and the design of our Creator, work out our salvation, and so die in peace, die in hope, whenever it shall please Him to call us away to the world of spirits. Amen.

LECTURE XXVI.

DEUT. XXXI. 1.

And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death.

SENECA, the celebrated Roman moralist, was preceptor to the emperor Nero, and had early and studiously trained him to virtue. But falling under the displeasure of that sanguinary tyrant, he was condemned to lose his life, by being blooded to death. The day of execution being arrived, he prepared to meet his fate with intrepidity, and to die as he had lived, in communicating useful knowledge. His pupils gathered round him, eager to mark his dying deportment, and provided with their writing tables, to record and preserve his last sayings. He was put into the warm bath, the arteries of his legs and arms were opened, and the purple fluid which sustains life was gradually drained off, while his sorrowing, admiring disciples caught the words as they fell from his parched lips.

But a greater then Seneca is here. We are this night gathered round a dying Moses, to listen to the last accents of that tongue which, one excepted, spake as never man spake. We behold him neither impetuously rushing forwards into the mortal con-

flict, nor timidly shrinking from it; but advancing with a steady majestic step to meet the King of Terrors. The interests of the God of Israel, and of the Israel of God, had employed his thoughts all his life long; and, blended in one, they glow in and expand his heart to his latest moment. He was speedily to cease from every earthly care, to cease from serving Israel any longer, to be occupied with God only; but even in death he is contriving the means of doing good to that dearly beloved, that fondly cherished people. As if his heart had relented at the harshness of some of the expressions which fidelity and a sense of duty had extorted from him; like one unwilling to part with them under any semblance of unkindness or displeasure, he again assumes the tender father, tunes his tongue to the law of kindness, buries all resentment of the past, and every thing unpleasant in the prospects of futurity, in the gentleness and benevolence of friends who were separating to meet no more.

The soul that is at peace with God desires to be at peace with all men: and it is meet that dying breath should be sweetened with mercy, forgiveness, and love. Slowly and solemnly as Moses advanced to meet his latter end, would we accompany his steps in his last progress through the beloved tents of Israel, and in his ascent to the hill, from whence he never should return. With a heart like his, overflowing with charity to the whole church of God, and filled with sentiments of peculiar affection towards you, we behold the approach

of that hour which is to disperse us, perhaps too for ever. With a blessing on our lips, like him, and O that his God and ours may make it effectual, we are hastening to bid you farewell.

The words which I have read are the beginning of the 54th and last *parasha*, or great section of the law, into which the whole books of Moses were subdivided, for the conveniency of publicly reading them, in conjunction with the prophets, every sabbath-day; a custom which prevailed in the Jewish church down to the times of our Saviour and of his apostles, as we learn from several passages of the gospel history. Thus Christ himself, "when "he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought "up, as his custom was, went into the synagogue "on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. "And there was delivered unto him the book of "the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the "book, he found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he "hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the "poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, "to preach deliverance to the captives, and recover-"ing of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them "that are bruised: to preach the acceptable year "of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he "gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue "were fastened on him. And he began to say "unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in "your ears." Luke iv. 16—21. Thus James,

in determining the question in the Synod of Jerusalem, concerning the necessity of circumcision, says, "Moses of old time hath in every city them "that preach him, being read in the synagogues "every sabbath-day." Acts xv. 21. And Paul and Barnabas, when "they came to Antioch, in "Pisidia, went into the synagogue on the sabbath-"day, and sat down. And after the reading of "the law and the prophets, the rulers of the syna-"gogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and bre-"thren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the "people, say on." Acts xiii. 14, 15.

The first section begins with the opening of the book of Genesis, and goes up to the ninth verse of the sixth chapter, and is called *Bereshit*, the first word in the Hebrew Bible. The second begins at these words in the sixth chapter: "These are the "generations of Noah:" and is thence called *Noah*, and it ends at the beginning of chapter twelfth, which sets out with the call of Abraham, and is therefore styled the section *Lec Leca*, i. e. "get "thee out," and so of the rest. To bring the whole fifty-four divisions within the compass of the year, they joined two of the shortest into one reading. Thus the whole constitution, both as to civil and sacred things, was publicly rehearsed once every year; so that it was impossible for any decent Israelite to be grossly ignorant of either the laws, the history, or the religion of his country.

The first public lecture was on the sabbath that followed the Feast of Tabernacles, and the rest

went on till the anniversary of that feast returned. I have mentioned these circumstances for several reasons. I am not ill-pleased to have so respectable an example for attempting a mode of instruction, which reason and experience convince us to be at once the most pleasant and the most useful. I honour human learning, I admire great talents, I am enchanted with eloquence; but I am persuaded, if *saving* knowledge be communicated, it is by the quick and powerful energy of God's own word coming, not with the allurements of man's wisdom, "but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power." This leads us to express a wonder why the reading of the Scriptures, by large portions at a time, is not universally practised in Christian congregations. Surely there must be a better reason for neglecting it, than that it is enjoined by the canons of the Church, and is in general practice in the Establishment. The last reason which I have at present to render for this digression, if it be thought one, is its affording me an opportunity of earnestly recommending to masters and mistresses of families, the regular and progressive use of the Scriptures, within the precincts of their private households, for the instruction of their children and servants. I am well aware, that from a diffidence and humility not too severely to be blamed, some younger heads of families are tempted to neglect family worship altogether, because some parts of it they cannot, dare not, undertake; that, for example, of addressing God in prayer, as the mouth of their domestic little

church. Let them begin with reading aloud the word of God: for this surely they have courage sufficient. They will be brought to pray insensibly, they will soon cease to be ashamed of that which is their highest honour and most glorious privilege. We now return.

The idea which I have formed to myself of "this "blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death," Deut. xxxiii. 1; how justly, I presume not to say, is this: Moses, having received his final summons to prepare for death, feels himself prompted at once by affection and the spirit of prophecy, to take a particular leave of every tribe, to bestow a several benediction on every one by name, and to prepare them one by one for the conquest of their inheritance, by giving them prophetically a general notion of their future condition, as constituent parts of the commonwealth of Israel, and of the particular lot to be assigned to each, with its corresponding advantages and pursuits. For this purpose, I suppose him making a solemn progress through the whole host, going from tribe to tribe, from tent to tent, and pouring out his soul, as a dying parent, in blessings upon his offspring, according to their different characters and conditions. O how unlike those visits of selfishness, pride, ambition, and strife, which the candidates for fame, place, and power, are from time to time making through a corrupted land! Let us attend his progress, and mark what he says.

We find Moses still beginning, proceeding, concluding with God. He sets out on this last awful circuit with a mind full of the glorious majesty of the great Jehovah. He calls to his own remembrance, and he impresses the image of it on the souls of the whole people, that great and dreadful day "when the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up "from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount "Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: "from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Deut. xxxiii. 2.—The particular mention of Seir and Paran in this exordium, has given birth to a poor conceit in the Jerusalem Targum, to this purpose: "that God first offered his law, and the protection "which it afforded, to the Idumeans, the inhabi-"tants of mount Seir, and the posterity of Esau, "but that they rejected it, because it contained "this precept, 'thou shalt not kill.' That after-"wards it was tendered to the Ishmaelites, or inhabi-"tants of mount Paran, who rejected it, because it "said, 'thou shalt not steal.' That then it was "proposed to the posterity of Jacob, who imme-"diately replied, 'all that the Lord hath com-"manded will we do, and be obedient.'" Without having recourse to a construction so unsupported, forced, and unnatural, the words of Moses, at the first glance, convey to us an image inconceivably grand and sublime, but at the same time, simple, natural, and obvious. Israel was encamped in the plains of Moab, with Jordan and the fertile fields of Canaan directly in view: the prospect on the south

terminated by the lofty mountains of Teman or Seir; and on the north by mount Paran, while Sinai raised its awful head, and buried it in the clouds of heaven from behind. Moses accordingly represents, in the bold imagery of oriental poetry, the glory of the Lord arising like the sun in the east, from behind the top of Sinai, and instantly darting his light from hill to hill, and increasing in lustre till the whole expanse of heaven is filled with it. The prophet Habakkuk has evidently caught the same celestial fire, and is filled with the same animating object, when he exclaims, "God came from Te-"man, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was "full of his praise. And his brightness was as the "light; he had horns coming out of his hand, and "there was the hiding of his power. Before him "went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth "at his feet. He stood and measured the earth: "he beheld, and drove asunder the nations, and "the everlasting mountains were scattered, the per-"petual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting." Habakkuk iii. 3—6.

But what are mountains and hills, and their inhabitants? Moses represents the great God as arising in unclouded majesty amidst ten thousand of his holy ones. "Angels, his ministers, that excel "in strength," the least of whom "could wield "these elements." His red right hand is extended, presenting to the astonished beholder a law, a fiery law, a fire that purifies, a fire that consumes. But

the terror of this dreadful appearance is instantly lost, in a display of the grace and mercy which prompted this splendid visit. "Yea, he loved the "people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they "sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of "thy words." Deut. xxxiii. 3. Here we behold the legislator lost in the friend, and instead of distractedly, despairingly calling upon "the moun-"tains to fall upon us, and the hills to cover us," we sit down in tranquillity at the feet of our gracious teacher, and every one for himself listens to the language of love.

Moses first approaches the tents of the tribe of Reuben, and having introduced himself by those solemn striking words, he proceeds to his particular salutation of that tribe, "Let Reuben live and "not die; and let not his men be few." Deut. xxxiii. 6. Concerning the head of that tribe, his dying father had prophetically denounced, "Unstable "as water, thou shalt not excel;" but the blessing of Moses seems to wipe the blot out of the scutcheon, and Reuben is restored to his rank in Israel again. Reuben alone, of the sons of Jacob, pitied Joseph in his distress, and contrived the means of restoring him to his father again. This redeems him and his family from infamy and destruction, and we are disposed to drown the memory of his lewdness, in respect for his tenderness and humanity.

Who stands next on the roll of Jacob's sons? To whom is the second salutation due? Simeon.—But

ah! We see the curse of a dying father upon him; we see Moses passing by his door without bidding him God speed; we see the blood of the Shechemites, the innocent, credulous Shechemites, lying with an oppressive weight upon his seed; we see a tribe of fifty-nine thousand three hundred in the wilderness of Sinai, melted down and reduced to twenty-two thousand two hundred in the plains of Moab; we see no judge or magistrate in future times springing from his loins; we see him "divided in "Jacob, and scattered in Israel," and in all this we see the vengeance of a righteous God pursuing a cool and deliberate murderer to utter ruin, and we think of the more dreadful weight of that blood which a hard-hearted race imprecated upon themselves and upon their children; and which the shame and sufferings of one thousand eight hundred years have not yet expiated. What must the sons of Simeon have felt when their dying leader passed them by, without vouchsafing them a word; to find themselves alone unblessed of all the children of their father's house! Speak to me, O merciful Father, in whatever language thou wilt: chide, upbraid, chastise me, but O pass me not in silent neglect: cease not to reprove me; say not, "Let him alone."

The dying prophet passes next to the standard of the tribe of Judah.—Judah, destined to empire, increase, and strength; Judah, the father of many princes; the root and offspring of David. "And "this is the blessing of Judah: and he said,

"Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah; and bring him "unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for "him, and be thou an help to him from his "enemies." Deut. xxxiii. 7. These words of Moses send us again to the dying bed of Jacob, and we find both patriarchs holding the same idea concerning this prerogative tribe, strength invincible, triumph over every foe, supreme authority; and we find ourselves led still farther back, to Leah his mother, in the hour of childbirth, bestowing on this her fourth son a name expressive of her personal exultation and triumph, "Judah, praise "the Lord," and thence we rise to the infinitely glorious design of Providence which has swallowed up the transient, private feeling of the individual in the great and comprehensive view of general compassion and favour, and in the source of universal gratitude and praise; and, borne on the wings of inspiration, we rise with the beloved disciple in vision, to contemplate the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, prevailing to open the sealed book in the right hand of him that sits on the throne, and loosing the seven seals thereof. "And I beheld, "and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the "four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood "a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns, "and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of "God, sent forth into all the earth." "And he "came and took the book out of the right hand of "him that sat upon the throne. And when he had "taken the book, the four beasts, and four and

" twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having " every one of them harps, and golden phials full " of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And " they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy " to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: " for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to " God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and " tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made " us unto our God, kings and priests: and we shall " reign on the earth." Rev. v. 7—10.

Thus we behold all that is great and magnificent among men, bringing its glory and honour, and laying it at the feet of Jesus; and all that is past and present lost in the immensity and importance of that which is to come.

He now approaches the priestly tribe of Levi, his kinsmen and friends according to the flesh, and copiously bestows his valedictory benediction upon them, in these remarkable words: " Let thy Thum- " mim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom " thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou " didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto " his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him, " neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew " his own children; for they have observed thy word " and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob " thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall " put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice " upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and " accept the work of his hands: smite through the

"loins of them that rise against him, and of them "that hate him, that they rise not again." Deut. xxxiii. 8—11.

Levi had been a partaker with Simeon, in shedding the blood of the Shechemites, and had fallen under the same condemnation; but their spirit and zeal in expiating the guilt of the golden calf by the blood of its idolatrous worshippers, have removed the stain, and restored their own blood again; and the dreadful sentence, "I will divide them in "Jacob, and scatter them in Israel," as far as it affects them, is from a curse turned into a blessing. They are divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, but it is honourably to themselves and usefully to others; as the priests of the Lord, and the instructors of the people. Why may we not suppose Eleazar the high priest, arrayed in his sacerdotal vestments, standing at the head of his tribe to receive the salutation of Moses, and that the appearance of this sacred officer in the splendour of his pontifical garb, might suggest to Moses some of the particulars contained in this blessing, especially the beginning of it? "Let thy Thummim and thy "Urim be with the holy one." "Thy Thummim "and thy Urim," that is, being interpreted, "thy "perfections and thy lights." They were mysteries, of which we have spoken in a former lecture, put into the high priest's breast-plate, and were designed apparently to signify the graces and office of the priesthood, which was committed to Aaron and to his seed, till Christ came, who should obtain and exer-

cise an everlasting and unchangeable priesthood, after a more excellent order than that of Aaron.

According to the different ideas of the mystery of the Urim and Thummim, and the connexion here established between them and the temptation at Massah and the strife at Meribah, various turns and interpretations have been given to the words of Moses.

1. They are supposed to be addressed to God himself, and the sense to run thus: "Thy Thum-"min and thy Urim" (O God) be with the man, thy gracious saint (Aaron and his seed), whom thou temptedst with temptation, or contendedst with (for his sin) at the waters of Meribah, of which we have the history. Num. xx. "And the Lord spake "unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me "not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of "Israel; therefore ye shall not bring this congrega-"tion into the land which I have given them. This "is the water of Meribah, because the children of "Israel strove with the Lord; and he was sanctified "in them." Numbers xx. 12, 13.

Or, 2dly, They may be addressed to the whole tribe, and with this sense, Thy Thummim and thy Urim (O Levi) be with Aaron and his sons! the holy, chosen, anointed one of thy gracious God, whom thou, in common with the rest of Israel, temptedst in Massah and in the strife at Meribah.

Or, 3dly, Understanding by the "holy one," the Christ of God, this will be the sense, Thy Thummin and thy Urim (O Levi) is with (or belongs to)

the man thy holy one, (Messiah the Christ,) the holy one of God, whom thou temptedst at Massah, and didst strive with at Meribah. In this last interpretation, the weakness, insufficiency, imperfection, and transitoriness of the Levitical priesthood are implied: it retained not long the Urim and Thummim, but lost them in the Babylonish captivity, as we find from Ezra, chap. ii. ver. 63. "And the "Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not "eat of the most holy things till there stood up a "priest with Urim and with Thummim." And it does not appear that they ever had them more, until by Jesus Christ, our High Priest after the order of Aaron, they were restored in the "light "and truth" of the Gospel.

The blessing upon Levi thus proceeds: "Who "said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not "seen him, neither did he acknowledge his bre-"thren, nor knew his own children: for they have "observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." Deut. xxxiii. 9. This is generally understood to express the devotedness of that tribe to the worship of God, which laid them under a necessity of abstractedness from the world, and constrained them, when employed in the order of their course, to suppress all appearance of secular concern, such as mourning for the dead, and the like. Thus, when "Nadab and Abihu perished by fire before "the Lord," Aaron and his two surviving sons were expressly forbid to show any signs of sorrow. "Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes,

"lest ye die." "And Aaron held his peace." The words are by many interpreters supposed particularly to refer to the judgment executed through the zeal of this tribe on their offending brethren in the matter of the golden calf, which is thus described: "And Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and "said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come "unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered "themselves together unto him. And he said unto "them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put "every man his sword by his side, and go in and "out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and "slay every man his brother, and every man his "companion, and every man his neighbour. And "the children of Levi did according to the word "of Moses: and there fell of the people that day "about three thousand men. For Moses had said, "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even "every man upon his son, and upon his brother; "that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." Exodus xxxii. 26—29. And it may perhaps be intended as a warning to the Christian priesthood, that though their profession does not call them wholly to renounce the world, to restrain the workings of natural affection, and cease to be men, yet it does call them to a higher degree of heavenly-mindedness, to stricter self-government, to a greater superiority to worldly attachments and pursuits: to have no respect of persons in dispensing the bread of life, to "know no man after the flesh," to sit looser than others to the things of time.

The next article of their prophet's parting blessing describes their glorious privileges: "They shall "teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: "they shall put incense before thee, and whole "burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar." The priests' lips shall keep knowledge.

This then is the first duty of their office: to "teach Jacob the judgments of God, and Israel "his law." Theirs was to be the distinguished honour of training up every succeeding generation as it arose, in the knowledge of the God of their fathers, in what he had done for them, and in what he required of them; of pointing out and inculcating upon them the connexion between their privileges and their duties, their safety and their obedience, their security and their fidelity. They were still to set before the people "good and evil, the blessing "and the curse," the promises which allured to the one, the threatenings which deterred from the other. They were under the necessity, of consequence, of studying the law of God and the history of his providence themselves, in order to the instruction of others: and to exhibit a decent conformity, in their own deportment, to what was written, as a pattern to their fellow-citizens. A task at once painful, dangerous, and honourable.

The second duty of their station was, "to put "incense before God." That sacred perfume was emblematical of the prayers, the praises, and thanksgiving of Israel: and on Levi was conferred the glorious privilege of standing between God and the

people, of conveying from Him to them the dictates of his will, the promises of his grace, the assurance of his favour and protection; and, as the mouth of the people, to re-convey to God the effusions of their gratitude, the acknowledgment of their submission and dependence; their entire confidence in the truth and faithfulness of God, their entire hope in his mercy. These the sons of Levi were to present before the Lord as incense; and with this sacrifice of praise from the people, the incense of their own grateful acknowledgments would naturally mingle and ascend.

Finally, the blessing pronounced on this distinguished tribe imposed on them the office of offering up "whole burnt-sacrifice upon the altar of God." They not only stood between a gracious God and an indebted people; but a holy and offended God, and a frail, offending people. Hence the necessity of "burnt-sacrifice," hence the idea of atonement, hence the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, hence the institution of the Levitical priesthood—"the shadow of good things to come." And thus the daily sacrifice, the intercession of the house of Aaron, and the united characters of teacher and priest, in the same person, prefigured and pointed out, "the Lamb of God, who taketh "away the sin of the world;"—"The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ "Jesus:—The great Teacher sent from God, who "spake as never man spake:"—"God's beloved "Son, in whom he is well pleased."

The conclusion of the benediction is prophetic, and descriptive of their reward, their inheritance, and security. "Bless, Lord, his substance, and "accept the work of his hands: smite through the "loins of them that rise against him, and of them "that hate him, that they rise not again." Deut. xxxiii. 11. This is the perfection of creature happiness; ample provision, with the blessing of the Almighty poured down and resting upon it—works and labours of love cheerfully performed and graciously accepted—every foe subdued, and every ground of fear for ever removed. Here may we not apply to this tribe in particular, what Moses, in the close, applies to Israel in general? "Happy art thou, O "*Levi:* who is like unto thee, O people saved by "the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the "sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall "be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread "upon their high places." Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Such were the functions, the privileges, the honours, and the emoluments of the Levitical priesthood. They suggest to the Christian ministry the vigilance, diligence, fidelity, and zeal which become those "who must give account"—the necessity laid upon them "to declare the whole counsel of "God"—the assured support on which they may depend, while they conscientiously aim at doing their duty—the "glorious recompense of reward," which is laid up for "the good and faithful ser-"vant," in that day "when they that be wise shall "shine as the brightness of the firmament; and

" they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars " for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3. May the power of such motives be felt and understood by all who bear the sacred and important office, that by them they may be rendered " steadfast, unmoveable, " always abounding in the work of the Lord, for- " asmuch as they know that their labour is not in " vain in the Lord."

The farther progress of Moses through the remaining tribes of Israel, shall be the subject of the next Lecture.

LECTURE XXVII.

DEUT. XXXI. 1.

And this is the blessing wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death.

THE rich man in hell is represented, Luke xvi. 27, 28, as entertaining the fond belief, that the return of one from the dead would certainly be effectual to the conviction and amendment of a thoughtless and impenitent generation. And men in general are disposed to ascribe an infallible efficacy to means fabricated in their own imagination, while at the same time they wilfully neglect to use those which God has appointed, whose operation is undoubted, and of which they are in the entire possession. The man of one talent lays it up in a napkin and buries it, because he cannot with one do the work of five or ten. One man is an infidel, because the miraculous powers which once accompanied the preaching of the Gospel accompany it no more; another affects to despise all external evidence whatever, and looks at Christianity with a suspicious eye, because it called in miracles and prophecy to confirm and support it. The Jews rejected the counsel of God against themselves, saying, "He casteth out devils, by Beelzebub the

" prince of the devils." Matt. xii. 24. The Greeks accounted the doctrine of the cross foolishness, because it belied their vain philosophy, and exposed their worldly spirit.

Were it possible for the human race to assemble in one general council, in order to settle a mode of religion which would suit the whole, they would speedily be constrained to separate without coming to any specific, decisive agreement on a point so essential; for pride and selfishness, and the spirit of contradiction, would instantly raise opposition, and the most salutary idea would be rejected by one party, for no better reason than that it was adopted by another. Were the rich man to come from the dead, commissioned " to tell the secrets of his " prison-house:" were Lazarus permitted to leave the bosom of Abraham, in order to display to men the glories of paradise; what could they say, that has not been repeated a thousand and a thousand times? The one would be esteemed by a busy, careless, unbelieving world, a poor moping melancholy wretch, fit for a place in Bedlam; the other would be called an enthusiastic visionary; and they might, for aught the world cared, return to the places from whence they came, and report that mankind was better employed than to listen to their dreams; that it was election time; that the term was coming on; that a packet was expected, or that a fleet had arrived.

Men amuse themselves with crying up the advantages of those who saw Christ going about doing

good, "healing all manner of sickness among the "people;" of those who heard Paul preach, and the like; but the faithful and true witness assures us, that Jesus frequently wrought miracles, and Paul preached in vain. Capernaum, Bethsaida, Jerusalem, remained full of unbelievers; and apostolic eloquence was called babbling by one; it made another to shake under a temporary fit of trembling, and only "almost persuaded" a third to be a Christian.

The decision of father Abraham then, in the passage already referred to, is founded in truth and experience: "If they hear not Moses and the pro-"phets, neither will they be persuaded though one "rose from the dead." Luke xvi. 31. Moses spake upon the brink of the grave, and was forgotten the moment his voice ceased.—God himself thundered from Sinai, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any "graven image, or any likeness of any thing, that "is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, "or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt "not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto "the third and fourth generation of them that hate "me," Exod. xx. 4, 5; and within "a little month" we see all Israel dancing round a golden calf, and saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought "thee up out of the land of Egypt." Exod. xxxii. 4. The Son of Man came down from Heaven, disclosed the secrets of the Eternal mind, descended

into the grave, returned to the earth, and showed himself openly. But did infidelity stop her mouth? No. "Some of the watch came into the city, and "showed unto the chief priests all the things that "were done. And when they were assembled with "the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large "money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his dis- "ciples came by night, and stole him away while "we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, "we will persuade him, and secure you. So they "took the money, and did as they were taught: "and this saying is commonly reported among the "Jews until this day." Matt. xxviii. 11—15.

The circumstances in which Moses took his last long farewell of his beloved charge were such, one would think, as to leave a lasting and indelible impression on the minds of his hearers; but the sequel shows us that the impressions of gratitude, sympathy, sorrow, and regret, are "as the morning "cloud and the early dew, which passeth away."

Having finished his course, and the time of his departure drawing nigh, we behold the man of God making his final progress through the camp of Israel; going from tribe to tribe, from standard to standard, saluting every one by his name, and pronouncing over him the cordial benediction of a dying friend. We have accompanied him from Reuben to Judah, and from Judah to Levi, and have heard his dying breath confirm the promise of royal dignity to the one, and entail the sacred dignity of the priesthood upon the other. They have

heard his last adieu. Their eyes shall behold him no more. He has now arrived at the encampment of Benjamin.—Benjamin the son of his mother's sorrow, the son of his father's right hand: the last of Israel in the course of nature, not the least in the affection of his sole surviving parent, nor in importance as one of the heads of the holy commonwealth. Benjamin, destined of Providence to support the throne of David, when shaken by the revolt of ten tribes. And what is the blessing of Benjamin? "Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord "shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall "cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell "between his shoulders." Deut. xxxiii. 12.

The course in which Moses proceeded in pronouncing the blessing, is supposed by some to be prophetically governed, according to the geographical description of Canaan, and to the order and course in which each portion was allotted to every several tribe. Benjamin, therefore, is addressed before his elder brother Joseph, because the lot of his inheritance was to lie between the lots of Judah and Joseph, and to border upon each, and this, by consulting the book of Joshua, xviii. 11, you will find was the case. And we shall afterwards find many circumstances concurring to give a distinction and a consequence to Benjamin, among the tribes of Israel. Jebus, that is, Jerusalem, fell to them. Of course, the seat of empire and of religion, in process of time, was fixed in the midst of them. Imperial Judah administered the affairs of govern-

ment in a city belonging to another tribe, and from the day that the temple was built, not only the priests the sons of Levi were called to minister in the order of their course, within the confines of their brother Benjamin; but all the males of all the tribes were obliged to appear before the Lord in the same place, at the three great stated festivals every year, besides the innumerable occasional visits made to the metropolis of the whole country, as to the centre of civil government and of religious worship.

On comparing the arrangement of the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high priest, with that of the same number and quality of gems which are represented as constituting the foundation of the New Jerusalem, we find the *jasper* standing last, with the name of Benjamin engraved upon it in the breast-plate; but it is the first in the foundation of the holy city, which is the type of the Christian church.

With the aid of Benjamin alone, Judah was enabled to support an independent sovereignty, which considerably outlasted the kingdom of the ten tribes. This, and various other circumstances in the future history and condition of this tribe, explain the blessing of Moses, which describes him as "the beloved of the Lord," tenderly watched over and protected of Jehovah, as the progenitor of this tribe according to the flesh was carefully kept at home, and affectionately cherished by his father Jacob; as "dwelling in safety by him," that

is, in confidence, in security, there being "none "to make him afraid," to whom God was so nigh. There is apparently an allusion to this, and a beautiful one, in the 48th Psalm, from verse 1 to 5; "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in "the city of our God, in the mountain of his holi- "ness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the "whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the "north, the city of the great king. God is known "in her palaces for a refuge. For lo, the kings "were assembled, they passed by together. They "saw it, and so they marvelled; they were trou- "bled, and hasted away."—"The Lord shall "cover him," adds Moses, "all day long."—"*Cover*." The Seventy translate the word by one that signifies "to overshadow." The Chaldean paraphrase is, "he shall be a shield over him;" it denotes a security, covering, or protection from evil; and the evangelical prophet, Isaiah, beautifully expands the thought in these remarkable words, descriptive of, and applied to the same object: "And the Lord will create upon every dwell- "ing place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, "a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a "flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory "shall be a defence. And there shall be a taber- "nacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, "and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from "storm and from rain." Isaiah iv. 5, 6.—"All "day long," or "every day;" that is, continually. "And he shall dwell between his shoulders;" like

the head, the glory of the natural body, rearing itself majestically between, and upon "the shoul-"ders," the strength and power of the man.—This was the blessing of Benjamin.

Moses seems now to turn to a peculiarly favourite object; he seems to rise above himself, the spirit of dying Jacob appears to revive in him. As if the name of Joseph were the fire put to the train, he kindles, he blazens, he lightens. As if the name of Joseph were the signal to be at once great and sublime, tender and pathetic, approaching his standard, recollecting the history and character of their illustrious progenitor, contemplating their rising greatness and prosperity, he thus breaks out in strains loftier than bard ever sung: "Blessed of the "Lord be his land, for the precious things of hea-"ven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth "beneath; and for the precious fruits brought forth "by the sun, and for the precious things put forth "by the moon, and for the chief things of the an-"cient mountains, and for the precious things of "the lasting hills. And for the precious things of "the earth, and the fulness thereof; and for the "good-will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the "blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon "the top of the head of him that was separated from "his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his "bullock, and his horns are like the horns of uni-"corns: with them he shall push the people toge-"ther to the ends of the earth: and they are the

"ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thou-
"sands of Manasseh." Deut. xxxiii. 13—17. Isaac had but two sons, and found himself exhausted when he had bestowed a blessing upon one of them; Jacob has twelve sons, and yet he has a several blessing for each son. Israel at the death of Moses was increased to an innumerable multitude, and yet there are blessings enough and to spare, and yet there is room. And when God shall have brought back the captivity of Jacob, when God shall have brought his ancient people within the bond of the gospel covenant, together with the fulness of the Gentile nations, the tide of benediction shall rise, and rise, and swell to the number and necessity of all the partakers. Thus the sacred stream which Ezekiel saw in vision, issuing from the threshold of the house, was at first but a little bubbling fountain; but after a progress of a thousand cubits, became "a brook of water up to the ancles;" after a thousand more it had risen to the height of the loins; and after a thousand more, "the waters were risen, "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed "over."

To go into a detail of the particulars contained in the blessing of Joseph, instead of occupying the space of an evening, might furnish employment for years. I feel myself perfectly at a loss how to represent it to your view; in what light first to consider it, or what particular part of it to bring forward—whether I should at all presume to attempt in illustration of it, or leave it altogether to your

private meditation. -- Never surely in the same quantity of words, were exhibited such a multitude and variety of beautiful, striking, and sublime ideas. When Joseph is to be blessed, the prophet for him arrays Nature in her gayest, richest attire: for him he digs into the mine, and cleaves the flinty rock, and pours jewels and gold at his feet. "For him "the roses blow, for him distils the dew." For him golden harvests wave in the fragrant air, and rivers of milk and oil flow down the mountains and through the valleys. For him the swelling clusters of the vine assume a purple hue, the meadows clothe themselves with verdure, and the cedars of God lift their proud heads to the skies; the sun and moon and eleven stars do obeisance to him. Nature is then animated as it were to do him honour, to give him protection, to extend his empire, to minister to his delight. The grove becomes vocal, the bullock treads stately through the plain, the unicorn pushes with the horn, nations of enemies melt before him, the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh cultivate their fertile peaceful fields, beautify their pleasant villages, fortify their magnificent cities.

With inexhausted strength, with resistless force, the prophet then hurries us out of the sphere of Nature, bears us to the awful regions of religion, places our feet on holy ground. It is the blessing of Joseph, and we feel ourselves transported to the wilderness of Horeb; we behold the bush on fire, we hear the voice of God himself from the midst of the flame.

But though it speaks from the midst of fire, to the house of Joseph it speaks nothing but love, it is a fire that consumes not, it breathes "good will." Moses having thus as a poet touched every power of imagination, conducted us from one scene of delight to another, and made all Eden rise to view; having as a prophet unveiled the world of spirits to our astonished sight, and borne us on eagle's wings up to the throne of God, gently deviates into his character of orator and historian, and sweetly re-descends with us into the field of Zoan, and calls forth a tender sigh from our bosom over the hapless youth who was torn from his father's embrace, and sold into slavery. "Let the blessing come upon the "head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of "him that was separated from his brethren." Deut. xxxiii. 16. But "who is this that darkeneth coun-"sel by words without knowledge?" Job xxxiii. 2. Moses, my friends, seems reluctant to break off his subject, he is loth to bid Joseph farewell; as he goes he "casts a longing, lingering look behind," and sighs out another blessing, after his tongue is silent. When Jacob speaks to Joseph, and Moses writes and speaks of him, neither of them know how to leave off.

We soon find the prediction of Moses verified, and the parting benediction falling down, according to the letter of it, in copious showers upon the head of Joseph. For though half the tribe of Manasseh obtained an inheritance beyond Jordan, and a fair and spacious lot had fallen to the rest of the sons of

Joseph in Canaan, they are soon under the necessity of applying to Joshua for an additional lot to enlarge their border. "And the children of Joseph "spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given "me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing "I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath "blessed me hitherto? And Joshua answered "them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to "the wood-country, and cut down for thyself there "in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if "mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the "children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for "us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land "of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who "are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are "of the valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spake unto "the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to "Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and "hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot "only. But the mountain shall be thine; for it is "a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the out-"goings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive "out the Canaanites, though they have iron cha-"riots, and though they be strong." Joshua xvii. 14—18.

The Jewish writers take delight in expatiating upon the beauty and fruitfulness of the providentially allotted portion of this tribe. They represent Canaan as a garden, in comparison to the rest of the world, and mount Ephram with its adjacent plains, as the garden of Canaan.—But we must hasten from

it, and attend our departing prophet, as he bids a shorter adieu to the remaining tribes.

As the lots of Zebulun and Issachar were to be contiguous in Canaan; as they were brothers-german, being both sons of Leah, and thereby had a nearer interest and affection among themselves, and their tents were pitched contiguous to each other in the plains of Moab, Moses addresses them as forming one body of people. "And of Zebulun he "said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and "Issachar in thy tents." Deut. xxxiii. 18. This is, with little variation, a repetition and confirmation of the blessing pronounced by dying Jacob. Zebulun, the younger of the two brothers, is in both preferred; and in distributing the lots, Zebulun has the third, Issachar only the fourth. The inheritance of Zebulun was to be of a peculiar quality, and they were to draw their subsistence and wealth from sources very different from those of the rest of Israel; they were to grow great by navagation and trade.

The sea, that unruly element, was to be made tributary to them, and through it, a passage opened to them to the vast, populous, and wealthy shores of Africa on the south, and of Asia and Europe on the north. "They shall suck of the abundance of the "seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. They "shall call the people unto the mountain; there "they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness." Deut. xxxiii. 19. The Chaldean applies these words peculiarly to Issachar, and translates them thus:

" Rejoice, Issachar, that is, be thou blessed in thy " going to appoint the times of the solemn feasts of " Israel," which has a reference to what we read of this tribe, 1 Chron. xii. 32. " And of the children of " Issachar, which were men that had understanding " of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: " the heads of them were two hundred, and all " their brethren were at their commandment." This is generally understood of the times and seasons of the year, of the new moons and other appearances of the heavenly bodies, by which the solemn festivals were regulated, and which they of Issachar, by their astronomical observation and skill, calculated for the use of all Israel. Hence they are represented in the blessing of Moses as calling the people " unto mount Zion, where the temple was." Thus we see that every tribe had some separate and distinct province, some peculiar benefit and privilege, that in the commonwealth of Israel, as in the natural body, there might be no schism, nor the hand be able to say to the eye or to the foot, " I have " no need of thee."

Moses advances to the tents of Gad with these words upon his tongue: " Blessed be he that " enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth " the arm with the crown of the head. And he " provideth the first part for himself, because there " in a portion of the lawgiver was he seated: and " he came with the heads of the people, he executed " the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with " Israel." Deut. xxxiii. 20, 21. The enlargement

of Gad may refer to his inheritance which God hereby promised to extend, as he did that of Israel in general. "I will enlarge thy border!" or it may be understood of his person, and will then imply deliverance out of trouble, in which sense the word is used, Psalm iv. 1: "Thou hast enlarged when I "was in distress." If so the words of Moses refer to the troubles of Gad, prophesied of by his dying father, and the history of the deliverance and enlargement of that tribe from the hands of their enemies, by Jephtha the Gileadite. We read of Gadites in David's time, who were "mighty men of "valour," whose faces were like the "faces of "lions," and were "as swift as the roes upon the "mountains." Hence he is said "to dwell as a "lion, and to tear the arm with the crown of the "head;" the emblems of sovereignty and strength, intimating that none should be so high or powerful, but the might of Gad should bring him down. The blessing in the 21st verse plainly refers to the provision already made for this tribe in conjunction with Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, in the kingdoms of Og and Sihon. "And he provided "the first part for himself, because there in a por-"tion of the lawgiver was he seated: and he came "with the heads of the people, he executed the "justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel." Deut. xxxiii. 21.

The younger children of a numerous family are to a stranger so many uninteresting, insignificant names; they have a mere family likeness, they

speedily become undistinguishable, we mistake the one for the other. It is not so with the parents; they have distinguishing marks for each, they have a particular affection for every one; they have something to say to, to say of, every one. Thus Dan and Naphtali and Asher are to us so many words without a meaning; but in the eyes of Moses all have a special importance, each particular blessing has a special meaning, and the last is not the least in his affection. But as strangers we pass by the rest, and distinct ideas of only two or three, of Judah and Levi, and of Benjamin and Joseph, cleave to our memory; these we would know among ten thousand, these we can never forget.

We must now suppose Moses to have finished his round, to have returned to his place; and, closing the solemn scene with taking a general survey of the whole, he rises from the goodly tents of Israel, to the contemplation and acknowledgment of Israel's God, and he finally desists from speaking and acting, in rapturous admiration of Him in whom he lived, moved, and breathed; he begins heaven on earth, by pouring out his soul in the bosom of the God of heaven and earth. "There is none like unto the "God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in "thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The "eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the "everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the "enemy from before thee, and shall say, destroy "them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; "the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of

" corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down " dew. Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto " thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of " thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! " and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, " and thou shalt tread upon their high places. Deut. xxxiii. 26—29.

Moses pronounced a blessing which he could not bestow, which has long ago spent itself, the effects of which are no longer visible.—Christ led out his disciples as far as to Bethany: " and he lifted up his " hands, and blessed them." Luke xxiv. 50. He pronounced a blessing it was in his power to confer, which has not spent its force, which reaches into eternity: " Go ye and teach all nations; baptizing " them in the name of the Father, and of the " Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to " observe all things whatsoever I have commanded " you. And lo, *I am* with you always, even unto " the end of the world." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. " He ever " liveth to make intercession for us." " All power " is given unto him in heaven and in earth."—What are the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them? What is now the land which once flowed with milk and honey? Where are now " the ten " thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of " Manasseh?" The blessing even of Joseph has failed, and the beauty of Mount Ephraim is no more. But we receive from our great Prophet " a

" kingdom which cannot be moved, an inheritance " incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not " away." His benediction embraces a globe; it extends from generation to generation; it unites his second to his first coming; it expands a new creation, " new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell- " eth righteousness;" it exalts guilty fallen men to the dignity of the sons of God. Let him bless me, and I shall be blessed. Lord, lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance, and I shall be saved: breathe upon me, and I shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The blessing of Moses implied succession and change, contention and triumph; it exhibited the " confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled " in blood," the exaltation of one on the depression of another:—The blessing of Christ presents stability and permanency, harmony and peace, equality and acquiescence; it exhibits only the noble contention of generous and affectionate spirits, the triumphs of benevolence; the spirit of adoption bursting from every lip, *Abba, Father;* the spirit of brotherly love glowing in every bosom, tuning the tongue to the law of kindness, beaming from the eye in looks of tenderness. A greater than Moses is with us: We " are not under the law, but " under grace."

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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Sacred Biography;

OR THE

HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS:

BEING

A COURSE OF LECTURES,

DELIVERED AT

THE SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY

HENRY HUNTER, D.D.

VOLUME IV.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.
John viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Revelation i. 8.

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Ruth ii. 1—3.—And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of a field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

LECTURE XV.

HISTORY OF RUTH 223

Ruth ii. 4.—And behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you: and they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

LECTURE XVI.

HISTORY OF RUTH.....239

Ruth ii. 5—17.—Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers amongst the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou

knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

LECTURE XVII.

HISTORY OF RUTH.....255

Ruth ii. 19—23, and iii. 1.—And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought

to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.—Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

LECTURE XVIII.

HISTORY OF RUTH.....272

Ruth iv. 13—17.—So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age. For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in

her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

LECTURE XIX.

HISTORY OF HANNAH, THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL. . 286

1 Sam. i. 1—8.—Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord; so she provoked her: therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said

Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

LECTURE XX.

HISTORY OF HANNAH 301

1 Sam. i. 9—18.—So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drank. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give him unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and

said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

LECTURE XXI.

HISTORY OF HANNAH 316

1 Sam. i. 19—23.—And they arose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up: for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him: only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

DEUTERONOMY XXXIV. 1—6.

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over-against Jericho: And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Napthali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over-against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

WHEN strangers accidentally meet to perform together the same voyage or journey, they are apt, at first, to regard each other with looks of caution and distrust; they converse sparingly, and with reserve; they conceal their views and purposes in their own breasts; they attempt to dive into the characters and

designs of their fellow travellers. By degrees this suspicious cautiousness wears off; it becomes their mutual desire and endeavour to please and oblige, they feel themselves united by a common interest, their communications becomes frequent and free, they discover all that is in their hearts, they take a kind concern in each other's future fortunes, they exchange tokens of affection, they devise the means of coming together again, and they part at length with regret. We seem, my brethren, to have been travelling through a vast country; we seem to have been conversing with men of different ages and regions; we have contemplated many a fair prospect, we have marked many successive changes, and at the end of another stage or two, we must separate, and bid each other farewell. Like men acquainted and friendly, who know each other's meaning, and wish each other's happiness, we look back to our common pilgrimage with some degree of satisfaction, and forward, I trust, with some degree of desire to meet together again. The mutual token which, in the mean time, we shall carry with us, to stir up our minds by way of remembrance, is one that touches the heart by more than one spring, the memory of a dear and estimable common friend, who has contributed much to our pleasure and improvement, who was lovely and pleasant in life, and in death fills the soul with admiration and regret; but whom we have the felicity of considering as having only preceded us a little in a journey,

on which we too have already entered, and the end of which will bring us all to the same home with him.

The pen has now dropped from the hand of Moses, and silent is his tongue; and another, not himself, must tell us what he is, and how he died. Every scene in the life of this illustrious man is singular, and instructive as singular; and his latter end is not the least interesting and useful. He had now completed his one hundred and twentieth year, without having become subject to the usual infirmities of that advanced age. It is one thing to live long, and another to be old. We frequently see old age commenced by many woful symptoms, long before the man has begun to live at all: and we sometimes see the wisdom and piety of grey hairs giving lustre to the bloom of youth, and tempering the vivacity of the morning of life. We wish to live long, but we weakly associate what never met, except in Moses and a favoured few like him, perfect soundness of faculties and the capacity of enjoying life, united to length of days and richness of experience. We wish to live long, but fail to reflect on dimness of eyes, decay of memory, wasting of strength, loss of appetite, the neglect or unkindness of friends, and the other concomitants of that forlorn period. We wish to live long, but if the days come we find them evil; when these wished-for years draw nigh, we are constrained to acknowledge "we have no plea-"sure in them." The few, the very few exceptions which the history of mankind furnishes, from the

general rule, serve only the more grievously to confirm it. Happy would it be for old men, however, happy for themselves, and most happy for others, though they cannot retain at pleasure the clear-sightedness and vigour of Moses, did they cultivate as they ought, and acquire as they might, something of his meekness, and gentleness, and condescension; they would not have such frequent reason to complain of the petulance, self-sufficiency, and presumption of young men, if they themselves would learn to be less peevish, and obstinate, and overbearing. For bad as the world is, age will obtain respect, unless it takes pains to provoke insult and disrespect.

The death of Moses, then, was not in the ordinary course of nature; it was not preceded by its usual harbingers, it was not occasioned by a failure of the radical moisture, by the stroke of violence, or the malignity of disease, but by a simple act of the will of God. "Wherefore, then should it be "thought a thing incredible that God should raise "the dead?" When we see the antediluvian patriarchs living to one thousand years, the eye of Moses, at one hundred and twenty, not dim, nor his natural force abated, and "Christ, the first fruits," bursting asunder the bars of the grave; have we not so many concurrent presumptions and proofs of immortality and the resurrection? And what must be the angelic beauty, the celestial vigour, the undecaying lustre and glory of bodies, "fashioned like to Christ's "glorious body," when we see the face of Moses shine, that it could not be steadfastly looked at, and

behold it preserving to life's extremity the morning dew of youth? The honour put on Moses was rare and singular, but the glory to be revealed is a blessedness of which all the redeemed of the Lord shall partake.

When the summons arrived for Aaron to prepare for death, Moses his brother, and Eleazar his son and successor, were commanded to ascend the mountain with him, and to assist in the solemnities of the awful charge; but Moses advances alone to meet death, to meet his God. The holy vestments, with the office to which they appertained, descended from father to son, and were at length done away altogether and lost; but the moral and spiritual parts of the dispensation never waxed old, could not see corruption, but like God, their author, were unchangeable; and like Moses, by whom they were delivered to the world, unenfeebled by length of time, they continued till Christ, the restorer of all things, interwove them with the tissue of the Gospel, and conferred immortality upon them.

We must now look back to the sentence of death which was pronounced against Moses, and to the crime which provoked the irreversible doom: "And "the Lord spake unto Moses that self-same day, "saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, "unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab "that is over-against Jericho; and behold the land "of Canaan, which I give unto the children of "Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whi-"ther thou goest up; and be gathered unto thy

" people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, " and was gathered unto his people; because ye " trespassed against me among the children of Israel " at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness " of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst " of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the " land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither " unto the land which I give the children of Israel." Deut. xxxii. 48—52. Here many things concur to surprise and instruct us. The offence of Moses seems a venial one; he erred merely through hastiness of spirit; and had he not good cause to be angry? He was not often so overtaken, he quickly repented, and recovered tranquillity and self-government. He repeatedly attempted to soften justice by submission and entreaty; he asked for nothing unreasonable and absurd; he wished merely to be a witness of the divine bounty, truth, and faithfulness; infinitely greater offenders had at his entreaty been forgiven and restored. But justice relented not: Moses for one offence must die; the grace which he often obtained for others is to himself denied. Let the wretch loaded with a thousand crimes black as hell, and malignant as the spirit that reigns in the children of disobedience, think of this and tremble. That " fool makes a mock of sin." " Father for- " give him, he knows not what he does." One transgression excluded Moses from Canaan; and with so many imperfections on his head, loaded with so many crimes of a nature so vile and atrocious, can he think of entering into the kingdom of Hea-

ven? When we see such inflexible and unrelenting severity pursuing the dearest and most distinguished of God's children, who shall dare to think or to call any sin a little one? Who shall presume on mercy, who shall dream of washing away his guilt by the tears of penitence, who shall harden himself against God, and hope to prosper? The great crime in the sight of God is giving that glory to another which belongeth to Himself alone. For this Moses died without remedy; from the consequence of this he could not escape, though he sought it carefully and with tears. The character of Moses comes near to perfection, but it is not faultless; he too, with the *guiltiest*, stands in need of pardon and atonement; and when "righteousness is laid to the "line, and judgment to the plummet," his life must pay the forfeit. Moses therefore could not be a saviour to others; had his conduct been perfectly pure, it had been still but the righteousness of a man, it could but have delivered his own soul, it could have merited nothing at the hands of a holy God. In order to constitute a Saviour for the guilty, to unspotted purity of moral character must be superadded divinity of nature, to give efficacy and virtue to suffering, and value to the shedding of blood. Thus the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; "and what the law could not do, in that it was "weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, con-"demned sin in the flesh." Rom. viii. 3. We

flee to thee, blessed Jesus, to cover us in the day of wrath; thy blood cleanseth from all sin; by the deeds of the law we cannot be justified, we look for redemption from the curse, through thy meritorious death and righteousness, "for the forgiveness of all "our sins, according to the riches of thy grace.

But though death was to Moses a mark of the divine displeasure, and the punishment of sin, like all the chastenings of fatherly wisdom, like all the punishments of Heaven, it was in the issue, and upon the whole, a real benefit, it was unspeakably great gain: it relieved him of a burthen sometimes ready to prove intolerable, it introduced him to communion with God more intimate and endearing than ever he had hitherto enjoyed; it placed him among the spirits of just men made perfect. Moses died in sight of the promised land, was permitted to measure it with his eye, and to judge of its fertility from specimens of its produce: and all that the labours and light of those who are fellow-workers with Moses can do, is to repeat the promise, to point with the finger, and to say, "This is the way, "walk ye in it." It belongs to another power to subdue corruption, to divide Jordan, to level the walls of proud Jericho.

We know the offence, we have heard the doom, the reprieve is expired, the warrant of death is signed, the day of execution is come. But the bitterness of death is over already, the sting of death is plucked out, and even the word that condemns and kills the body is a word of love. A worldly mind

cannot discern the reason why the cross is the way, why death is in the cup, why the entrance into the kingdom of God is through the thorny road of much tribulation; but the child of God, the disciple of Jesus, has ceased from himself and from his own will and understanding: "He knows whom he has be-"lieved," and who has said, "As many as I love I re-"buke and chasten." He sees death in the list of his privileges and possessions, and is assured that all shall work together for his good.

Moses has fulfilled like a hireling his day, has written, has spoken, has judged, has prayed, has blessed; the business of life is ended; he has glorified God on earth, it only remains that he glorify him, by submission to his sovereign will in dying. Behold him then solitarily and solemnly advancing to encounter the last enemy: he has passed through the plain, and again he begins to climb up into the mount to meet God. The eyes of all Israel are rivetted to his footsteps. Who is not ready to cry out, "Would to God I could die for thee!" Every step he advances plants a dagger in the heart. The distance begins to render vision indistinct, his person is diminished to a speck, they fondly imagine they see him still, the eyes strain for another and another glimpse, they are suffused with tears, they can behold him no more. But he still beholds their goodly tents, he sees all Israel collected into one point of view:—Jehovah dwelling in the midst of his people, the tabernacle with the pillar of cloud resting upon it: his affection with his sight is con-

centred on the happy spot, his whole soul goes out in one general departing blessing. As he ascends, the prospect expands and brightens to his ravished eye. He can trace Jordan from its source, till it falls into the sea; he wanders with delight from hill to hill, from plain to plain. He sees on this side mount Lebanon losing its lofty head in the clouds; on that, the ocean and the sky meeting together to terminate his view. Beneath his feet, as it were, the city of palm-trees, and the happy fields which the posterity of Joseph were destined to inhabit. The land which Abraham had measured with his foot in the length and in the breadth of it; in which Isaac and Jacob had sojourned as strangers; which God had fenced, and cultivated, and planted, and enriched by the hand of the Canaanite for his beloved people; which the sun irradiated with milder beams, which the dew of heaven refreshed with sweeter moisture, and which the early and the latter rain fattened in more copious showers. "And the Lord said unto him, This is the land "which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and "unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed; "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but "thou shalt not go over thither." Deut. xxxiv. 4.

But what is the glory of this world? It passeth away. What is the felicity of man, who must die, and of the son of man who is a worm? It cometh quickly to a period. The eye which age had not made dim must nevertheless be closed in death at length; the strength which a hundred and twenty

years had not been able to impair, is in a moment by one touch of the finger of God dissolved; the heart which God and Israel had so long divided is now wholly occupied with God. In the midst of a vision so divine Moses gently falls asleep; and he who falls asleep in the bosom of a Father needs to be under no anxiety about his awakening. "So "Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the "land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." Deut. xxxiv. 5. Moses died with Canaan full in view, enjoying every thing but possession: and the utmost that his dispensation can do is to ascertain the existence of the heavenly country; to describe its boundaries, nature, and situation; to conduct to its limits, and to put us under the conduct of the great Captain of salvation.

When we see the prophet of the law so far from having power to introduce others into their promised rest, that he himself could not enter in because of unbelief; we are admonished to court the protection and assistance of a more potent arm; to cleave to him who, by dying, has overcome death, and him who hath the power of death; "who openeth and no "man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

But Oh, what a blessed transition! From the fairest earthly prospect that eye ever beheld, to the enjoyment of a fairer inheritance, eternal in the heavens: from the tents of Jacob to the encampment of angels under Michael their prince; from a glory confined and transitory, to glory unbounded, unchangeable; from the symbol of the divine pre-

sence in a pillar of fire and cloud, to his real presence, where there "is fulness of joy;" and where "there are pleasures for evermore;" Ps. xvi. 11; to see him as he is, and to be transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Behold Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, rushing from their thrones to welcome to the realms of light the shepherd of Israel, who had led the chosen seed from strength to strength, from triumph to triumph, while the voice of the Eternal himself proclaims, "Well done, "good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of "thy Lord."

But we must descend from this exceeding high mountain, and inquire after the breathless clay of the servant of the Lord. It is precious in the sight of God; not a particle of it shall be lost in the grave, and it shall be raised up at the last day. In every other instance He leaves the dead to bury their dead, but He charges himself with the body of Moses, performs himself the rites of sepulture, conveys it, by the ministration of angels, from the top of Nebo to a tomb of his own providing, "in a valley in the "land of Moab, over-against Beth-peor: but no man "knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Deut. xxxiv. 6.

The reason commonly assigned for concealing the place where Moses was interred, was to prevent a superstitious use for his tomb and relics, which a people so prone to idolatry might readily have adopted, and with as good colour of reason at least as the votaries of any hero, prince, or saint, that ever was de-

ified, could allege for their conduct. The Scripture saith expressly, that at the time this conclusion of the book of Deuteronomy was written, whether by Joshua, his immediate successor, by Samuel, three hundred and fifty years afterwards, or by Ezra, after the dissolution of the monarchy and the Babylonish captivity, that then the place of Moses's burial was unknown to any man, and had been so from the beginning; and yet such is the wickedness of imposture on the one hand, and the fondness of credulity on the other, that so late as the year of our Lord 1655, a pretended discovery of the spot was made, and attempted to be imposed upon the world.

The outlines of the story are as follow: "Certain shepherds, who were feeding their goats on "the mountains of Nebo and Abarim, observed "that some of their charge were in use to disappear, and were absent for several days together; "and that upon their return to the flock their hair "was perfumed with something that smelled extremely sweet. This excited their curiosity, and "determined them to investigate the affair with the "utmost accuracy. They accordingly traced their "goats, and were led by them through rugged and "rocky places to a little vale, where, upon examination, they discovered a kind of cave, out of which "proceeded a very agreeable smell, resembling that "which the goats conveyed on their fleeces, and "which had first suggested the inquiry. In the "middle of the cave they found a tomb of stone, on "which certain characters were engraven, which,

" being illiterate, they could not decipher; but " they soon perceived that the sweet smell was " communicated to their persons and garments. " Upon this they went immediately to Mataxat, " patriarch of the Maronites, who resided at the " monastery of St. Mary, on mount Lebanon, and " related to him the particulars of their discovery. " The fragrance that still adhered to their clothes " confirming their testimony, he sent two of his " monks with them, (one of them a man of pro- " found erudition, named Aben-Useph,) who found, " in the place pointed out to them, a monument " inscribed with these words in Hebrew, MOSES " THE SERVANT OF THE LORD. The patriarch, " transported with joy at a discovery so marvellous, " besought Morat, Pacha of Damascus, to consti- " tute him sole guardian of the sepulchre. But " the Greeks and Armenians, as well as the Fran- " ciscan friars, and after them the Jews, violent- " ly opposed it, and, unable to agree, tried by dint " of interest at court, by presents to the Mufti and " Grand Vizier, to appropriate each to themselves the " superintendance of this tomb, which they equally " believed to be that of Moses, and which the Jews, " with peculiar earnestness, insisted must belong to " them. They represented that, among all the " possessions of the Grand Signor, none could be " more valuable and illustrious than the property of " three sepulchres so renowned as that of Mahomet " at Mecca, of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem, and of " Moses in Mount Nebo. But the Jesuits had the

" address, by presents happily applied, to defeat the " claims of all those pretenders, and to obtain an order " for shutting up the sepulchre, and obstructing the " road that led to it; nay for prohibiting all access " to it, under pain of death. They were meanwhile " forming a design of secretly conveying off the body " of Moses, which they flattered themselves would " prove a considerable accession of respectability, " and a new source of wealth to their Order. " Having, however, with much difficulty and " danger, penetrated into the sepulchre, it was " found entirely empty; no body, no relics ap- " peared." Hornius, Secul. xvii. These pleasing chimeras vanished almost as soon as formed; for a learned Rabbin proved, that the person interred in this tomb was not the ancient legislator of the Hebrews, but a modern Jew of the same name.

The sacred history says, that Moses died the fortieth year after the deliverance from Egypt, and the most part of the Jewish writers fix the day of his death to the seventh day of the last month of that year, or the month Adar: and our learned and pious countryman, Archbishop Usher, calculates it to have happened on the first day of the same month.

There is a passage in the New Testament which refers to this event, and which has greatly exercised the labour and ingenuity of critics and commentators: it is in the General Epistle of Jude, where that disciple, in reproving the rashness and licentiousness of certain heretics, " who despise dominion,

"and speak evil of dignities," quotes an example of very high authority, as condemning the practice: "Yet," says he, "Michael the archangel, when "contending with the devil, he disputed about the "body of Moses, durst not bring against him a rail-"ing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Jude 9.

Now as many questions almost as words have been started on this subject: What is an arch-angel? and who is Michael? How came the body of Moses to be a ground of controversy between him and the devil, what were they severally aiming at, and what was the issue of their quarrel? What authority restrained Michael from preferring a railing accusation against him, how his conduct comes to be adduced as a pattern of self-government, and a reproof of the vices of the tongue? And from what source did Jude derive his knowledge of this transaction?—The very mention of so many, some of them, on the first glance, unimportant questions, will I doubt not check curiosity altogether, instead of exciting it. It is evident, that the death and burial of Moses interested heaven, and earth, and hell; that many historical facts of great moment are purposely left unrecorded; that many discoveries are reserved for that great and notable day of the Lord, when God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil; that it becomes not us to be wise above what is written, but to rest in hope, that "what we know not now, "we shall know hereafter." This much we know,

that about fifteen hundred years after, Moses appeared in glory (" whether in the body I cannot tell, " or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God " knoweth") to do homage to his Saviour on the mount of transfiguration, and to lay his glory at the feet of him in whose light he shone; and we know " the hour is coming when all who are in the graves " 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." John v. 28, 29.

Such was the latter end of, " take him for all in " all," the greatest mere man that ever existed. But I check myself. It is impossible to do any thing like justice to such a character in a few moments' discourse: You will indulge me with another hearing on this subject; I mean to preach a funeral sermon: the only one I ever undertook without pain, over a character and a memory to which no eloquence can tire, no detail do justice; in celebrating which, praise cannot degenerate into panegyric, nor the preacher be suspected of adulation.

Moses died in the year of the world two thousand five hundred and fifty-three—before Christ one thousand four hundred and fifty,—after the flood eight hundred and ninety-seven. The most ancient and authentic of historians, the most penetrating, dignified, and illuminated of prophets, the profoundest, sagest of legislators, the prince of orators and poets, the most excellent and amiable of men,

the firmest and faithfullest of believers. "Whether "we live, let us live unto the Lord," that when we die, we may "die in the Lord;" that "living "and dying we may be the Lord's."

LECTURE II.

DEUT. XXXIV. 10—12.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face: in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.

THERE is in mankind a good-natured disposition to spare the dead. Without very high provocation indeed, who could think of disturbing the peace and silence of the grave, and of dragging again before the tribunal of man, those who have already undergone the more awful judgment of a righteous God.

But this generosity does not always proceed from pure benevolence. The dead no longer stand in our way; they are no longer our rivals in the pursuits of fame or of fortune. We can here earn the praise of magnanimity, without any danger of suffering in the interests of our reputation, our consequence, or our self-love. From whatever source this lenity and forbearance proceed, we would not be thought altogether to condemn them; but good-nature in this, as in a few other cases, is apt sometimes to be carried too far. Through fear of being

thought severe to those who have no power to defend themselves, extravagant and unmerited commendation has been often lavished on the worthless and the wicked. I will cheerfully engage not to violate the ashes of the dead by unjust censure, nor even by merited invective; but I must not be forced, on the other hand, to commemorate virtues that were never practised; to bring to light worth that never existed, except in the tropes of a funeral oration; to represent as right, what God, and truth, and reason, pronounce to be wrong. My tongue shall be silent as the grave over the memory of the proudest, most selfish, hard-hearted, unkind, uncomplying wretch that ever lived; but I must not be called in to prostitute my conscience by celebrating his humility, generosity, compassion, or sweetness of temper. I would correct the common adage a little, and then give it all the currency in my power. Instead of rendering it, "Of the dead "say that only which is *good*," I would translate it, "Of the dead say that only which is *true*."

Indeed the best thing that can befall most men, when they die, is to be forgotten as soon as possible. Few, very few characters are such as not to suffer by handling; and there is great danger of rousing and provoking slumbering resentments against our departed friends, by an official zeal to trumpet their praise, and to display their good qualities. The praise bestowed on the dead is generally contemptible adulation to the living; adulation, vilely bestowing the rewards of piety and goodness on mere

greatness or affluence, and thereby strengthening the hands of vice, by lulling the conscience to rest, and deceiving men in the belief that a good name may be purchased without possessing a spark of virtue.

The liturgy of our established church, in how many other respects soever useful and excellent, is here faulty, and certainly does mischief. The funeral service, one of the noblest, because one of the most scriptural parts of it, with indiscriminating charity dispenses the kingdom of heaven to the evil and the good, to "him that sweareth as to him who "feareth an oath." The wretch whose whole life has been a notorious violation of every law human and divine, who grew old in hatred and contempt of the Gospel, falls asleep in the "sure and certain "hope of a resurrection to eternal life." What is this but to encourage men to continue in sin, that grace may abound; to live profligates, and yet hope to die in peace?

Happily, the character which we are this evening to bring under your review, will stand the test of the strictest examination, will shine with superior lustre from being touched and retouched, will discover new excellencies on every investigation, will furnish to the humble, the penitent, and the believing, perpetual ground of instruction and consolation. After a course of more than fourscore lectures on the life, character, and writings of Moses, it may perhaps be thought superfluous to employ the whole of another discourse in attempting to elucidate his character, to

recommend his example, to embalm his memory. But it is this very circumstance which determined me to attempt a delineation of this wonderful man's portrait, to request that you would join me in meditating a few moments over one who has been honoured of God to do more, in order to please and instruct mankind, than any mere man that ever existed. To say truth, I consider the person of Moses as a pledge of affection between you and myself. He brought us together at first, and he has kept us together a considerable part of these three years past; to part with him and his writings, seems a kind of presentiment of our own final dissolution likewise; and, in losing him, I feel as if I were losing a thousand friends at a stroke. But let us speak and think of Moses, not of ourselves.

It is impossible to think of Moses without first thinking of "his Father and our Father, of his "God and our God." To be a chosen instrument in the hand of Heaven to carry on the plans of Providence, to promote the wisdom and the happiness of mankind, is man's highest glory: as it is his truest felicity to do this voluntarily and from the heart, as an obedient, zealous, and cheerful fellow-worker with God. Now Moses possessed this distinction and felicity in a very eminent degree. God raised up Pharaoh "in very deed for this cause, "to show in him his power, that his great name "might be declared throughout all the earth;" and Pharaoh, unhappily for himself, accomplished the designs of Heaven, by his pride, obstinacy, and

rebellion. God called "Cyrus his anointed, by name, "and surnamed him who had not known him, for "Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect." Nebuchadnezzar he employed as the rod of his anger to chastise a disobedient and gainsaying people, and then broke it in pieces and dashed it to the ground. These, and many others, stand upon record, as executing the will of the Eternal without their own consciousness or intention, nay, totally against it; but Moses had the rare felicity of engaging in one of the most generous purposes which can animate a human breast, knowing it to be, at the same time, the leading, commanding purpose of God himself. Every step he moved was supported by the enlivening reflection, that every step he moved was executing the decrees of the Almighty, and promoting the relief and salvation of his wretched countrymen. How delightful is the progress, when duty and inclination go hand in hand!

The circumstances in which God raised up Moses mark him peculiarly as his own. Every thing concurred to prove, that here "the arm of the Lord "was revealed." Another king had arisen, "who "knew not Joseph;" the hope of Israel seemed to be perishing: Egypt was alarmed with expectation, or rather apprehension, of the appearance of this wonderful child; Israel was awakened to expectation, but abandoned it in despair. To reach the life of one, ten thousand innocents perish by the sword. But, as if in defiance of the precautions of human wisdom, Moses is born in the very rage of that

persecution which threatened his life. The daughter of Pharaoh becomes his protector, and Egyptian Magi vie with each other in rearing that genius, whose ascendant threatened the downfall of their country, and Moses is become great, before the world apprehends that it is he by whose hand God would deliver his people from bondage.

This brings us forward to the period when his personal character began plainly to unfold itself; and it discovers to us a mind superior to every mean, every selfish gratification. Men love to adopt the cause that prevails; and the cause of Israel was at that time low indeed. At a certain period of life passion bears unlimited sway. At forty the calls of ambition and pride are loudest; and they who are themselves at ease are little disposed to embark in the miseries of others. But in Moses behold a man, not sunk into poverty violently obtruded upon him, but poverty deliberately chosen; a man of forty relinquishing, without reluctance or regret, the pleasures, riches, and honours of a court, and exchanging them for the labour and oppression of an Israelitish slave, and glorying in the reproachful name of Hebrew, much more than in that of the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Behold the manly indignation of a noble spirit hastening to avenge wretchedness and depression of insolence and cruelty, and in the punishment of one oppressor exhibiting an anticipated view of that great deliverance which, in process of time, God was by him to work in behalf of a whole people.

The same spirit which beheld Egyptian oppression with just resentment, beheld discord among brethren with godly sorrow and regret. He boldly exposed his life to repel the one; in the spirit of meekness he tried to heal the other; and he very early experienced the ungracious, and ungrateful, and discouraging requital of services the most kindly intended; the sad presage of that life of mortification unparalleled, and most unmerited, which he was called to endure. The insolent retort of an unkind brother awakened prudence, and put him for a season to flight; for valour, as the case then stood, valour against such fearful odds, could not have deserved the name of courage, but of rashness.

Providence still directs his path, and conducts him at once to usefulness and happiness. It seems as if the all-wise Jehovah meant to display in Moses an example of the great and of the petty virtues, the virtues of the man, of the citizen, and of the believer united; and in none of his future exploits, perhaps, is he more amiable and more estimable than in protecting the virgin daughters of Jethro from the violence of their rough and surly neighbours. Here we behold again on what delicate hinges the great God turns round the affairs of men. This piece of natural, honest, commendable gallantry, introduces Moses to the acquaintance of a Prince, lays the foundation of an important alliance for life, and influences all his future fortunes and feelings as a man.

Hence we are conducted to the delicious, the calm,

the contemplative period of our hero's mortal existence. We behold a simple shepherd tending a flock not his own, but enjoying tranquillity and contentment; secluded from the society of men, but blessed with the visions of the Almighty; losing himself in sweet oblivion of a busy bustling world, awake only to the innocent joys of domestic life, and to the sublimer pleasures of religion. It was in all probability in this delightful retreat, during this blessed interval of retirement from an unconnectedness with what passed on the great theatre, that, divinely taught, he sung "how the heavens "and earth rose out of chaos." It was then and there that the Divine Spirit disclosed to his astonished, his enraptured eye, the years beyond the flood, the spring-season of nature, the first man whom God created upon the earth, the amiableness of pure primeval innocence, the glories of Paradise, the unlimited bounty of indulgent Heaven. It was then, and there, that good Spirit put the pen into his hand, to trace that sacred record which has descended to us for our delight and instruction, and which shall remain, till time expire, the wonder, the monitor, the guide of mankind unto all manner of truth.

What a happy period for the human race! how happy for himself! Were the will of man to prevail, who would exchange such a retirement as this, for the noise and glare which captivate fools? But men, such as Moses, are not made for themselves alone; and ill would he have improved the bless-

ings of solitude, had he not learned in it cheerfully to sacrifice his own humour and his own ease to the work and glory of God.

The time to favour Israel was now come, and Moses must think of privacy and self-enjoyment no longer. By a vision such as might appal the boldest, and encourage the most fearful, he is remanded to Egypt with a commission, under the seal of Heaven, to haughty Pharaoh, and he fears no more the wrath of a king.

But we have insensibly deviated into the history of Moses, instead of delineating his character. Are they not, however, one and the same thing? To know what he was, we have but to consider what he said, and how he acted. But how is it possible to comprise, within the bounds of one discourse, a detail of forty active, busy years, from the day that God appeared to him in a flame of fire in the bush, to the day of his ascending to the top of mount Nebo to die? In general, they contain a display of almost every human shining virtue, brought forward to the eye, and impressed on the heart, by their most lovely foil, modesty, meekness, and humility. What magnanimity, united to what coolness and self-government! what firmness and intrepidity! what patience and gentleness! what consummate wisdom! what amiable simplicity! In youth, in maturity, in old age; in public, and in private life; in every relation and condition, who is like him, who deserves to be compared with him? In forming an idea of human excellence, Moses presents himself immedi-

ately to my view; it is no longer an idea, it is a delightful reality.

The more attentive part of my hearers will observe that, to complete the proposed plan of this discourse, there is still wanting the general leading idea of all these discourses, the resemblance between the type and the person typified—the analogy of Moses and Christ. This I refer to another Lecture: and beg leave to subjoin, as a proper sequel to this, the following elogium of Moses, translated from the works of an eloquent critic of his writings (Saurin).

ELOGIUM OF MOSES.

"This most extraordinary personage was presented to the world in very singular circumstances. "He appeared at a period of peculiar affliction to "his kindred and nation; and divine Providence "seems to have raised him up expressly for the "purpose of exemplifying virtues which distress "and persecution alone are calculated to place in "the fairest point of light. By a series of miraculous events he escaped, in infancy, the fatal effects "of a sanguinary decree, which doomed to death "all the male children of the Hebrews, from the "womb. And what highly merits consideration, and "serves strikingly to display the influence which "sovereign wisdom exercises over all the affairs of "men, he owed his preservation, in a great measure, "to persons whose interest it was to have destroyed "him. Those very persons assisted in forming that

"superior genius, and in cultivating those wonder-
"ful talents, which in time qualified him to be the
"deliverer of a nation which it was their intention
"utterly to extirpate.

"Scarcely arrived at that stage of life when men
"begin to form plans for the remainder of their
"existence, he feels himself called to determine be-
"tween two objects, so incompatible in their na-
"ture, that the maturest judgment can with diffi-
"culty hold the balance even: religion and worldly
"interest. Under the necessity of making a choice
"so difficult, he rises above his age, above his
"passions, nay, in some sense, above humanity,
"and nobly sacrifices every worldly prospect to re-
"ligion. He resolves to partake in the miseries of
"an oppressed people, in order to secure an interest
"in the favour of that God who is continually
"watching over his children, even when he seems
"to have abandoned them to their persecutors; he
"values nothing in comparison with that favour: he
"prizes it infinitely more than that of a great king,
"nay, more than the prospect itself of being heir
"to a throne and kingdom; and, according to the
"expression of St. Paul, *esteemed the reproach
"of Christ greater riches than the treasures of
"Egypt.* Heb. xi. 26.

"Not satisfied with being a spectator and a par-
"taker of the misery of his wretched brethren, he
"resolves to meet the torrent; and, of a witness,
"hastens to become the avenger of the tyranny
"under which they groaned. Observing one of the

" merciless tools of oppression abusing an Israelite,
" he braves the rigour of all the laws of Egypt, kills
" the oppressor, delivers the sufferer, and, as we
" have said in another place, performs an anticipated
" act of the *Deliverer of his Country*.

" Prudence constrains him to withdraw from the
" danger which threatened the stranger who dared
" to shed the blood of an Egyptian. He retires
" into the land of Midian, and there experiences
" repeated proofs of the care of that miraculous
" Providence which accompanied him through the
" whole course of a long life. Cut off from every
" opportunity of displaying the qualities of the
" hero, he exhibits those of the philosopher; he
" employs the calmness of that retreat in contem-
" plating the Divine perfections; or rather, in this
" delicious retirement it was, that he enjoyed the
" intimate communications of the Almighty, who
" inspired him, and appointed him to the high
" destination of laying the first foundations of
" revealed religion, which was to supply the defects
" of that of Nature, already clouded and disfigured
" by the prejudices and the passions of mankind.
" He composed the book of Genesis; and thereby
" furnished the world with irresistible arms to com-
" bat idolatry. He attacks the two most extravagant
" errors into which the human race had fallen, the
" plurality of gods, and that which admits imper-
" fection in the Deity. To the one, and the other,
" he opposes the doctrine of the unity of an all-
" perfect Being.

"That God, whose existence and attributes he "thus published, was pleased to manifest Himself "to him in mount Horeb, in a manner altogether "singular and miraculous. He confers on this "chosen servant the glorious but formidable com- "mission, to take the field against Pharaoh, to stem "the current of oppression, to attempt to mollify "the tyrant; and, if persuasion failed, to employ "force, to support arguments by prodigies, to exact "from all Egypt the expiation of those barbarities "which she had dared to exercise upon a people "distinguished as the object of His tenderest love, "and of His most illustrious miracles.

"This appointment Moses presumes to decline; "but from a spirit of humility rather than of diso- "bedience. He could not conceive it possible that, "at the age of fourscore, and labouring under a "defect of speech, he could be the person qualified "to address a mighty Prince, and overturn a whole "kingdom. The appointment is a second time "pressed upon him; a second time he refuses it. "At length, however, his reluctance is overcome, "and, filled with that Spirit which animated him "to the conflict, he enters the career of glory "which was presented to him, and his first victory "is a victory over himself. He tears himself from "the delights of the land of Midian; he quits the "house of a father-in-law, by whom he was most "tenderly beloved, to encounter a host of enemies "and executioners.

"He arrives in Egypt. He presents himself

" before Pharaoh: he entreats; he threatens; he " draws down upon the Egyptians plagues the most " tremendous. He departs from that kingdom at " the head of a people which had endured in it " cruelties the most unexampled. The tyrant " pursues him, gains ground, presses hard upon " him. Behold him encompassed on every side, " by a vast and invincible army, by a ridge of in- " accessible mountains, and by the waters of the " Red Sea. He rebukes the roaring billows; they " instantly become obedient to the man whom the " DEITY has made, if the expression be lawful, the " depository of his power. *The waters were a wall " unto them on their right hand and on their left,* " Exodus xiv. 29; as the sacred historian expresses " himself. Moses advances into the wilderness, and " by a continuation of miraculous interposition, he " beholds those very waters which had divided, to " favour the passage of Israel, closing again, and " swallowing up Pharaoh, his court, and his host.

" Delivered, in appearance, from his most for- " midable enemies, he soon finds he has to maintain " a lasting conflict with foes still more formidable, " the very people whom he conducted. He dis- " covers in these degenerate sons of Israel, every " mean and grovelling sentiment which a servile " state has a tendency to inspire; all the absurdity of " weak and capricious minds; all the cowardice, per- " fidy, and ingratitude of corrupted hearts. With " such a race Moses found himself under the neces- " sity of living in a waste and parched desert, and

" of struggling there with all the horrors of hunger " and thirst, and a total want of every necessary. " Exposed to all the insults of an enraged, un- " governable multitude, he is at the same time con- " strained to act as their intercessor with an offended " God. He feels himself called upon to maintain " the interests of the Divine glory with a stiff- " necked and perverse nation; and to plead the " cause of that very nation with the Deity, provoked " to execute righteous judgment on a race of men " who were continually disposed to insult his autho- " rity, and to degrade his perfections, by associat- " ing Him with the infamous idols of the Pagan " world.

" Moses had sometimes the felicity of averting " the Divine displeasure, and of restraining the mad- " ness of the people. But more frequently he en- " dured the mortification of seeing the inefficacy of " his well-meant efforts. The violence of the people " bore down all opposition; and offended Heaven " turned a deaf ear to the voice of his supplication. " Divine justice vindicated its rights; Israel felt " its severest strokes, and *twenty-four thousand*, " Num. xxv. 9, fall at one stroke.

" The most awful chastisements have proved " equally ineffectual with the tenderest expostula- " tions, to bring them back to a sense of their duty. " And as if Moses had been responsible for the " calamities which they had brought upon them- " selves by their reiterated crimes, they talk of

"stoning him. They propose to appoint a com-
"mander to conduct them back to Egypt, from
"whence God had delivered them by *a strong hand*
"*and a stretched-out arm:* they prefer an inglorious
"servitude to the miraculous protection afforded
"them in the wilderness, and to all the prospects
"of the fair inheritance which God had promised
"to bestow upon them.

"In a state of such anxiety and distress, Moses
"passed forty complete years, and conducted, at
"length, the remains of this people to the borders
"of the promised land. Was ever life so singularly
"eventful? Was ever hero signalized by so many
"extraordinary exploits?

"If we go into a more particular detail of his
"great actions, we meet with a bright display of
"every shining virtue.

"What magnanimity! Witness the armies he so
"successfully commanded; witness the crown and
"kingdom of Egypt despised, rejected, when put
"in competition with the obligations and prospects
"of religion.

"What firmness! Witness his undaunted ad-
"dresses, and his animated replies to Pharaoh.
"*Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they*
"*may serve me.* Exod. viii. 1.—*We will go with*
"*our young and with our old, with our sons and*
"*with our daughters, with our flocks and with our*
"*herds will we go;—there shall not be an hoof left*
"*behind.—Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy*
face again no more. Exod. x. 9, 26, 29.

"What fervour! Witness those hands lifted up "to heaven, while Israel was fighting against "Amalek. Witness those ardent prayers in behalf "of the rebellious Israelites: *Lord, why doth thy "wrath wax hot against thy people which thou "hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, "with great power, and with a mighty hand? "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, "For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them "in the mountains, and to consume them from the "face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, "and repent of this evil against thy people. Re- "member Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy ser- "vants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, "and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed "as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I "have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and "they shall inherit it for ever.* Exod. xxxii. 11. "—13.

"What charity! Witness these forcible expres- "sions: *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, "and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if "thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, "I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast "written.* Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

"What gentleness! Witness what is said of "him, Numbers xii. 3: *Now the man Moses "was very meek, above all the men which were "upon the face of the earth.*

"What earnest desire to draw supplies of grace

" and truth immediately from their source! Wit-
" ness these ardent aspirations of soul after God:
" *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up*
" *hence.—I beseech thee, show me thy glory.* Exod.
" xxxiii. 15—18.

" What zeal for the glory of God! Witness
" the tables of the law broken in pieces at the sight
" of a people who had rendered themselves unwor-
" thy of receiving marks so tender of the love of
" God. Witness that rigorous order issued to the
" sons of Levi: *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel,*
" *Put every man his sword by his side, and go in*
" *and out from gate to gate throughout the camp,*
" *and slay every man his brother, and every man his*
" *companion, and every man his neighbour.* Exod.
" xxxiii. 27. Witness his answer to Joshua, when
" he expressed an apprehension lest the prophetic
" gifts bestowed on Eldad and Medad should
" eclipse the glory of his master: *Enviest thou for*
" *my sake? would God that all the Lord's people*
" *were prophets, and that the Lord would put his*
" *Spirit upon them!* Num. xi. 29.

" What perseverance! Witness those exhorta-
" tions; and that sacred song with which he con-
" cluded his ministrations and his life.

" But where was perfect virtue ever to be found?
" Moses too had his infirmities. In a life so long,
" however, and so peculiarly circumstanced, who
" is chargeable with faults so slight and so few?
" His very errors seem to partake of the nature of

" virtue. The darker shades of his character be-
" come perceptible from the contrast which they
" form with a whole life so bright and luminous.
" That he should shrink back, at first, from the
" proposal of an embassy to the King of Egypt;
" that he should neglect, for a season, from certain
" domestic considerations, the circumcision of a
" child; that he should be slow of belief respecting
" the disposition of a righteous God to extract
" water miracuously from the rock, to supply the
" wants of a murmuring generation; that he should
" strike the rock a second time, rather from indig-
" nation against the rebels, than from distrust of
" the God in whom compassions flow—These un-
" doubtedly are blemishes, nay, offences which
" God might punish with death, were he strict to
" mark iniquity; but, when human infirmity is
" taken into the account, they are faults that excite
" pity rather than indignation.

" Should any part of the elogium we have pro-
" nounced on Moses seem exaggerated, we shall add,
" to all the honourable traits under which we have
" represented him, one infinitely more glorious still,
" traced by the hand of God himself, who best
" knows how to estimate merit and to distribute
" praise, and which exalts our Prophet far above all
" human panegyric: *There arose not a Prophet since*
" *in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew*
" *face to face: in all the signs and the wonders*
" *which the Lord sent him to do in the land of*
" *Egypt, to Pharoah, and to all his servants, and*

" *to all his land, and in all that mighty hand,*
" *and in all the great terror which Moses showed*
" *in the sight of all Israel.*"

This truly great man died, as has been said, in the year of the world two thousand five hundred and fifty-three; and before the birth of Jesus Christ one thousand four hundred and fifty one; eight hundred and ninety-seven years after the flood; and before the building of Solomon's Temple four hundred and forty; in the fortieth year from the Exodus, or departure of Israel from Egypt; and of his own age the one hundred and twentieth.—Before his death he uttered a clear and distinct prediction of the Messiah, which, in "the fulness of time," was exactly accomplished; and he appeared in person on mount Tabor, to lay all his glory and honour at the feet of the Saviour of the world. We shall have finished our plan, after we have suggested a few reflections on this prediction of Moses, and on this his appearance, in company with Elias, to do homage to the Son of God,—"the Author and Finisher of "our faith." To Him "be glory and dominion "for ever and ever. Amen."

LECTURE III.

DEUT. XVIII. 15—18. *ACTS III.* 22.

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto him ye shall hearken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.—For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

IN the frame and course of nature, who does not perceive evident marks of wisdom in design, of order in execution, of energy in operation? All is plan, system, harmony. Every thing bespeaks a Being provident, omnipotent, unremittingly attentive: whose works, indeed, infinitely exceed our comprehension; but which by their beauty, simplicity, and usefulness, fill the mind with wonder and delight, while their variety, lustre, magnificence, and immensity astonish and overwhelm. The government of the world, it is equally evident, is the result of contrivance; it evinces a constant, superintending care. Event arises out of event

link runs into link. What to the first glance appeared an assemblage of scattered fragments, is found, on a more careful and attentive inspection, to be a regular, beautiful, well-proportioned fabric, a "body "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which "every joint supplieth, according to the effectual "working in the measure of every part."

It must be pleasing to every serious mind to observe in the work of Redemption a similar uniformity of design, progress, and execution. We find Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, remote from, unknown to one another, at different ages, in different regions, declaring the same purpose, promoting the same plan, aiming at the same end. This affords a presumption at least, that He who made, upholds, and governs the universe, is likewise the Author of Salvation; in all whose works and ways a noble and important end is obviously kept in view; and that end pursued and attained by means the wisest and the best. The Mosaic and Christian are not separate, unconnected, independent dispensations, but corresponding and harmonious members of the same great building of God. Nature and Grace have one source, one date; they proceed in a parallel direction, they are hastening to one common consummation. Or, to speak more properly, the system of external Nature and the scheme of Redemption are the well-adjusted, the harmonized parts of the one great plan of Eternal Providence, which contains the whole purpose of the glorious Creator concerning Man—his first formation, his

present state and character, and his final destination.

Turn up the inspired Volume at whatever page you will, and you have a person, or an event, or a service, or a prediction, unfolding, in one form or another, the merciful "purpose of Him who work-"eth all things after the counsel of his own will, "that we should be to the praise of his glory." Transport yourself in thought to whatever period of the world you will, and you still find the Gospel preached; whether in the sacrifice of righteous Abel, the translation of Enoch, the ark of Noah, the promise made to Abraham, the prediction of dying Jacob; from the seat of Moses, the throne of David, the dungeon of Jeremiah. They all speak an uniform language, all give witness to the same person, all disclose their own peculiar portion of the gospel treasure, for the illumination of an ignorant, the reformation of a corrupted, the salvation of a perishing world.

The writings of Moses exhibit a singular display of this grand combined plan. He traces Nature up to her birth, and instructs us "how the heavens "and earth rose out of chaos." He conducts us through the mazes of the moral government of the Great Supreme, and there too unfolds wild uproar reduced to order, and "the wrath of man working the "righteousness of God." He draws aside the curtains of the night, and "the day-spring from on high" dawns on fallen humanity. He attends us through the morning of that bright day, and, constrained

at length to retire, leaves behind him the assurance that "the fulness of the time" would come, that the "morning light" would advance with growing splendour unto "the perfect day." He presents to our astonished eyes the vast, the complicated, the beautiful machine: wheel within wheel put in motion, preserving from age to age its steady majestic tenour, with native, unwearied, undiminished force: referring us still to its divine AUTHOR, who made and upholds all "by the word of his "power," and for whose "pleasure they are, and "were created."

Moses, not only in what he wrote, but in what he was and acted, illustriously displayed the grace of God in the redemption of the world. Not only did he *write* and *testify* concerning the great Deliverer, but his person, his character, his offices, were a prefiguration of "Him who was to come," and to whom "all the prophets give witness."

The prediction which has been read, and the pointed application made of it by the Apostles to their Divine Master, constitute the proof of what we have just advanced. Moses, under the direction of the spirit of prophecy, raises the expectation of mankind to the appearance of a prophet, like, indeed, but far superior to himself; and the Apostles point with the finger to Jesus of Nazareth, saying, "We have found Him of whom Moses, in the law, "and the prophets did write."

A limited creature of threescore years and ten is lost in the contemplation of a period of fifteen hun-

dred and eleven years, for such was the distance of this prophecy from its accomplishment. The short-lived creature loses sight of it, feels his interest in it but small, is at little pains to transmit the knowledge of it to those who shall come after him; the next generation it is neglected, overlooked, forgotten; or, if observed and recollected, it is misunderstood, misapplied. But during every instant of the extended period, the Eternal Eye has been watching over it; in solemn silence attending its progress, triumphing over both neglect and oppression; and a slumbering world is roused at length to see and to acknowledge the truth and faithfulness, the power, wisdom, and grace of the Most High.

The day of Moses, then, in the eye of God, runs down to that of Christ; as His, in return, ascends to the earliest of the promises and predictions, illuminating, quickening, confirming, fulfilling all that is written. Placed at whatever point of the system of Nature, whether on our planet, or on any other, to the north, or to the south, in summer or winter, the eye is still attracted to the common centre of all, the great "light of the world." In like manner, at whatever distance we are placed, and in whatever direction we contemplate the System which Redeeming Love has framed, from under the shade of the tree of life in Eden, from the summit of Ararat, Moriah, or Pisgah, in the plain of Mamre, or from the pinnacle of the temple: with Abraham, viewing the Saviour and his day afar off, or with Simeon embracing Him, the same "Sun of

"righteousness" sheds his glory around us; we see the light, we feel the influence of Him who quickeneth and enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

As we find Moses plainly and unequivocally referring men to Christ, so the Saviour as explicitly refers to Moses for a testimony concerning himself; thereby plainly insinuating, that if the Jewish Prophet deserved any credit, possessed any respectability, this credit, this respectability were ministering servants to the dignity of his own person, the sacredness of his own character, the divinity of his own mission. And this is accompanied with a severe denunciation of judgment against such as admitted the authority of Moses, but rejected that of Christ: for to introduce, recommend, and confirm, this was the end for which Moses was raised up. "Do not think I will accuse you to the "Father: there is one that accuseth you, even "Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed "Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote "of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how "shall ye believe my words?"

This reciprocal testimony, therefore, of the Founders of the ancient and new economy, throws light on both, and communicates mutual credibility and importance. Moses satisfies himself with simply delivering the prediction which he had in charge; he forms no plan, enters into no arrangement to bring it into effect, but leaves to Providence the care of leading the plan forward to the accomplish-

ment, in the proper time and method. Christ simply points to what was written, and was generally known, received, and respected as a Revelation from Heaven, and requires to be believed and obeyed no further than as he bore the characters under which Moses had announced him; particularly that of the "great Prophet which should come into the world."

—The proper character of a prophet is to communicate the special will of Heaven to men. God, indeed, writes his will on the mind of every man, as he comes into the world; He interweaves it with the very constitution and frame of his being, so that, in truth, every man is a law, is a prophet to himself. But the characters are quickly erased, effaced; education, example, superstition, vicious propensities obliterate the writing of God; habit and the commerce of the world harden the heart, and lull the conscience asleep, and "the hearts of men are "set in them to do evil." Hence the necessity of a prophet, of a messenger, of a minister from Heaven, to republish the original law, to restore the obliterated characters, to call men back to God, from whom they have revolted.

And such an one was Moses; raised up of God at a period of singular darkness and depravity, divinely commissioned to promulgate the royal law. Not to settle a different, a novel constitution, not to new-model human nature, but to revive and enforce the primitive constitution, to proclaim in the ear what Nature whispered from the beginning, to hang

up the conspicuous tablet before the eye, whose contents are the exact counterpart of what the finger of God, in the very formation of man, engraved on "the living tables of the heart." And when Christ came, the prophet after his similitude, was it not in like manner to rebuild what was broken down, not to rear a totally different edifice; to magnify the law and make it honourable, to clear it from misinterpretation and perversion, to restore it to its native purity and simplicity, and to extract the spirit out of the letter? "Think not," says he, "that I am "come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am "not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I "say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot "or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, "till all be fulfilled." Matt. v. 17, 18. This confirms the observation which we have been all along endeavouring to inculcate, respecting the uniformity and perseverance of the divine procedure. Men start from purpose to purpose, from pursuit to pursuit; they lose sight, they tire of their object; they waste their strength, they are discouraged by opposition, they began to build before they counted the cost. But "known to God are all his works from "the beginning." He forms his plan, and undeviatingly pursues it. "I am the Lord, I change "not." He lays his foundation, and it standeth sure, and the building rises; "he willeth and none can "let it." "God made man upright;" and to maintain or restore that uprightness is his great aim and

end, under every dispensation of his Providence, under the law and the gospel, by Moses and by Christ.

—A prophet must have the necessary qualifications for his office, must be instructed in the mind of God, must be filled with zeal for his glory, must be animated with ardent love to mankind, must be fortified against the assaults and opposition of ignorance, and prejudice, and envy. And such an one was Moses, "whom the Lord knew face to face," with whom he conversed as a man with his friend; his zeal was inextinguishable; for the good of Israel he was ready to make the sacrifice of self; his meekness was unruffled, his patience not to be subdued, his perseverance indefatigable, his resolution undaunted. How much more eminently conspicuous were these characters of a prophet, in the great "Author and Finisher of the Christian faith!" The only begotten Son who is "in the bosom "of the Father, he hath declared him." "The "zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." "I "came not to do mine own will, but the will of "him that sent me." "The cup which my Father "giveth me, shall I not drink it?"—"This is my "beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. iii. 17.

Moses conversed forty days with God in the mount; but thus saith uncreated Wisdom, "The "Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, "before his works of old; I was set up from everlast-"ing, from the beginning or ever the earth was;"

" before Abraham was, I am." " In the beginning " was the Word, and the Word was with God, and " the Word was God: the same was in the begin- " ning with God. All things were made by him; and " without him was not any thing made that was " made. In him was life, and the life was the light " of men." John i. 1—4.

The spirit of Moses was sometimes stirred within him: he dashed the tables of the law to the ground; " he spake unadvisedly with his lips;" he incurred the displeasure of his heavenly Father; he drew down a sentence of just condemnation upon his head: but the spirit of the Christian Leader was in no one instance discomposed. " He did no sin, neither was " guile found in his lips." He suffered indeed and died, but it was without a crime, " the just for the " unjust, that he might bring us unto God." Moses expressed a willingness to be blotted out of God's book, to be deprived of his personal right as a son of Israel, provided Israel might receive the remission of sin, might have their rights preserved, and the covenant of promise confirmed. But Christ became a " curse for us," was " hanged on a tree," was " cut off from the " land of the living," became " a Propitiation for " sin," " bare our sins in his own body on the " tree," " became a sin for us, though he knew no " sin, that we might be made the righteousness of " God in him."

—A prophet must exhibit the signs of his mission. Men will not believe him on his own report,

they will suspect him of attention to his own fame, or interest, or authority. To prove therefore that he came from God, that he speaks in his name, that he is vested with his authority, he must do the works of God.—And thus was Moses commissioned and permitted to prove his mission. By sign upon sign he demonstrated that the Lord had appeared unto him, and spake by him: earth, and water, and air, bore their united testimony to his divine legation; and the most enlightened nation of the globe was made to feel his ascendant by arguments addressed at once to the senses and to the understanding. Is it needful to say that the great Prophet, "Apostle, and High Priest of our profession," by similar means, by more irresistible evidence, evinced that he was "a teacher sent from God?" I shall say nothing respecting the greater number, variety, and notoriety of Christ's miracles: though every one of these circumstances furnishes ample matter of discussion; I satisfy myself at present with mentioning two particulars which strikingly establish Christ's prophetic character, and give it a clear and decided superiority to that of Moses. The latter acted by a delegated authority, and according to a prescribed form; he assumed nothing to himself, but was checked, reproved, condemned, the moment that he presumed to arrogate independence, and to speak or act for himself. But Jesus Christ wrought miracles in his own name, by his own power, as the Lord of Nature, as possessed of independent

sovereignty. Again, the signs which Moses exhibited were of a mixed nature, they declared both the mercy and judgment of God, they poured down hail, and tempest, and pestilence on Egypt, as well as dropped manna on the tents of Israel; whereas the signs which Jesus adduced in support of his mission were all miracles of mercy; the powers of hell alone felt the rod of his anger; and the miracles by which he confirmed his doctrine, breathed its meekness, and gentleness, and charity.

"Of the things which have been spoken this is "the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is "set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty "in the heavens. A minister of the sanctuary, "and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, "and not man." Heb. viii. 1, 2. "Holy bre-"thren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, "Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that "appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all "his house. For this man was counted worthy of "more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath "builded the house, hath more honour than the "house. For every house is builded by some man; "but he that built all things is God. And Moses "verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, "for a testimony of those things which were to be "spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own "house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the "confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto "the end." Heb. iii. 1—6. "We ought to give

" the more earnest heed to the things which we have
" heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.
" For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast,
" and every transgression and disobedience received
" a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape
" if we neglect so great salvation, which at first
" began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirm-
" ed unto us by them that heard him; God also
" bearing them witness, both with signs and won-
" ders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the
" Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" Heb. ii. 1—4. " He that despised Moses' law died without
" mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how
" much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be
" thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the
" Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the
" covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy
" thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of
" grace?" Heb. x. 28, 29.

Having now, in the course of these exercises through a series of years, endeavoured to trace the history of mankind, in a series of characters, from Adam to Moses, copied from the original portraits which the pencil of Inspiration has itself vouchsafed to delineate; the whole in general, and every one in particular, referring themselves to one great ORIGINAL, from whom their meaning, use, and importance are derived, I hasten to conclude my plan, by turning over to the Gospel history which exhibits that same Moses, whom we saw expire on mount

Nebo, and "buried in a valley in the land of Moab, "over against Beth-Peor;" whose dying benediction yet trembles on our ear, and whose funeral elogy we attempted to sing, alive again on mount Tabor, and giving personal testimony and homage to him whom he prefigured and foretold. The history of Moses is not properly ended till then: and in vanishing from our sight on the mount of Transfiguration, he becomes a glorious harbinger of the "life and "immortality which are brought to light by the "Gospel."

LECTURE IV.

LUKE IX. 28—35.

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.

IN the narrowness of their conceptions and the presumptuousness of their pride, men are apt to consider themselves as the only, or at least the chief inhabitants of the creation of God. A false patriotism, or rather a spirit of insolence and selfishness, has gone farther, has ascribed the consequence of a whole universe to some insignificant little region or district of this little globe, and has represented the

men who breathe on such a spot, and who converse in such a language, as the only persons who are worthy of consideration. We reflect not what a speck our own country is, compared with the whole earth; what a point the earth is compared to the vast solar system, and how the solar system itself is lost, in the contemplation of infinite space. We reflect not on the myriads of "just men made per-"fect," from the death of "righteous Abel," down to the expiring saint, whose disengaged spirit is just now on the wing to the bosom of his God; of those who, lost to us, yet live to their Creator. We reflect not on the myriads of probably more glorious beings, who people the greater and more glorious worlds which surround ours. We reflect not on the myriads of pure spirits who never left their estate, that innumerable company of Angels who "excel "in strength," "the least of whom could wield "these elements."

Sound reason and "the wisdom which is from "above," correct our narrowness of thought and pride of heart; and they teach us to say, in the words which our immortal bard puts in the mouth of Adam first of men, addressed to his fair consort—

——"Nor think, though men were none,
"That heaven would want spectators, God want praise.
"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
"Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep;
"All these with ceaseless praise his works behold,
"Both day and night."

If our ears were not dull and limited as our spirits—

——"How often, from the steep
"Of echoing hill or thicket, should we hear
"Celestial voices to the midnight air,
"Sole, or responsive each to other's note
"Singing their great Creator?—Oft in bands,
"While they keep watch, or nightly round ing walk,
"With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds,
"In full harmonic number join'd, their songs
"Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heaven."

We foolishly imagine the world of spirits to be at a vast distance, whereas in truth we are upon its very confines. We consider its inhabitants as entire strangers to us, whereas they are constantly about our path and our bed, attending our going out and coming in, our lying down and rising up. If our eyes were not held, we should even now behold them joining in and assisting our praises, rejoicing together, when, by the ministry of the word of divine grace, sinners are converted, and saints edified. Little did the three disciples think, when they ascended mount Tabor, that they were so near to an interview with Moses and Elias. Moses, and Elias, and Christ, are not far from us; it is our folly and infirmity to think ourselves far from them.

When we look back to the latter end of Moses, the man of God, we attend him up to mount Nebo, and behold him taking from Pisgah a last look and a last farewell of the glory of this world. We see his eyes closing in peace, we breathe a sigh over his

tomb, and bid him a long farewell, and think we have lost him for ever. But it is not an everlasting adieu. On Tabor we have found him again, after a lapse of fifteen centuries; we find not only his name, his memory, his writings, his predictions, his spirit, alive and in force, but his very person, still employed in ministering to the salvation of the Israel of God: and hence we look forwards to the lapse of a few years more, at the expiration of which we hope to meet him indeed, not armed with that fiery law which condemns and consumes, but a minister and a fellow partaker of that grace which redeems and saves.

We cannot consider ourselves therefore as having yet concluded the history of Moses, while that memorable event of it, which is the subject of this evening's reading, remains unconsidered; and as the evangelic page has exhibited him to us alive from the dead, let us devoutly attend to the reason and end of this glorious apparition. It naturally suggests to us the following reflections:

I. That Jehovah is, with undeviating. undiverted, undivided attention, carrying on the great plan of his Providence to full maturity, by every order of beings, in every possible state; by those who cheerfully enter into his views, and joyfully submit to his will; and by those who carelessly neglect or proudly oppose it. We have seen him serving himself of this Moses in the court of Pharaoh, in the pastures of Midian, in the wilderness of Sinai; as a prophet, as a legislator, as an historian. And to fit him for

a new field of action, we behold him shining in a new and glorious form. The grave seems to have surrendered up its trust, heaven has yielded up one of its inhabitants, and Moses is now admitted into a land from which he was once shut out. In this world we have still to deplore faculties wasting, impairing, extinguished; usefulness interrupted, cut off in the midst by the stroke of death, the earth impoverished by the premature departure of wisdom and worth. The history of mankind exhibits projects blasted, schemes abortive, instruments feeble and inadequate, concussions violent, revolutions sudden and unexpected; but far different is the view which the Scriptures represent of the kingdom of God. In it, one generation passeth not away that another may succeed, but there is an eternal accumulation of citizens, eternally increasing in wisdom, goodness, and felicity; faculties ever improving, projects advancing in full certainty of success, means fitted to their end, and the one great scheme of the Eternal Mind proceeding in steady, uniform majesty to its final consummation. Pleasing, awful thought! "The counsel of the Lord standeth for "ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Psalm xxxiii. 11.

II. We observe from this history, the benevolent interest which celestial beings take in the affairs of men. They are no unconcerned spectators of what passes here below. They who have been raised from earth to heaven have not lost all recollection of the world which they have left, nor dropped all

concern about their brethren in the flesh. Moses and Elias with joy revisit an inferior region, if thereby they can be instrumental in promoting the work of redemption; and exchange, for a season, the society of angels, and the delight of the paradise of God, for the company of simple fishermen, and of a barren mountain's top, that we might have strong consolation in contemplating "the sufferings "of Christ," and the glory that "preceded and fol-"lowed." O what an exalted, what a generous spirit does true religion breathe and inspire! It makes angels "ministering spirits to them who are the "heirs of salvation;" it brings departed saints back to earth again; it converts Tabor into Heaven, and determines the choice of an Apostle, when in a strait betwixt two, and to prefer abiding in the flesh, because more needful to his fellow-creatures, to the selfish joy, though far better, of departing and being with Christ. But Moses, and Elias, and Paul were themselves men, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; they were instructed by sympathy to commiserate, and prompted by affection to relieve, human wretchedness. Behold an infinitely greater miracle of generous, disinterested love; "God so "loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten "Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not "perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. —Jesus "loved us, and washed us from our sins in "his own blood, and hath made us kings and "priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory "and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. i.

5, 6.—"Verily he took not on him the nature of an-
"gels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."
Heb. ii. 16—"As children are partakers of flesh
"and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the
"same; that through death he might destroy him
"that had the power of death, that is, the devil;
"and deliver them who through fear of death were
"all their life-time subject to bondage." Heb. ii.
14, 15.

III. The history before us suggests the sweet harmony, the perfect intelligence, which subsist between glorified spirits. Moses and Elias, as they co-operated in the same design, though at different periods upon earth, much more concur in sentiment, in exertion, now they see more clearly, and comprehend more fully the intentions of a wise and gracious Providence. Through ignorance, through pride, through jealousy, through malice, imperfect men on earth will differ, will hate and oppose each other; but in celestial bosoms the dark, malignant, unsocial passions find no place: in them there ever prevails unity of intelligence, unity of design, unity in operation, unity of affection. Prompted by the same motive, aiming at the same end, Gabriel, a multitude of the heavenly host, Moses and Elias, angels single and in bands, announce to the world the advent of the Saviour, celebrate his birth, witness his transfiguration, relieve his agony, record his death, declare his resurrection from the dead, grace his ascent to heaven, proclaim his second coming. And O what must be that harmony and

joy! the harmony and joy of heaven, where angels and archangels, the cherubim and the seraphim, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the whole multitude of the redeemed, animated by one spirit, adore the same object, rejoice in the same grace wherein they stand, and join in the same triumphant song!

Connect with this the idea of the quick and perfect intelligence which subsist between the children of this kingdom. The happiness of heaven is a social, not a solitary joy. But how can the poverty of our imagination, the coldness of our affections, conceive the intimacy of intercourse, the promptness of communication, the sympathy of feeling, in pure spirits wholly disposed to love, and free from all desire or design to disguise, to deceive, to conceal?

"Where friendship full exerts her softest power,
"Perfect esteem enliven'd by desire
"Ineffable, and sympathy of soul,
"Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
"With boundless confidence."

THOMSON.

With what promptitude and intelligence celestial beings converse, say, ye gentle spirits who know what it is to soothe and relieve the lazy lingering hours of absence by the friendly aid of letters; ye, whom the murmur of a sigh, or the tone of a single word can instantly instruct; ye, whose hearts the pressure of a finger can awake to rapture; ye, whose kindred, congenial souls the

slightest glance of the impassioned eye can, in a moment, quick as the lightning's flash, penetrate, kindle, inform, assimilate;——

" Ye whom the sudden tear
" Surprises often when you look around,
" And nothing strikes your eye but sights of bliss."

THOMSON.

But the purest human affection is ever dashed with doubt, with apprehension, with suspicion; its communications are liable to be retarded by dulness, prevented by accident, or checked and blasted by a malignant eye, and therefore can at best convey but an imperfect idea of that " perfect love " which casteth out fear," of that divine sympathy which speeds the holy intercourse from soul to soul, of that mutual understanding which needs not the medium of sense to convey it.—

Though we cannot conceive, much less describe, in what manner angels and saints in bliss converse one with another, yet from the text we know, what is the *one, great darling* theme of their conversation. Moses and Elias descend from their heavenly thrones, from before the fountain of light and life, appear in glory, revisit the earth, associate with men, to do homage at the feet of Jesus, and to " speak of his decease which he should accomplish " at Jerusalem." This leads to a

IV, and the most important remark on this passage of our Saviour's history, in connexion with that of Moses, namely, That under every dispen-

sation, before the giving of the law, and under its reign, when it was restored, and after it is abolished; to righteous men on earth, to just men made perfect, to the angels of God—in the eye of God himself, there is one object of peculiar magnitude and importance, which is before all, above all, runs through all, and in which all shall finally terminate. It is surely not without a meaning, that the promises, the predictions, from first to last, point out a Saviour that should suffer and die; that all the types, services, sacrifices of the law should represent a salvation that was to be wrought out, and to be purchased with blood; that the whole doctrine of the Gospel should be compressed into one point, the doctrine of the *cross;* that the throne of God eternal in the heavens should exhibit at its right hand, and in the midst of it, "a Lamb as it had "been slain;" that the song of the redeemed should celebrate him who loved the sons of men, and "washed them from their sins in his blood!" O the infatuation of a careless, unbelieving world! That subject which the ransomed of the Lord dwell upon with ever new and increasing delight; that great "Mystery of Godliness," which "angels desire to "look into;" that object which the great God has marked with special precision as his own? the wonder of heaven, the joy of the earth, the theme of eternity, "was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and "the Greeks foolishness:" it still is to a faithless and perverse generation a thing of nought, the song of the drunkard, the jest of fools! If that blood

has fallen and lies with such oppressive weight, both as a temporal and a spiritual curse, on those who rashly imprecated it on themselves and their children, and then impiously and remorselessly shed it, "of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, "shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden "under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the "blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanc-"tified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite "unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 29. May that blood be upon us, and upon our children, to cleanse, not to condemn, to exalt, not to overwhelm us; and be it our determinate resolution, through the grace that is in Christ, to know nothing in comparison of Christ Jesus, and him crucified, "and "to glory in nothing but his cross."

V. Observe the superiority ascribed, by a voice from the most excellent glory, to Christ the Lord, swallowing up and eclipsing all created excellency and perfection. "This is my beloved Son, hear "him," Luke ix. 35, proclaims the voice; and instantly Moses and Elias disappear, that Jesus may be all in all. They have brought their glory and honour, and laid it at his feet; they have pointed out to mankind in whose light they shine, in what consists their chief eminence and distinction. They in effect say the same thing with John Baptist, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, "whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose." John i. 27.—"Behold the Lamb of God, which "taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29.

They forbid us to look toward them, or to trust in them for salvation. Having given this testimony to their Lord and ours, they retire to that world of bliss into which they found admission through that blood which cleanseth from all sin, through the decease which Christ was ready "to accomplish at "Jerusalem."—Let us joyfully bend the knee to Him, who, "for the suffering of death, is crowned "with glory and honour, and has obtained a name "that is above every name;" whom Moses and Elias acknowledge as their greater; whom all the angels of God are commanded to worship, as "the "image of the invisible God, the first-born of every "creature," "by whom were created all things that "are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible, whe-"ther they be thrones, or dominions, or prin-"cipalities, or powers; all things were created by "Him, and for Him." Col. i. 16.

Finally, The passage exibits to our wondering eyes a glimpse of that glory which all the faithful shall finally attain; in the person of one who had never tasted death; whose body, by a miracle of almighty power, was fitted for heaven and immortality without seeing corruption in the grave; and of one who, as we must, died and was buried, and by a similar miracle, was either ransomed from the power of the grave, or whose glorified spirit was fitted with a temporary vehicle of transparent flesh for the present grand occasion; but above all, in the person of the Greatest of the three, who was pleased on this occasion to clothe humanity, which

had not yet suffered, but soon was to suffer death, with a transitory glory, the forerunner of that which should quickly follow, and do away all the ignominy of the tomb, and become the sure pledge of that glory with which he shall invest all them that believe, after "the fashion of his own glorious "body."—While we contemplate mount Tabor, the immortal spirit looks through the frail tottering fabric of flesh and blood, in which it is enclosed; and while, from its present connexion, it surveys with concern the inroads of disease, the wastes of time, the approaches of dissolution; from the visions of God, from the power of free sovereign grace, from the present attainments of the faithful, it beholds with rapture the splendour of that vehicle in which it shall ascend "to meet the Lord in the "air," when "mortality shall be swallowed up of "life:" when it shall be united to a body unsusceptible of pain, undepressed by its own gravity, unfettered by the laws of dull matter, uncondemned to mortality. Glorious and blessed day, when the meanest of the saints shall resemble Moses, not in that green and lively old age which experienced not dimness of eyes, nor abatement of natural vigour, but in that renovated youth, that unfading beauty, that impassive strength, that immortal lustre, wherein on the mount of the Lord he was seen. When every saint shall resemble Elias, not by mounting with the help of a chariot of fire and horses of fire into heaven, but with native force, immediately derived from the

great Source of life and motion, shall spontaneously ascend up to his native seat; shall resemble Christ, his divine head, not in that sinless infirmity to which he voluntarily submitted in the days of his flesh, but in that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and which for a moment burst forth on the mount of Transfiguration, when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment "was white as the light."—Glorious and blessed Gospel! which first taught the resurrection from the dead, which has "abolished death, and brought "life and immortality to light;" whose "exceeding "great and precious promises" make men "par-"takers of a divine nature;" whose hallowed page represents saints and angels quitting their heavenly abode to minister to the necessities of wretched mortals, rising to everlasting possession of heavenly thrones.—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, "where is thy victory?"—"Thanks be to God, "which giveth us the victory through our Lord "Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 57.

But now the curtain is dropped; Moses and Elias have resumed their places in heaven, and the glory of Tabor is no more. Yet, though unseen, they cease not to instruct us. Though withdrawn, they are in the midst of us still; the distinction of past and future they feel no longer, and separation by space cannot keep celestial beings asunder. Providence brought together into one place the giver and restorer of the law, and the first harbingers of the Gospel, blending earth and heaven together in

homage to the Son of God.—And all distance between them too is now for ever done away. Remote as we are, we behold them together in a state of glorious perfection, but permitted to converse with us no more. But He is with us still, their Lord and ours; his voice we can still hear, after they are silenced, and Him we are commanded to hear.—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and "to-day, and for ever:"—"To Him all the pro-"phets give witness," and He is "the end of the "law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

And thus have we finished our proposed delineation of the lives of the Patriarchs, from Adam, the father of the human race, down to Moses the great legislator and prophet of the Hebrew nation; with the intermediate illustrious personages, whom the Spirit of God has preserved from oblivion, for our information and use; whom Providence raised up in the earlier ages of the world, to occupy distinguished stations, and to accomplish important designs; who, by their respective characters, offices, and declarations, predicted or prefigured the Messiah; who edified the world, while they lived, by their doctrine and example; and who, being dead, continue living monitors and instructors of mankind.

While we contemplate the progress of those venerable figures along the plain of existence, we feel ourselves in motion; we are hurrying down the stream, we begin to mingle with the assembly of

the departed, we leave our place among men empty. Of those who entered with us on this career of meditation, "some are not;" their course is finished, they have fulfilled their day, they are gone to join the men who lived beyond the flood. The cold hand of death has frozen up some of the streams of friendship; the congelation is gaining upon our own vital powers, and marking us for the tomb, where the endearments of social affection, and the meltings of sympathy, and the glow of love, are felt no more. But, "we sorrow not" over departed worth "as those who have no hope." God, and angels, and "the spirits of just men "made perfect," have gained what the world has lost: they move in a higher sphere; they perceive with purer intelligence, they act with superior energy, they enjoy with more exalted capacity; they die no more, they are as the angels of God in heaven: and Providence charges itself with the care of the forsaken, the helpless, and the forlorn, whom they have left behind.—And we look forward together to that day when we shall join Moses and Elias; Peter, and James, and John, and all who have died before us, or shall die after us in the Lord, not in the glory of Tabor, which was to pass away, but of Mount Zion, which is above, and which endureth to endless ages—when we shall come together "unto the city of the living God, "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable "company of angels, to the general assembly and "church of the first-born which are written in

" heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the " spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the " mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood " of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than " that of Abel." Heb. xii. 22—24; and dwell together in a tabernacle not erected by the hands of man, the habitation of an hour, but in a " build- " ing of God, an house not made with hands, eternal " in the heavens."

Be ye therefore " followers of them who through " faith and patience inherit the promises."—Purchase for yourselves a deathless name among the " ransomed of the Lord."—Consider yourselves as encompassed, observed, tenderly regarded by those to whom you were dear while they tabernacled among you, and who now love you with the ardour of immortals.—Add to the consolation which they enjoy, that of marking your progress in wisdom, your growth in grace.—Cultivate acquaintance with the language which you are to speak, with the spirit which you are to breathe, the manners with which you are to conform, the persons with whom you are to converse eternally—" Seeing we are also com- " passed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, " let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which " doth so easily beset us, and let us run with " patience the race that is set before us, looking " unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; " who, for the joy that was set before him, endured " the cross, despising the shame, and is set down " at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb.

xii. 1, 2. "Behold what manner of love the Father "hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called "the sons of God."—"Beloved, 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 man that hath this "hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." 1 John iii. 2, 3.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE History of the Patriarchs, from Adam to Moses inclusively, was all I intended to give from the Press. The favourable reception with which that Work has been honoured induces me to hope that it may have been useful; and it encourages me to comply with a request repeatedly made, that I would publish at least the subjects which follow, they having been peculiarly acceptable from the Pulpit. Being an attempt to delineate the female *character, from real examples, it may perhaps have the merit of interest with readers of that sex. And if it shall in any degree serve to maintain their importance, and to promote their improvement, society will have gained from the publication. I again respectfully submit it, such as it is, to the public judgment.*

H. H.

Hoxton,
1st Jan. 1802.

LECTURE V.

GENESIS II. 18.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.

THE Holy Scriptures always exhibit the most simple and the justest view of every subject which they treat. And what subject of importance to man do they not treat? The God who made us what we are, formed man after a model, destined him for a special situation, and to fulfil a specific purpose. His faculties, his relations, his duties, his demands, his delights, were all, from the beginning, present to the eye of his Creator; and a corresponding arrangement and provision were made by Him, who seeth the end from the commencement, and who exactly adjusts all, according to number, weight, and measure.

The perfection of the works of God is a beautiful and gradual progress toward perfection; from inanimate to vegetative, from vegetative to animal, from animal to rational Nature; each approaching to, bordering upon each, but every one circumscribed by a boundary which it cannot pass, to disturb and confound the province of another. The scale of being, as to this globe, was complete when God had

"created man in his own image." But social existence was not perfect till it pleased God to draw man out of solitude, by making him "an help-meet "for him." This simply, yet clearly, unfolds woman's nature, station, duty, use, and end. This raises her to her *proper* rank and importance, and instructs her how most effectually to support them; this forbids her to aspire after rule, for her Maker designed her as "an helper;" this secures for her affection and respect, for how is it possible to hate or despise what God and nature have rendered essential to our happiness? If the intention of the Creator, therefore, is attended to, the respective claims and duties of the sexes are settled in a moment, and an end is put to all unprofitable discussion of superiority and inferiority, of authority and subjection, in persons whose destination and whose duty it is, to be mutually helpful, attentive, and affectionate.

The female character and conduct have frequently presented themselves in the course of the history of the Patriarchs. And indeed how can the life of man be separated from that of woman? Their amiable qualities and praiseworthy actions have been occasionally pointed out, and unreservedly, though without adulation, commended: their faults and follies have been, with equal freedom, exposed and censured. But in the instances referred to, female conduct has undergone only an incidental and transient review, in detached fragments, and as supplementary to, or producing influence on, the conduct

of man. The pencil of inspiration, however, having introduced persons of the gentler sex into its inimitable compositions; and these not always thrown into the back-ground or placed in the shade, but sometimes springing forward into the light, and glowing in all the brilliancy of colouring, I have been induced, with trembling steps, to follow the heavenly Guide; and to follow up the fainter sketches of a Sarah, a Rebekah, a Rachael, a Miriam, with the more finished portraits "of "Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth,"—"Ruth the "Moabitess," and "Hannah," the mother of Samuel the prophet. In order to introduce these with greater advantage, I mean to employ the present Lecture, in giving a general delineation of the female character, as it is represented in the passage now read, and as being, in the purpose and act of the great Lord of Nature, an "help meet for man."

Every creature was intended to yield help to man: the flower, with its beauty and fragrance; the tree, with its nutritious fruit; the animal tribes, with all their powers of ministering satisfaction to the senses or to the mind. Adam surveyed them all with delight, he saw their several characters in their several forms, he gave them names, he observed and glorified his Creator's perfections displayed in himself, and in them. But still he was alone amidst all this multitude; the understanding was employed, but the heart wanted its object: the tongue could name all that the eye beheld, but there was no tender, sympathetic ear, to which it

could say, "How fair, how lovely, how glorious is "all this that we behold!"—"For Adam there was "not found an help meet for him." The want of Nature is no sooner perceived by the great Parent of man, than it is supplied; the wish of reason is no sooner expressed than it is gratified. Paternal care and tenderness even outrun and prevent the calls of filial necessity. Adam has felt no void, has uttered no complaint; but "the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone: I "will make him an help meet for him." And with God, execution certainly and instantaneously follows design. "And the Lord God caused a deep "sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he "took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh "instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord "God had taken from man, made he a woman, "and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my "flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was "taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave "his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto "his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Verse 21—24. How completely suitable an helper God provided for man in a state of sinless perfection transcends imagination, much more description; conceive all that is lovely in form, all that is graceful in manner, all that is exalted in mind, all that is pure in thought, all that is delicate in sentiment, all that is enchanting in conversation. This felicity was made subject to alteration: this har-

mony was not to continue perfect; but the original intention of the Creator was not to be defeated, no, but even in a state of degradation, difficulty, and distress, as in a state of purity and peace, it was still the destination of Providence, that woman should be "an help meet" for man: in what important respects, we are now to inquire.

The first and most obvious is, as his counsellor and coadjutor in bringing up their common offspring. Education, on the part of the mother, commences from the moment that she has the prospect of becoming a mother; and the care of her own health is, thenceforth, the first duty which she owes to her child.* From that moment too she becomes, in a peculiar sense, "an help meet" for man, as being the depository and guardian of their most precious joint concern. How greatly is her

* The instructions given to the wife of Manoah, and the mother of Samson the Nazarite, (Judg. xiii. 4,) "Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing," are not merely arbitrary injunctions, adapted to a particular branch of political economy, and intended to serve local and temporary purposes; no, they are constitutions of nature, reason, and experience, which unite in recommending to those who have the prospect of being mothers, a strict attention to diet, to exercise, to temper, to every thing which, affecting the frame of their own body or mind, may communicate an important, a lasting, perhaps indelible impression to the body or mind of their offspring. A proper regimen for themselves is, therefore, the first stage of education for their children. The neglect of it is frequently found productive of effects which no future culture is able to alter or rectify.

value now enhanced! Her existence is multiplied, her duration is extended. A man-child is at length born in the world; and what helper so *meet* for the glad father in rearing the tender babe, as the mother who bare him? There are offices which she, and only she, can perform; there are affections which she, and only she, can feel; there are difficulties which she, and only she, can surmount. Nature has here so happily blended the duty with the recompense, that they cannot be distinguished or separated. In performing every act of maternal tenderness, while she tends and nourishes the body of her infant, she is gradually and insensibly forming his mind. His very first expressions of look, voice, and gesture, are expressions of the important lessons which his mother has already taught him; attachment, gratitude, a sense of obligation and dependence. Hitherto she is the sole instructor, "and a stranger intermeddleth not with her joy." The dawning of reason appears; the solicitude of a father awakes; what a task is imposed upon him! Who is sufficient for it? But he is not left to perform it alone. The Lord God has provided him "an help meet for him," one prompted by duty, drawn by affection, trained by experience, to assist him in the

"Delightful task! To rear the tender thought,
"To teach the young idea how to shoot,
"To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,
"To breathe th' enlivening spirit, and to fix
"The generous purpose in the glowing breast."

THOMSON.

In the more advanced stages of education, after the pupil is removed from under the maternal wing, of what assistance to the father, of what importance to the child, are the delicate ideas and the tender counsels of a wise and virtuous woman! Read "the "words of King Lemuel, the prophecy which his "mother taught him," Prov. xxxi. 1—9; and judge whether or not a mother may be an useful "help" in instructing a son, a grown son, and that son a prince. In truth, the mother's influence over the child, as it begins earlier, so it is of much longer duration than even the father's. The son having become a man, or approaching to that state, begins to feel uneasy under the restraints of paternal authority; he longs to shake the yoke from off his neck; he pants for independence—he must obtain it. But what ingenuous young man ever felt a mother's yoke galling, or longed for emancipation from the silken fetters in which her gentle fingers had entangled his soul? In the perfection of understanding, in the plenitude of power, in the self-gratulation of independence, to her milder reason he still submits, her unassuming sway he readily acknowledges, and, independent on all things else, he feels he cannot do without the smiles of maternal approbation, the admonitions of maternal solicitude, the reproofs of maternal tenderness and integrity.

Whatever be the dispositions, whatever the faculties of the child, whether earlier or later in life, the business neither of father nor masters can proceed wisely and well, without the co-operation of the

mother. Who knows so well as she the road to the understanding, the road to the heart? Who has skill like her, to encourage the timid and to repress the bold? Who has power and address like a mother's, to subdue the stubborn and confirm the irresolute? Who can with such exquisite art draw out, put in motion, and direct ordinary or superior powers? Who can so well place goodness in its fairest and most attractive light, and expose vice in its most hideous and forbidding form? In the case of those persons who have unhappily grossly deviated from the path of virtue, how many have been stopped, converted, brought back by consideration of maternal feelings—shame, and sorrow, and regret; and by the recollection of early lessons, and principles, and resolutions. Having been "trained up, when a child, "in the way wherein he should walk," the man calls it to remembrance in old age, he approves it, he returns to it, and "departs from it" no more.

In educating the children of her own sex, the mother seems to be more than "an help meet" for man. The trust chiefly, if not entirely, devolves on her: and where could it be deposited so well? The knowledge which she has of herself, experience of the world, and maternal affection, are all she needs to qualify her for this arduous undertaking. A mother only can enter into the feelings, and weaknesses, and necessities of a young female, entering on an unknown, varying, tempestuous, dangerous ocean! for she remembers how she herself felt and feared, what she needed, and how she was relieved,

assisted, and carried through. And to a mother only can a young female impart the numberless, nameless anxieties which every step she takes in life necessarily excite. When she converses with her mother, it is only thinking aloud. A mother's conduct is the loveliest pattern of virtue, and the hope of a mother's applause is, next to God's, the most powerful motive to imitate it. The superiority of female to male youth in respect of moral, whatever be the case as to intellectual improvement, is clearly deducible from the larger share which the mother has in the education of the one, than of the other. And the more liberal and enlarged spirit of the times in which we live, procuring for the female world a more liberal and rational education, is daily evincing to what an equality of intellectual endowment they are capable of rising, and thereby of, in all respects, fulfilling the design of the Creator, who said in the beginning, "I will make for man "an help meet for him."

I now proceed to mention a second most important respect, in which it is the obvious intention of Providence that woman should be "an help meet" for man, namely, The care and management of his worldly estate.

In a paradisiacal state man *did* not, and in what is improperly called the state of nature, he *could* not long continue. In the former, there was labour imposed not as a burden or a punishment, but bestowed as a privilege and a source of delight. The help of woman enhanced the value of that privilege,

and improved that delight: and even in Paradise, the attention of Eve to the disposal of the fruits of his labour must have been to the man an exquisite accession to the pleasure of enjoying them. The arrangement which her taste and care had made, constituted the charm of the repast. In a state of uncultivated nature, the subsistence of the day is man's leading object. He has no idea of "much "goods, laid up for many years." But the society and assistance of his rude companion are necessary to give a relish to "what he took in hunting;" and "the burden and heat of the day" he cheerfully encounters, in the prospect of the refreshment and repose of the evening; and even the hut in the desert exhibits the accomplishment of the Creator's purpose, woman "an help meet" for man, managing his scanty portion with discretion, and doubling it by participation.

As the state of society advanced, new ideas of property must have been produced. The labour of to-day began to look forward; "to-morrow, and to "morrow, and to morrow." The care of posterity arose. Permanency must be given to possession. The earth and its produce are parcelled out, men "call their "lands by their names," "house is joined to house, "and field added to field." But could man do this alone? No. In vain have his labour and skill provided "bread enough, *and to spare*," unless the woman's prudent attention manage that sufficiency, and lay up that surplus for the evil day which may

come. No man ever prospered in the world without the consent and co-operation of his wife. Let him be ever so frugal, regular, industrious, intelligent, successful—all goes for nothing, if she is profuse, disorderly, indolent, or unfaithful to her trust. His farm prospers, his barns are filled with plenty, "the floors are full of wheat, the vats overflow with "wine and oil," his cattle increase, he is waxing rich. His neighbour's commerce thrives, his plans were well laid; Providence smiles; the wings of every wind are wafting to his door gold, and silver, and precious things. The talents of a third are procuring for him reputation and distinction, and honour and wealth. How came they all to fail? Who opened the door, and let poverty rush in as an armed man? The thing speaks for itself. The design of Heaven was defeated; the parties were "un-"equally yoked;" the "help" found for these men was not "an help *meet*" for them. Skill was counteracted by carelessness; the fruits of diligence were scattered about by the hand of dissipation: the labours of a year perished in the sitting of an evening; "by much slothfulness the building decayed, and "through idleness of the hands the house dropped "through."

But "O how good a thing it is, and how plea-"sant," when the gracious intentions of God and Nature are fulfilled! With what spirit and perseverance does a man labour in his vocation, when he knows that his earnings will be faithfully disposed, and carefully improved! With what confidence

will he resort to his farm, to his merchandise, fly over land, over the seas, meet difficulty, meet danger, if he has the assurance, that he is not spending his time and strength for nought and in vain; that all is well and safe at home; that indulgent Heaven has crowned all his other blessings with that of "an "help meet for him," a discreet manager of his estate, a fellow-labourer with him, from interest, from affection, from a sense of duty, in "doing "justly," in seconding the goodness of Divine Providence, in making fair provision for the time to come, in "providing things honest in the sight of all "men!" I conclude this branch of my subject, with a portrait drawn by the pencil of inspiration; may Heaven propagate the resemblance.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price "is far above rubies. The heart of her husband "doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no "need of spoil. She will do him good and not "evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool "and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. "She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her "food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet "night, and giveth meat to her household, and a "portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, "and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she "planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with "strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She per-"ceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle "goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to

"the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She "stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she "reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is "not afraid of the snow for her household: for "all her household are clothed with scarlet. She "maketh herself coverings with tapestry; her "clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is "known in the gates when he sitteth among the "elders of the land. She maketh fine linen and "selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the mer-"chant. Strength and honour are her clothing: "and she shall rejoice in time to come. She open-"eth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue "is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the "ways of her household, and eateth not the bread "of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her "blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou "excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and "beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the "Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit "of her hands; and let her own works praise her "in the gates." Prov. xxxi. 10—31.

A third respect in which God intended that woman should be "an help meet" for man, is the care of his health and every thing connected with it, his tranquillity of mind, his temper, his character, and reputation; without which the greatest bodily vigour will quickly decay and sink, and life will cease to be a blessing.

It is pleasant to have a companion in solitude, an assistant in labour, a fellow-partaker in joy. But human life contains varieties painful as well as pleasant. Sorrow, pain, solicitude, and disappointment, enter into the history of man: and he is but half provided for the voyage of life, who has found an associate for his happier days only, while for his months of darkness and distress no sympathizing partner is prepared, no "help meet" is found. The provident care of the Almighty meets every wish and want of man; and in bestowing upon him a companion for youth, a sharer in felicity, a partner in property, He was securing for him at a distance, a friend in age, a solace in affliction, a partner in want,—"a friend that sticketh closer "than a brother."

If a man's worldly estate, whether it be much or little, is wisely managed, one foundation of health and comfort is laid; and she who is thus habitually employed may be considered as administering a perpetual medicine or cordial to her husband. But no prudence of foresight can ward off the attack of disease, or prevent the stroke of calamity; affluence cannot purchase release from pain, nor tenderness cool the fever in the blood. But the sufferer is not left destitute. There is one ear into which he can pour out all his heart; there is one hand ever ready to relieve him; "one life bound up in his life." And as enjoyment derived all its relish from participation, so misery loses all its anguish in the bosom of sympathy and kindness. The spirit of

penitence is inferior only to unsullied innocence: and next to the blessing of unimpaired health and uninterrupted comfort, is the consolation of sickness alleviated, and comfort restored, by the gentle language and engaging offices of love. What shall I say? Is there not, perhaps, in the restoration of repenting guilt, and in the suspension of woe, by the assiduity of affection, a peculiar satisfaction and delight, which perfect innocence and perfect health could not possibly have known?

The regular temperature of a man's body is however only one ingredient in the cup of health. "An help meet for him" will be anxious to preserve a sound mind in a sound body; will endeavour to prevent or to dispel painful reflection; will remove disquieting objects; will present smiling images; will watch the ebbing and flowing of passion, will bear and forbear, and, like the Best of Beings, will "overcome evil with good."

She will likewise consider herself as intrusted with the care of his good name. His reputation is her brightest ornament, his honour is her joy and crown of rejoicing. If he is disgraced, she is degraded. Every instance of misconduct in her, she knows, glances at him; and therefore to support his dignity is a powerful motive with her to act wisely and well. She reflects that not only by gross deviations from duty in the wife, does the husband suffer in character, but that levity, indiscretion, carelessness in her, are an imputation upon his understanding, and, in the opinion of the world,

incessantly upbraid him with the choice which he has made of "an help meet for him." As she would therefore compassionately nurse his body in pain and sickness, and prudently study and watch his temper amidst the conflict of contending passions, so, in order to approve herself what God and Nature meant her to be, she will guard his fame, the life of his life, "as her precious eye," and thus, in every thing relating both to mental and bodily health, to private comfort and public estimation, "she will "do him good, and not evil, all the days of her "life."

But there is somewhat still dearer, still more sacred to a man than children or property, than health or reputation, somewhat which, neglected, forfeited, lost, it will profit him nothing to gain "even the "whole world;" and in the securing and promoting of which, who is so qualified to minister and assist as her, whom the Father of mercies gave him, to be "an help meet for him?" I mean,

Fourthly, The salvation of the immortal soul. This is indeed a personal concern; an interest which cannot be transferred or communicated. The goodwill of another cannot impart it; the remissness of another cannot defeat it: to God, his great Master, here every man standeth or falleth, for "every one "must give account of himself to God." But is it not obvious that example, that reason, that co-operation possess a mighty influence toward promoting or obstructing personal piety, growth in grace, meetness for the kingdom of heaven? is the

impressed with the worth, with the danger of his own soul; does he feel "the powers of a world to "come;" is his mind turned to devotion; is the love of God shed abroad in his heart? How will such impressions be fixed and strengthened, by endeavouring to communicate them to a beloved object, and by receiving back the impression heightened and improved, from that object! How much more exalted and affecting is a sense of divine goodness, when it is beheld embracing more than one! When it is seen conferring immortality, eternity, on virtuous human affections! What a live coal is applied to devotion, when the solitary *my* Father and *my* God, is changed into the social *our* Father and *our* God! How is the hope of glory ennobled, extended, animated, by the prospect of participation! "Here am I, Holy Father, with her whom thou "gavest me to be *an help meet for me.* We were "one in interest and affection; one in the faith of the "Gospel and in the practice of piety? our prayers "ascended in one stream of incense, and every "gift of thy providence and grace was multiplied "and sweetened to each, by being bestowed on the "other.—Sweet were our labours of love to our "joint offspring; sweet our united efforts to improve "the bounty of our common parent; sweet the "sympathies of kindred hearts, in sickness and in "health, in sorrow and in joy, in good and in bad "report: but sweeter far the consolations of reli-"gion, the prospect of *life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel.*" We come together to

" *receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our* " *souls;* as through grace we have been made help- " ers of each other's faith, let us be eternally help- " ers of each other's joy."

Is the man unhappily dead to all sense of religion; swallowed up of time and sense, is his great, or only inquiry, " What shall I eat, what shall I drink, " wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Or, more wretched still, is he delivered over " to commit " iniquity with greediness," " and to glory in his " shame?" What are the most likely means of awakening him to reflection, of reaching his conscience, of melting his heart, of changing his conduct? Preaching is vain; he turns " a deaf ear to " the voice of the charmer, charm he never so " wisely:" prosperity fosters pride and forgetfulness of God; adversity only hardens him the more: reason is perverted, passion has acquired the ascendant, the power of habit predominates: but the Lord God has provided " an help meet for him." When public instruction and foreign reproof have failed, the mind is still accessible. The unaffected, unostentatious charm of genuine female piety is felt and understood, and it becomes efficacious; the silent un-upbraiding regret of conjugal tenderness supplies the place of a thousand arguments, and forces its way to the heart; " the effectual fervent " prayer" of a gracious woman " availeth much;" the " believing wife" draws to the Redeemer, with the cords of love, " the unbelieving husband;" she becomes the blessed instrument of " converti he

"sinner from the error of his way, she saves a soul "from death, she hides a multitude of sins," and, in the noblest sense of the word, approves herself "an "help meet" for man.

In all these important respects, the original design of eternal wisdom, in the formation of woman, is plain and palpable. To have fulfilled one branch of duty, and even to have excelled in it, is no exemption from the obligation of the rest. The duties of life and of religion run in a series, one is linked with another, supposes it, supports it, cannot be separated from it. To no purpose are children well educated, if through the indolence, folly, or vice of parents, they are launched into the world in doubtful, dishonourable, embarrassed, or distressful circumstances. What is it to me that my fortune is prudently and frugally managed, if my person is neglected, my temper trifled with, my reputation sacrificed, "my good name filched from "me?" And what is the acquisition of a world at the expense of my soul?

Let it be understood and remembered, that every word which has been said of the obligation laid on woman, as "an help meet" for man, applies with at least equal propriety and force to man, as the helper and friend of woman. Does he possess superiority of any kind? It is evidently intended not to oppress but to support. His greater strength is given for her protection; his more vigorous or profound powers of thought are designed to be her instructor and guide. Whatever advantage, real or

apparent, each may have above the other, Providence clearly wills that it should be employed for the comfort and benefit of the other. A contention of mutual affection, beneficence, forbearance, forgiveness, is the only strife which nature, reason, and decency permit to this state and relation.

We proceed to illustrate female utility and importance in social life, by certain noted examples from the Sacred Record. May God smile on every attempt to communicate useful truth. Amen.

LECTURE VI.

JUDGES IV. 4, 5.

And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el, in mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

THE unremitting attention paid by a wise and gracious Providence to the affairs of men, affords equal matter of wonder and gratitude, with the astonishing power and skill displayed in the first formation of this great universe. Let us suppose the care of that Providence for a little while suspended, and the world left to itself. Who is not shocked in looking forward to the probable, the certain consequences of that remission? Behold instantly the bars of the vast abyss burst asunder, and "hell itself breathing forth destruction to mankind." Behold the prince of the power of the air reigning and raging without control. Behold chaos and ancient night resuming their murky empire, and darkness covering the face of the deep; behold earth and air confounded; nature convulsed by the fury of contending elements, unrestrained by law; universal confusion and wild uproar prevailing.

s, it is not necessary to state the supposition

so high. To conceive the wretchedness of mankind, deprived of the constant, superintending care of Heaven, it is needless to let loose the demons of the bottomless pit; it is needless to unbridle the fury of the ocean, or to assist the roaring winds in blowing up the fire into a hotter flame. Under the *slightest* alteration of the established order of things, all nature languishes. Remove, for a moment, the all-ruling, all-supporting hand of the great Father of the Universe, and lo, one fair and fertile region is overwhelmed with an inundation, and another is burned to one pumice-stone, by the force of celestial or subterraneous fire. Here arises a race of all males, like the fabled generation of warriors which sprung from the serpent's teeth, armed at all points for mutual destruction and slaughter; and there, a nation of timid defenceless females, inviting violence and insult. But under an uninterrupted divine superintendance all goes on well; there is no schism in the body; every thing is found in its place, every thing performs its function. The exactest proportion between male and female births is preserved; the robuster frame is still found united to the stronger mental faculties; the delicacy of the feminine form indicates, to the very eye, the softer, gentler qualities of the spirit which inhabits it; and nature assigns to each the limits of duty, and the sphere of usefulness and exertion.

But the Great God is pleased to make himself known, not only by general conformity to established laws, but by occasional deviation from

them: that the sons of men may know, it is according to His high will, that all creatures are, and think, and act.

The history which this evening comes under our review exhibits a new thing in the annals of human nature; it asserts the sovereignty of the Most High over all persons and events; it places the female character and importance in a new, a striking, and a respectable point of view. It thereby admonishes the male sex to think of their own natural general superiority with deference, affection, and honour to the manly excellencies of the female mind, when cultivated by a proper education, directed to a worthy object, and roused into exertion by a great and worthy occasion. Hitherto we have seen wise and good women in the retired vale of domestic life, their proper and peculiar sphere; Sarah co-operating, in the duties of hospitality, with her venerable lord; Rebekah refreshing the weary traveller and the thirsty camel, as they went on their way, with water from the well; Rachel, and the seven daughters of Jethro tending their father's flocks, and making them to lie down under the shade at noon; Miriam leading the festive dance and song, in celebrating the loving-kindness of the Lord and the triumphs of Israel; and Rahab giving shelter to the persecuted spies, and providing for the safety of her father's house.

But we are now to contemplate female genius and talents forcing their way to public observation, and to everlasting renown: eclipsing masculine sa-

gacity and fortitude; the inspirer and the example of generous patriotism and martial prowess. We are to contemplate feminine warmth and eagerness, under the influence of prophetic inspiration, and blended with the dignity and integrity of the judgment seat; female spirit giving breath to the bloody trumpet of war, directing the movements of the embattled host, waking into sacred, poetic rapture, and adapting the joyful strains of victory to the musical sounds of the living lyre.

Israel had now enjoyed a blessed repose of fourscore years; and they are again corrupted by ease and prosperity. Their national character and conduct are a striking representation of those of many individuals, whom we are daily meeting with in the world; who are capable of bearing neither prosperity nor adversity; whom it is impossible to serve or to save; who by their perverseness or folly are perpetually undoing the kindest designs, and counteracting the most vigorous efforts of their friends in their behalf, and whom, at length, friends are constrained to abandon in despair. Well has Nehemiah, their countryman, described this character, and displayed the patience and long-suffering of God, in that recapitulation of their history which is addressed solemnly to Heaven, in the ninth chapter of his book: "And they took strong cities, and a "fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, "wells digged, vineyards, and olive-yards, and "fruit-trees in abundance. So they did eat, and "were filled, and became fat, and delighted them

" selves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless, they " were disobedient and rebelled against thee, and " cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy " prophets which testified against them to turn them " to thee, and they wrought great provocations. " Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hands " of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the " time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, " thou heardest them from heaven; and according " to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, " who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. " But after they had rest, they did evil again before " thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of " their enemies, so that they had the dominion " over them; yet when they returned and cried " unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and " many times didst thou deliver them, according to " thy mercies; and testifiedst against them that thou " mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they " dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy com- " mandments, but sinned against thy judgments, " which if a man do he shall live in them; and with- " drew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and " would not hear. Yet many years didst thou forbear " them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in " thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: there- " fore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of " the lands. Nevertheless, for thy great mercies' " sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor " forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merci- " ful God." Neh. ix. 25—31.

If we are to judge of the atrocity of the offence committed on the occasion before us, from the severity of the punishment, the length of its duration, and the violence of their oppressor, we must conclude it to have been uncommonly grievous: for the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, part of whose formidable host consisted of nine hundred chariots of iron; and who for "twenty years together mightily oppressed the chil-"dren of Israel." Calamity is peculiarly oppressive when it is embittered with the reflection, that it might have been prevented, that it is the native fruit of our own doings; and with finding the wretched associates of our guilt the wretched partakers of our woe.

Hope seems quite extinguished in Israel. Not one man of common spirit, in the course of twenty years' oppression, appears awakened to a sense of his country's wrongs, and generously prompted to hazard his life in removing or avenging them. But the cause of the church of God is never to be despaired of. Its emblem is, "the bush burning, but "not consumed;" its motto, "cast down, but not "destroyed." And whither are our eyes at this time directed to behold the saviour of a sinking country? Behold the residue of the spirit is upon the head of a woman; the sacred flame of public spirit, smothered and dead in each manly breast, yet glows in a female bosom, and the tribunal of judgment, deserted by masculine virtue and ability, is

honourably and usefully filled by feminine sensibility, discernment, honesty, and zeal. "And "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she "judged Israel at that time." Judges iv. 4. She was a wife and a mother in Israel, and such a wife is a crown to her husband, such a mother is the glory and pride of her children; but her great, her capacious soul embraced more than her own family; she aimed at the happiness of thousands, sweetly blended public with private virtue. Is it unreasonable to suppose that the discreet and wise management of her own household first procured her the public notice and esteem; and that the prudent deportment of the matron passed, by a natural and easy transition, into the sanctity of the prophetess, and the gravity and authority of the judge? Certain it is, that the reputation which is not established on the basis of personal goodness, like a house built upon the sand, must speedily sink and fall to pieces.

Hitherto we have seen only "holy *men* of God "speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But the great Jehovah is no respecter of persons or sexes; "the secret of the Lord is with them that "fear him, and he showeth unto them his holy "covenant." The simple dignity of this woman's unadorned, unassuming state is beautifully represented: "She dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, "between Ramah and Beth-el, in Mount Ephraim: "and the children of Israel came up to her for judg- "ment." Judges iv. 5. Behold a female mind ex-

alted above the pageantry and pride of external appearance; a mind not deriving consequence from the splendour of her attire, the charms of her person, or the number of her retinue, but from the affability of her manners, the purity of her character, the sacredness of her office, the impartiality of her conduct, the importance of her public services; not wandering from place to place, hunting after a little empty applause, but sought unto of all Israel for the eminency and extensive utility of her talents and her virtues. Her canopy of state was the shade of the palm-tree; her rule of judgment, the law and the testimony of the living God; her motive, the inspiration of the Almighty; her aim and end, the glory of God and the good of her people; her reward, the testimony of a good conscience, the respect of a grateful nation, the admiration of future generations, the smiles of approving Heaven. What are, compared to these, the ermined robe, the ivory sceptre, the chair of state, the glittering diadem!

But alas! what availeth the most upright and impartial administration of justice, among a people enslaved in the extreme, groaning under a foreign yoke, holding liberty, property, and life, by the wretched tenure of a tyrant's caprice? The ardent soul of Deborah aspires at nothing short of a total emancipation of her bleeding country, from those inglorious chains. And, like a true prophetess of the living and true God, she engages in this noble

and generous enterprise, not with the zeal of an enthusiast, not in an idle, inactive reliance on supernatural assistance; but in the honest confidence of a good cause, with the diligent use of the most promising means, and ultimate dependence on the blessing of Him, "who worketh all things after the "counsel of his will."

The character of this illustrious heroine grows upon us as we proceed; and it exhibits a picture of female excellence, to which her own sex may look with emulation and honest pride, and ours with admiration and esteem, unmixed with envy. —An ordinary woman, in her place, and possessed of her advantages, would probably have aimed at the sole reputation of having delivered her country. But when a military operation is to be set on foot for the attainment of this end, with the modest reserve becoming her sex, she satisfies herself with advising only. When the sword of Israel is to be drawn, let it be wielded by manly hands; let Barak come in for a share of the danger, the labour, and the praise. She is to be the directing head, and he the active hand.—But what was the broken strength of two of the least of the tribes of Israel? What were ten thousand men to carry on offensive war against a power which could employ nine hundred chariots of iron as part of his force? What must have been the number of infantry that corresponded to this formidable armament? For such a handful of men to appear in arms, was to provoke their own fate, not to serve their bleeding country; it was to

rouse their haughty oppressors into more violent rage and cruelty, not to attack them with a probability of success. The force called for by the prophetess, by divine appointment, was thus small that the glory of all, in the issue, might be ascribed solely to God: and it was thus great, to teach mankind, that as they hope to prosper, their own exertions must co-operate with the influence of over-ruling Providence.

Such was either the general despondency that prevailed in Israel at that dark period, or such the general confidence reposed in Deborah, that Barak accepts of the commission given him, and consents to head the forces of his country into the field, under the express condition that their prophetess and judge would be his companion and directress in the warfare. To this she yields a cordial assent, and cheerfully engages to take part in all that regarded the public service, whether counsel or resolution were needful to carry it on. She would not, could it with propriety be avoided, become a leader in arms, but she feels no reluctance, and is conscious of no fear, when attending the captain of the Lord's host into "the valley of decision." It is pleasant to observe how the manly virtues, properly modified and corrected, may be adopted into the female character, not only without giving offence, but so as to communicate the highest satisfaction and win approbation: and how, on the other hand, the softest of the female graces may, without sinking the manly character, without exciting contempt, become a

shade to the boldest, hardiest, masculine qualities. Courage has been reckoned an attribute peculiar to men; but it is easy to conceive it so raised, and so expressed, and so exerted, as to be not only pardonable in, but highly ornamental to women. "A "hen gathering her chickens under her wings," is a picture not only of maternal tenderness, but of the most undaunted intrepidity. "A bear bereaved "of her whelps" is not more fierce and more fearless. A mother defying the danger of the pestilential air which she inhales from her smitten child; a mother flying as a lioness on the brutal wretch who dared to crush her little darling: how dignified, what a noble creature she is! A tender virgin stirred up into holy indignation at hearing her absent friend traduced by the tongue of malevolence, forgetting herself for a moment, to repel the barbarous insult—it is a disorder so lovely, that it almost deserves to be stamped with the name of virtue. To see Deborah quitting her seat under the palm-tree, to attend Barak to the top of mount Tabor, when the enemies of her God and of her country are to be engaged and subdued; what heart does not catch fire from her heroic ardour! what tongue can withhold its tribute of praise!

While Deborah without hesitation agrees to accompany Barak to the high places of the field, by virtue of the spirit of prophecy which was upon her, she informs him that the glory which he should obtain was to suffer considerable diminution, not only by her participation of it, but also by the com-

munication of it to another woman, for whom Providence had reserved the honour of putting the last hand to this arduous undertaking. Indeed this seems to be a crisis, in the history of human nature, at which Providence intended to exhibit the powers of the female mind, in all their force and all their extent; intended to represent the sex in every situation that can create esteem, inspire love, command respect, or awaken terror. The united spirits and achievements of Deborah and of Jael the wife of Heber seem to comprehend the whole compass of the feminine character in its more extraordinary feelings and exertions; and, in the displaying the conduct of these two individuals, they excite our attention to the whole sex, as the most warm, steady, and affectionate of friends, or the most formidable, dangerous, and determined of enemies.

But we must not bring forward both these at once. We conclude with a few reflections on what has been suggested from the history of Deborah.

I. It exposes the folly of despising or undervaluing any description of our fellow-creatures in the lump. All national reflections are founded in ignorance and folly; and the despisers have often paid dear for their insolence and presumption. The illiberal abuse so indiscriminately poured upon the gentler sex is of the same nature. It generally comes from men something worse than the worst part of womankind. The truly sensible, and the truly brave, entertain far better, and far more just sentiments of female utility and importance in the

scale of being; and they are ever disposed to ascribe to female capacity and worth, more than female modesty and wisdom are disposed to assume, or even to receive. No *good* man ever wished to see the female character undervalued or degraded; and perhaps very few *good* women have ever violently coveted stations and employments which belong peculiarly to men. But as Nature delights in producing variety as well as uniformity, it is not to be wondered at, if we sometimes meet with men more silly, timid, and frivolous, than the most insignificant of the other sex; and, on the other hand, with women as daring, as enlightened, as magnanimous, as public-spirited, as the first among mankind. The rivalship, however, and competition of the sexes are altogether ridiculous and absurd. Each has its distinct, and both have their conjoined dignity and usefulness—and mutual concession is the truest wisdom in the one and in the other. But,

II. However weak and contemptible the instrument may be in itself, from the hand that wields it, it becomes mighty and respectable: and the history before us becomes, and that not darkly, a typical representation of the Gospel of Christ, which was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to "the Greeks foolishness." Pride and self-sufficiency smile at the idea of a female prophet, a female judge, a female poet, a female politician, a female warrior; and yet, in truth, women have filled all those offices with credit to themselves, and

with satisfaction to the public. And "who hath "made man's mouth; or who maketh the dumb, "or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind?" In the honoured list of those who "through faith subdued "kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained pro- "mises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched "the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the "sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed "valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the "aliens," female names too stand recorded with commendation and renown. And "what had, "thou, O man, but what thou hast first received?" —"God hath chosen the foolish things of the "world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen "the weak things of the world to confound the "things which are mighty; and base things of the "world, and things which are despised, hath God "chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring "to nought things that are: that no flesh should "glory in his presence."

III. As the great Ruler of the world never can want an instrument to save, so he is always provided with instruments to punish. "He is wise in heart, "and mighty in strength; who hath hardened him- "self against Him and hath prospered? The haughtiest of monarchs is at length constrained to "praise, and extol, and honour the King of Heaven, "all whose works are truth, and his ways judg- "ment, and those that walk in pride he is able to "abase."—"By a strong hand and stretched-out "arm," Pharaoh is at length compelled to "let

" Israel go."—" Humble" then " thyself," O man, " under his mighty hand."—" Be wise now, O ye " kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve " the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

The next Lecture will carry on the history of Deborah in connexion with that of Jael. I conclude the present with calling on the female part of my audience to bless God, that while he has carried some of their sex through the most arduous employments, the most eminent stations, and the most hazardous enterprises, not only with safety but with applause, he is pleased in general to put their talents and their virtues to a trial less severe; and let them remember, that after all which has been, or may be said, in praise of the few who have acted wisely and well upon the public theatre, to the generality, " the post of honour is a private station."

LECTURE VII.

JUDGES IV. 21—23.

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: (for he was fast asleep, and weary:) so he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

WHEN we consider how frequent, how violent, and how sudden are the transitions from condition to condition in human life, pride appears to be a mystery of folly below contempt. To behold a rational being assuming consequence on an empty unmeaning title; or from the possession of a little wealth, that bird of passage eternally on the wing; or from beauty and strength, which accident or disease may blast in a moment, and which the lapse of a very few years certainly will impair; to behold a man putting confidence in princes, or feeding on the applause of a multitude; to hear him saying to himself, "Soul, take thy rest; thou hast much "goods laid up for many years:" "My mountain "standeth strong; I shall never be moved:" All

this is calculated to excite derision, not resentment; and when reason and experience ponder what the end may be, anger sinks into pity. Not only is frail man every moment at the mercy of a being, Almighty to save and to destroy; but the proudest and mightiest is every moment in the power of the weakest and meanest of his fellow-creatures. The tongue of the wretch whom thou despisest may ruin thy reputation for ever. The crawling insect in thy path is armed with deadly poison against thy life. That nodding wall threatens to crush thee to pieces. Arm thee at all points as well as thou canst, malice or hatred, envy or revenge, will still find some part unguarded; and, bleeding to death, thou shalt find thou wert not invulnerable.

Those who are distinguished by their rank, their abilities, or their virtues, attract the notice of many observers, and create to themselves many open, and many more secret enemies. The history of Sisera, the captain of the host of Jabin, king of Canaan, is a striking illustration of most of these remarks. In him we see a man rendered insolent by successes, intoxicated with prosperity, betrayed into disgrace through confidence of victory, the dupe of confidence in his own strength, and then the victim of confidence, equally unwise, in the fidelity and attachment of a stranger. We behold him in the morning, advancing to the unequal conflict at the head of a mighty and hitherto invincible host; in the evening a bleeding corpse, fallen ingloriously by the hand of a woman.

Deborah, the prophetess of Israel, having transfused the patriotic ardour of her soul into Barak, not only directs him what he should do, but offers herself as the companion of the expedition which she had planned. With ten thousand men of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali under his command, Barak takes possession of mount Tabor, meaning to act only on the defensive, till Providence should point out an occasion of acting to advantage. The rashness and impetuosity of Sisera soon presented him with such an opportunity. Enraged to think that an enemy so often discomfited, so long oppressed, so broken by calamity, should presume to make head against their lordly masters, he collects the whole of his vast strength, and invests the mountain, determined to crush the puny insurrection at one blow.

The sagacious judge and divinely inspired prophetess of Israel observes the season to be favourable, observes that the unwieldy army of the Canaanites was ready to fall in pieces by its own weight, that their vain confidence was destroying them, and that, above all, Heaven was propitious. She gives the signal of attack, and lo, "one chases a thou-"sand, and ten put ten thousand to flight." The cause was of God, and it prospers: and the mighty hand and outstretched arm of Jehovah once more asserts Israel into liberty.

Whatever praise is to be ascribed to the conduct of Barak on this occasion, and to the intrepidity of this little army, it is evident from some expressions

in the song of praise which was composed in celebration of the victory, that the defeat of the Canaanites was in part at least miraculous. "They fought "from heaven." "The stars in their courses," it is said, "fought against Sisera." By "the stars" some interpreters understand "the angels of God," who are sometimes designed by that name. Josephus takes the words in a different sense, and affirms that an extraordinary storm of rain, mixed with hail, blinded the eyes of the Canaanites, and drove back their darts upon their own heads. The Rabbins, with still less appearance of probability, allege that certain constellations of a pestilential influence consumed the army of Sisera, burnt them up with thirst, and drove them for refreshment to the brook Kishon, where they were met, in a languid enfeebled state, by the troops of Deborah and Barak, and put to the sword. The expedition from first to last was without controversy conducted and crowned by the hand of Providence. But the narration of the event, on the sacred page, is too general and concise to enable us to pronounce with confidence where the providence of human sagacity and valour ended, and where the interposition of Heaven began.

However it were, the victory was complete; the enemy was totally routed and put to the edge of the sword; the commander in chief alone escapes the universal carnage of the field; and he, who a little before had nine hundred chariots of iron at his disposal, sees himself stripped of all, and is constrain-

ed to consult his safety by flight. A prince without subjects, and a general without an army, shrink into poor, wretched, solitary individuals, the more to be pitied from the giddy height whence they have fallen.

The history drops the myriads which composed the army of Sisera into a silent grave; and it pursues the sad tale of the unhappy man himself up to his tragical death. Seeing his army slaughtered and put to flight, and himself in danger of falling into the hands of triumphant Israel, he alights from his chariot, and flees away on foot. "How are the "mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" What a sad reverse within the compass of one short day! And to such reverses human life is eternally liable. The greatest uninspired bard has put this passionate exclamation in the mouth of a dethroned monarch of our own country, addressing himself to his few wretched attendants, the poor remains of his departed state:

> Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
> With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
> Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
> For you have but mistook me all this while:
> I live on bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
> Need friends:—Subjected thus,
> How can you say to me—I am a king?
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

Behold the mighty Sisera weary and faint with thirst, without one of so many thousands to assist

or comfort his flight, seeking refuge from his pursuers in the tents of an allied power, Heber the Kenite.

By looking back to the book of Numbers, chap. x. we find that Hobab, the son of Raguel or Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, had left his native residence, to attend the camp of Israel as their guide through the wilderness, and had been persuaded by Moses, his brother-in-law, to cast in his lot among that people, upon a solemn assurance, that, on their settlement in Canaan, he and his family, and descendants, should share in the fruits of victory, and obtain a portion in the land promised to the children of Abraham. This accounts for our finding them established, at such a distance of time, in the border of Kedesh Naphtali. On the invasion of the country, however, by Jabin king of Canaan, we find them observing a strict neutrality. "There "was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor, and "the house of Heber the Kenite." Verse 17. In the confidence of this, Sisera betakes himself to the Kenite for protection: and is received by Jael the wife of Heber with every mark of humanity and respect due to a great man, and a friend in distress. She brings him milk to quench his thirst, covers him carefully up in her own tent, to repose himself from the vexation and fatigue of that disastrous day, and to conceal him from the pursuit of Barak. She promises inviolably to keep secret the place of his concealment; and, relying on that promise, weary and worn out, he falls into a profound sleep.

Jael avails herself of his defenceless situation, and seizing such arms as were at hand, a hammer and one of the pins or nails used in stretching out the tent, she transfixes the head of the unhappy sleeper as he lay along, and with redoubled blows fastens the bleeding temples to the ground.

Such was the inglorious end of a man on whom that morning's sun had risen with a smiling aspect; who awoke from sleep in the possession of all that royal favour could bestow, all that sovereign power could compel, all that flattering hope could promise. Of the motives which could impel Jael to such a deed of horror we have no information. Her conduct, we know, is celebrated in the song of Deborah in terms of the strongest approbation; which obliges us to conclude, that there are circumstances in the story which the Spirit of God has not thought proper to disclose. The great Jehovah needs not a vindication of his conduct from the labour and ingenuity of a wretched ignorant mortal. He has but to discover a few little particulars which are as yet hid from our eyes, and then, what now confounds and overwhelms our understanding becomes clear and intelligible to the meanest capacity. Instead, therefore, of vainly and presumptuously attempting to reconcile this action of Jael with the laws of morality, which by the glimmering light we have is impossible, we shall make a few observations on the history, of a general and practical nature. And,

I. We repeat, what has been already suggested,

" that human reason is a very incompetent judge of " divine proceeding." We know so little, so very little of the system of nature; our own constitution is such an inexplicable mystery to ourselves; we meet every where so many difficulties, contradictions, defects, redundancies, at least we take upon us to think and call them so, as must lead us to this conclusion, That either the work of God is imperfect; or that we cannot find out him and his work unto perfection. Now the little reason we have cannot hesitate an instant in choosing its side of this alternative. And if we confessedly are unqualified to judge of that which is less, dare we presume to pronounce concerning that which is greater? If the volume of Nature, spread open to the perusal at once of our senses and of our reason, present many things not only hard, but impossible to be understood, can we deem ourselves qualified or entitled to explain, to justify, or to arraign the more dark and mysterious ways of Providence? And which is the greater pride and presumption, that which is for ever " charging God foolishly," or that which sets itself up as the bold interpreter and assistant of eternal wisdom and justice? Observe,

II. An obvious reason, why these difficulties are permitted in the frame of nature, in the conduct of Providence, and in the revelation of the grace of God. It is to form us to submission, to exercise our patience, to fix our attention, to whet our industry, to repress our boldness, to increase and confirm our confidence in God. It is a mark of respect to

superior wisdom and virtue, not always to require an explanation, but to repose implicit trust in known goodness and integrity. A wise man, in the consciousness of his own rectitude, disdains to acknowledge the obligation of clearing up his conduct to every prating meddler who may think proper to call him to account, and who has neither a right nor a capacity to judge of his motives. And shall we withhold from our Maker that decent respect which we so cheerfully pay to a fallible, imperfect fellow-creature? Shall we refuse to take the God of truth upon his word? Shall we think it much, if in some cases he exact belief without vouchsafing to assign a reason? "Why dost thou strive against "him? He giveth not account of any of his "matters." Job xxxviii. 13. Our sacred bard has sublimely expressed this noble sentiment, drawn from the volume of inspiration; considering the divine Providence under the image of a vast sealed up book, chained to the eternal throne, containing the character, the revolutions, the destination of angels and men, but closed to the inspection of every created eye. We observe,

III. That it is doing the grossest injustice to the wise and righteous Governor of the world, to suppose him in every point approving the person, or the conduct, by which he carries on his great designs. Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar are styled the servants of God, though the one knew him not, and the other openly defied him. The rod which

he condescendeth to use, for the chastisement of disobedient and gainsaying children, when their reformation is accomplished, he often breaks and dashes on the ground. Every instrument which he employs must necessarily partake of human imperfection; but it follows not that he is pleased with imperfection. The devices of Satan himself shall in the issue redound to the glory of God, as "the "wrath of man must praise him;" but that wrath is hateful to his nature, and those devices his wisdom counteracts, and his justice condemns. We are not therefore to mistake the patriotic ardour of a female Israelitish bard, for the calm, the merited applause of the God of mercy and truth. I can easily conceive the person, whom national partiality, resentment, or gratitude would celebrate in strains of admiration, to be regarded with abhorrence by the Father of mercies, the avenger of falsehood, the refuge of the miserable. And while Israelitish Deborah, in the heat of her zeal, makes the eulogium of a woman so unlike herself, and styles Jael, the wife of Heber, who murdered her sleeping guest, "blessed above women," why may not a Christian Dorcas, a woman of mercy and humanity, "a "woman full of good works, and alms deeds," under the mild and gentle influence of that religion which she believes, feels, and practises, reprobate the cruel and perfidious act, and its author, in terms of the severest indignation? Indeed the conduct of Jael, considered by itself, is a horrid complication of all that is base and detestable in human nature; it is

an infamous violation of sacred truth; it is a daring infringement of the law of nature and nations; it is a flagrant breach of the laws of hospitality, which the most savage natures and nations have respected as sacred; it is the vilest degradation of her character as a woman; and it is the most barbarous exhibition of a little mind, enjoying the triumph over unsuspecting credulity and defenceless misery. "Cursed be her anger, for it was fierce, and her "wrath, for it was cruel." Observe,

IV. Into what dreadful extremes we impetuously rush, when the radical principles of our nature are once subdued. Time must have been, that the idea of shedding the blood of another would have chilled the blood in Jael's veins.—What must it have cost her to overcome the timidity, the tenderness, the compassion of her sex! But being overcome, lo, each gentle, feminine passion is lulled asleep; and frantic zeal or demoniac revenge alone is awake. Ah me, what beast of prey is so savage and unrelenting as a human being destitute of pity! Ah me, how easily do the best things degenerate into the worst! Of what importance is it, to guard against the first deviation from the simple and direct path! Who can promise for himself that he shall stop, return, and regain the right road, when he pleases? Observe,

V. That the rarity of the instances, the peculiarity of the situations, and the singularity of the spirit and conduct apparent in the female characters here brought into public view, forbid, by more than a

positive law, female interference in matters of business and of government. Believe me, my fair friends, it is not stripping you of your just importance, it is increasing and securing it, to say that the shade is your native, your proper station: it is there you shine, it is there you are useful, it is there you are respectable. Your heart and your understanding assent to the truth of this. Is there a woman among you who would not prefer, in obscurity, the affection of her husband, the attachment and gratitude of her children, the estimation and respect of her friends, to all the public splendour of Deborah's magisterial power and prophetic spirit; to all the blushing impurpled honours of Jael's more than masculine resentment? It is not your want of talents for government which we dispute; it is the suitableness of government to your talents, your natural dispositions, your real honour and happiness. A wise and good woman never can desire to become the object of universal admiration, nor the subject of every one's discourse. If you aim at so much, depend upon it you will lose something of what you have, and which is infinitely better than all the incense of flattery, than all the sonnets of a thousand poetic swains. In the history of our own country, the reigns of two female sovereigns shine with conspicuous lustre. They were periods of great national prosperity and glory. But the weakest of women would not surely thence infer, that the sceptre ought always to be committed to female hands. With all due deference to the memory of an Eli-

zabeth and an Anne, and to the general felicity which their administration diffused over the land; Great Britain can look with pride and exultation to a Queen, whose personal glory and virtues far exceed theirs: Not a sovereign indeed, but a partner of the throne; who shines in reason's eye, because she affects not to shine; who reigns over willing hearts, because she disclaims all rule; who is great and blessed among women, because she nobly sinks the princess in the woman, the wife, the mother, and the friend.

We encroach no farther on your patience by extending our observations on the subject. And the rather, as a review of the song of Deborah, composed on this memorable occasion, will, if God permit, bring it again before us, and place female genius in our eye, in a new and not unpleasing point of light; uniting poetic and musical skill to fervent devotion, heroic intrepidity, and prophetic inspiration. A combination how rare, how instructive, how respectable!

LECTURE VIII.

JUDGES V. 1—5.

Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes: I, even I will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.

To some it is the gift of Heaven to perform actions worthy of being recorded; to others it is given to preserve the memory of illustrious actions, in writings worthy of being read. To both the world is under great obligations, and gratefully permits the historian or the poet, to divide the palm with the hero or the sage whom they celebrate. To the writer, perhaps, the more ample share of praise is due. The achievements of valour and strength are local and temporary. They benefit but a few, and they quickly spend their force. But the historic and poetic page, more durable, more diffused, and more conspicuous than monuments of brass and marble, is an universal and a perpetual blessing to mankind, conveying to distant nations and latest

posterity, harmless pleasure blended with wholesome instruction.

On a favoured few has been conferred the combined glory of acting nobly, and of writing well; of serving their own day and generation, with credit to themselves and advantage to their country, and of transmitting useful information to regions remote and to generations unborn. On the list of those illustrious few stands, with distinguished honour, the name of Deborah the judge, the prophetess, the sweet singer of Israel; and it is with exultation that we observe the most dignified, arduous, and important stations of human life filled with reputation by a woman: a woman who first with resolution and intrepidity saved her country in the hour of danger and distress, and ruled it with wisdom and equity; and then recorded her own achievements in strains which must be held in admiration, so long as good taste and the love of virtue exist in the world.

Having with veneration and respect attended to the equitable decisions, and to the oracles of truth which flowed from the lips of the female seer and sage who sat under the palm-tree in mount Ephraim; and having accompanied the undaunted heroine to the top of mount Tabor, and to the ensanguined plains washed by the river of Kishon, let us listen with wonder and delight to the lofty strains of the female bard, and join our voices in the burden of her song.

This sublime poem is the most ancient that ex-

ists, two excepted, namely, that which celebrates the miraculous passage through the Red Sea; and the sweetly swelling notes of the dying swan of Israel. It is two hundred and thirty-four years later than the former, and one hundred and ninety-four years than the latter of these sacred compositions; but it is four hundred and ten years older than Homer, the great father of heathen poesy. From its high antiquity therefore, were there nothing else to recommend it to notice, it is most respectable; but from its antiquity, and the very nature of poetical composition, it must of necessity be in some respects involved in difficulty and obscurity. This we pretend not wholly to clear up or to remove. Instead then of making an attempt in which we should probably, perhaps certainly fail, we shall satisfy ourselves with pointing out a few of the more obvious and striking beauties of a piece which all will allow to contain many and shining excellencies.

The inscription of this hymn of praise first challenges our notice. "Then sang Deborah, and Barak "the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying." Verse 1. In exhibiting the character and conduct of this truly estimable woman, the feminine delicacy and reserve are never dropped. As a ruler and a prophetess, she is introduced under her relative character of the wife of Lapidoth. As the leader of armies to battle, and leader in the musical choir which celebrated the victories of her country, she is represented as the companion and co-adjutrix of Barak the

son of Abinoam. She was undoubtedly the first woman of her own, perhaps of any age; but her consequence, in place of being diminished, is increased and supported by the blending of private, personal worth and ability, with the relations of social life, those of wife, mother, and friend.

Adam might exist a little while in Paradise before Eve was formed, but Nature, Reason, and Religion, all seem to declare, that woman can neither comfortably nor reputably subsist, separated from that side whence she was originally taken. Who will deny that the superiority in point of discretion and understanding is frequently on the side of the female? But a woman forfeits all pretension to that very superiority, the moment she assumes or boasts of it. Whether, therefore it were Deborah's own good sense and female modesty, which preferred appearing in a connected, to appearing in a solitary state, though this might be more flattering to vanity; or whether the Spirit of God in representing the most elevated of female geniuses in the most elevated of situations, thought proper to point her out as connected and dependent, the same lesson of moderation, diffidence, delicacy, and condescension is powerfully inculcated; and her sex is instructed where their true dignity, safety, honour, and comfort lie.

The time is marked when this triumphant anthem was first composed and sung. "On that day." It had been a day of danger, anxiety, and fatigue; a day of vengeance upon the insulting foe; a day of

mutual congratulation and rejoicing; but ill had Israel deserved such a victory, and shamefully had Deborah improved it, if either the emotions of joy or of revenge had excluded those of gratitude and love. The tongue of Deborah, like the pen of a ready writer, dictates "acceptable words" to the thousands of her people; she cannot think of repose till the evening sacrifice of praise be offered up, and from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The day which the arm of Omnipotence had distinguished by wonders of mercy, must not be concluded without songs of deliverance. From "the con-"fused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in "blood," the soul turns with holy joy, to the acknowledgment of that "right hand and holy arm "which had gotten them the victory:" and in one solemn "praise ye the Lord," bursting at once from every tongue, every redeemed Israelite calls upon himself and upon his fellow to give unto JEHOVAH the glory due unto his name.

Here the song naturally begins, by this it must be supported, and in this it must terminate. All creatures, all events point out "Him first, Him "last, Him midst, and without end."—"Praise ye "the Lord."

But religion is "a reasonable service." The divine essence we do not, we cannot know; "the "invisible things of God," even "his eternal power "and deity," are to be discovered only by the "things which he has made," and the things which he doth. Here then the spirit of praise immediately

fixes, and the recent interposition of a gracious Providence rises instantly into view: his "avenging "of Israel," in which Jehovah is acknowledged as at once just and merciful: just in recompensing tribulation to them that troubled his covenanted church and people; merciful in giving his troubled people rest.

Vengeance; the vengeance of God! Fearful thought! but, oh, it is sweetly relieved by the reflection, that the right of executing vengeance is claimed by the God of mercy, with awful propriety, as his own. This dreadful thunder no arm but his own must presume to wield: "Vengeance is mine, "I will repay, saith the Lord." If I must be punished, "let me fall now into the hand of the LORD, "for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into "the hand of man." The only vengeance permitted to man is a vengeance of kindness and forgiveness; the only coals which he must scatter are the coals of fire of love. "If thine enemy hunger, "feed him; if he thirst, give him drink:—Be not "overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, "do good to them that hate you, and pray for them "which despitefully use you and persecute you: that "ye may be the children of your Father which is "in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the "evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just "and on the unjust." Matt. v. 44, 45.

The voluntary actions of the people, in "offering "themselves" to fight their own battles, are with

singular beauty ascribed to the wisdom and goodness of God, who has the "hearts of all in his hand," and can "turn them which way soever he will." He who could have saved by miracles, will save by means. If there be a spirit of concord to resist the common enemy, it is of the LORD. If internal dissension aid the enemy without, we behold a righteous God infatuating those whom he means to destroy.

Having thus simply proposed the glorious subject of her praise, "the sweet enthusiast" prepares to unfold and amplify it. She throws her eyes over the face of the whole earth: she views all nations and their potentates as interested in the glowing theme; and she summons an admiring world to listen to her song. "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, "O ye princes; I, even I will sing unto the Lord: "I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel." Ver. 3. What so delightful to a grateful and affectionate heart, as the enumeration of benefits received! What benefactor is once to be compared with the Giver of all good, "the Father of lights, from "whom cometh down every good gift, and every "perfect!"

Having proposed her theme and summoned her august audience, the divine poetess seems to pause for a moment, as if awed by the presence of such a splendid audience and overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task which she has undertaken, and, with renovated strength, aims her flight, like the [illegible]le, up to her native skies. The deliverance of

that day brings former wonders of mercy to mind; and "God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for "ever," is seen and adored in all. Instead of expatiating on the goodness of the Most High in strains addressed to the "kings and princes" whom she had called to attend, she rises at once to "JEHO-"VAH'S awful throne," she loses all sense of created majesty, and loses herself in the contemplation of infinite perfection. "Lord, when thou wentest "out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field "of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens "dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The "mountains melted from before the Lord, even "that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel." Ver. 4, 5.

The former part of this animated address probably refers to that passage in the history of Israel, which we have in the Book of Numbers, chap. xx. relating to the passage of Israel through the land of Idumea, which was humbly and peaceably solicited, and unkindly refused. Of this some particulars might have been reserved by tradition to the times of Deborah, though not admitted into the sacred Canon, and might have suggested to her the lofty expressions which she here employs in celebrating the praises of Israel's God. Though he would not permit them to force a passage by the sword through the country given to the posterity of Esau their brother, yet in guiding them round the confines of Idumea, in the majestic symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud and fire, the Great

God might by some sensible tokens make Edom to know, it was not from want of power, but of inclination, that he led his people in a circuitous course. The language of the prophetess, divested of its bold figurative dress, is simply this: "The wonders of "this day, O Lord, recall and equal the greatest "wonders of ages past. We have seen the stars in "their courses fighting against our enemies, as our "fathers of old saw mountain and plain, heaven and "earth, giving testimony to the presence and favour "of the God of Israel.—The field of Edom and "the vale of Kishon are equally filled with the "glory of the Lord. We recognize in the hand "which has discomfited the host of Sisera, the "same Almighty Power which restrained the Idu-"mean, and conducted our ancestors, if not by the "nearest, certainly by the best road to Canaan."

The latter part of the address evidently refers to the awful solemnity with which the law was given from mount Sinai; in which all Nature, without a figure, bare witness to the presence and power of Nature's God. "The earth trembled, the hills "melted like wax," the face of heaven was covered with blackness of darkness, lightning flashed, the hoarse thunder roared, the louder and more dreadful voice of the Eternal drowned its tremendous sound, men's hearts fail them for fear, Moses quakes.

What matter of joy to Israel, that he who of old had thus revealed his fiery law, that day, that very day had come riding on the swift wings of the wind for their salvation! To fix these emotions of rising

gratitude and wonder, the bard dexterously and imperceptibly slides into a review of the recent distress and misery of her unhappy country; distress yet fresh in every one's memory, misery out of which they were just beginning to emerge: and she takes occasion to pay a just tribute of respect to the memory of a great man, whom God had honoured to be the instrument of redemption to an oppressed people.

Those who are themselves the most deserving of praise, are ever the most liberal in bestowing it where it is due. It is a slender and contemptible merit which seeks to shine by obscuring, concealing, or diminishing the worth of another. Deborah is but the more estimable, for the frank and unreserved commendation which she confers on departed or contemporary virtue and talents. "In the days of "Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of "Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the "travellers walked through by-ways. The inha-"bitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in "Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a "mother in Israel." Verses 6, 7. What a melancholy picture have we here of a ruined, wretched country! By means of oppression all intercourse is interrupted; commerce is languishing to death; life and property have become insecure; every thing dear to man is at the mercy of a haughty tyrant; is ever exposed to the ravages of a lawless band of armed ruffians: The scanty and dejected inhabitants

tremble at the sound of their own feet, at the sight of their own shadow; behold them skulking from place to place, stealing through by-ways, to carry on a starved and precarious traffic; suffering much, and fearing worse.

Ah, little do we reflect, while living at our ease, enjoying the blessings of mild and equitable government, while "sitting every one under his vine, and "under his fig-tree, while there is none to make us "afraid;" little do we reflect on the misery and tears of myriads of our fellow-creatures, oppressed, and there is none to help them: whose cry incessantly rises up to heaven, but rises mingled with despair. Think what multitudes of the bold and hardy Africans are yearly driven or trepanned into servitude, through the violence or craft of their own countrymen, or through the more fierce and unrelenting principle of European avarice, which has reduced slavery to a system, has invented an article of commerce which God and Nature abhor, and concur to prohibit; and what is the subject of the infamous, impious traffic? the souls and bodies of men.

Who can turn his eyes, without weeping tears of blood, to the fertile soil, the clement air, and the simple, harmless inhabitants of the eastern world, and observe the gifts of Nature perverted into a curse, the goodness of Providence thwarted by the cursed lust of power, or more cursed lust of wealth, and the patient uncomplaining Asiatic perishing for hunger, in his own luxuriant domain; and the

Ganges disgorging millions of fetid corpses into the ocean, the corpses of wretches who died for lack of food, to purchase for a still greater wretch an empty title, and a seat among the lawgivers of the wisest, most polished, and humane of the nations of the western world.

Look to the thin and scanty remains of the populous and properous nations of the southern hemisphere, and to a land whose veins are gold and its mountains silver, of which Spanish cruelty and avarice have been constrained to make a desert, in order to secure the possession of it. Behold the sullen, dejected native trampling under his feet gold and diamonds which he dare not put forth his hand to touch; and reproaching Heaven with heaping upon him, in its anger, treasures which have attracted, not the pious zeal and attention, but the infernal rage, of men who nevertheless dare to call themselves Christians.

Behold yet again—No, I sicken at the horrid prospect—and will no longer encroach upon the feelings of humanity, by exhibiting the more than savage barbarity, of systematic cruelty and oppression. God of mercy, put a speedy end to these horrors! assert thy offspring into liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God.—Let us return to the sweet mistress of Israelitish song: We see her warm, and rise into native, conscious worth and importance: and we honour the lovely pride, the honest vanity of the female patriot. "The inhabitants of the

" villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I " Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel." Verse 7. If ever there were ability, if ever there were services, if ever there were an occasion which could warrant self-praise, it was the ability, the public services of Deborah, and the glorious occasion on which she wrote and sung. Show me such exertions for the public good, and let a man, let a woman be as vain as they will, and let affected humility and self-denial say what they will, it is an honourable and laudable ground of glorying that God has made us the means of conveying happiness to others. But occasions of doing justice to eminent, public female worth so seldom occur, that I must reserve to myself the pleasure of accompanying this great woman, this more than princess, through the remainder of her song, in another Lecture.

—Men and brethren, we are furnished with a much more noble subject of praise, a subject which angels delight to celebrate in celestial strains, a subject which carries us back into the eternal counsels of peace " before the world was," which carries us forward to the grand consummation, when " time shall be no longer;" when " the ransomed " of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with " songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads:" when " they shall obtain joy and gladness, and " sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Need I point out the era, Christians, and the spot, and the performers, and the audience, or repeat the words of the lofty theme?—" There were in the same

"country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping "watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the "angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory "of the Lord shone round about them: and they "were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings "of great joy, which shall be to all people. For "unto you is born this day, in the city of David, "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this "shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe "wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multi-"tude of the heavenly host praising God, and say-"ing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth "peace, good-will towards men." Luke ii. 8—14. Here are celebrated, not the transient interests of a petty tribe, the momentary triumph of the oppressed, and the downfall of the oppressor; not events which have long ago spent all their force, and left no trace behind; but the broad, unbounded, permanent interests of mankind; the triumph of "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge:" of "the peace of God, which passeth all under-"standing:" events which extend their influence into eternity. We celebrate "the praises of Him "who hath called us out of darkness into his mar-"vellous light"—of God, who "so loved the world, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever "believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-"lasting life;" John iii. 16.—Of "Him that loved "us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

" and hath made us kings and priests unto God and " his Father: to him be glory and dominion for " ever and ever. Amen." Rev. i. 5, 6. We sing the praises of Him, " who through death, has de- " stroyed him that had the power of death, that is, " the devil." The burden of the Christian's song is, " Salvation," salvation begun, going on, ready to be accomplished. " The kingdoms of this world " are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his " Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15.

The song of Deborah exhibits awful distinctions between man and man, between nation and nation; it presents a mystery of Providence which human understanding endeavours in vain to trace. in the song of the Redeemed of the Lord, all distinction is abolished; it presents a mystery of grace which " angels desire to look into;" it is in full harmony sung by those who have " come from the east and " from the west, from the south and from the north, " and have sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and " Jacob, in the kingdom of God:" where the spirit of this world finds no place, and its differences are absorbed of the " spirit of love: where there is " neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircum- " cision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but " Christ is all, and in all." Let these reflections be " practically improved, in conformity to the apos- tolic exhortation, by our daily learning to " put on, " as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of " mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness,

" long-suffering; forbearing one another, and for-
" giving one another—and above all these things,
" put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.
" And let the peace of God rule in your hearts."
Amen.

LECTURE IX.

JUDGES V. 12, 13.

Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.

IT is natural for man to look forward to futurity; and to derive a part, at least, of his felicity and importance, from the estimation in which he is to be held by posterity. He knows that his body must soon die, and his connexion with the world be dissolved; but he flatters himself with the fond hope, that his name may survive his ashes, and that his memory may be cherished and respected, though his person be lost in the grave, and sink into oblivion.

When this anticipation and desire of immortality serve as a stimulus to virtuous exertion, and call forth wisdom and goodness honourably to fulfil their day, the love of fame is a respectable principle in the individual, because it becomes a blessing to mankind. But to wade to the temple of fame through a sea of blood; to extract "the bubble "reputation" from widows' tears and the groans of expiring wretches, is worse than contemptible; it is

detestable, it is monstrous. And whatever national partiality and prejudice may have done, reason and humanity will always regard such characters as Alexander and Cæsar with abhorrence, strip them of their ill-earned glory, and stigmatize their names, to the latest generations, as the enemies of mankind.

The spirit of patriotism, in other respects noble and excellent, is here faulty, pernicious, and worthy of the severest censure. It encroaches on the sacred rights of loving-kindness and tender mercy. It encroaches on the more sacred prerogatives of high Heaven. It would make the God of the spirits of all flesh a party in the quarrels of two petty states, and force the great interests of an universe to bend to the caprice, the pride, the ambition, or revenge of some paltry prince. Hence the literary monuments of all nations exhibit a narrow, illiberal, ungenerous, impious spirit.—The warlike genius of Rome acquired the ascendant over her rival Carthage. The literary genius of that gallant people assumed the superiority of course; and *Punic* perfidy, barbarity, and cowardice, became the subject of proverbial apophthegms, historical records, and poetical rhapsodies. But suppose, for a moment, the scales changed, and the fate of Carthage preponderating, and we should have had this whole picture reversed; and *Roman*, not *Punic* faithlessness, cruelty, and cowardice, had been the burden of the song, and the object of detestation. While *our* notes of triumph rend the vault of Heaven, cross

that brook, look forward from the summit of that little hill where we are celebrating victory with all the insolence of success, and erecting the monumental column to prosperous valour, and nought is to be seen but sights of woe, no voice is to be heard but that of lamentation and despair; while angels, from yonder sphere, look down with pity and concern, such as angels feel, on both the victor and the vanquished. "The broad eye of one Creator "takes in all mankind: his laws expand the heart;" and the "Te Deum," which angels sing with rapture, is, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, "good will towards men."

We must carry these ideas with us as a corrective to the vehemence of poetical enthusiasm, and learn still to distinguish between the rapturous praise and censure of a female patriot, and the calm, equitable, unbiassed applause or condemnation of unerring wisdom and eternal justice. In the picture of human nature here suspended before our eyes, we behold it as it is, not what it ought in all respects to be.

Deborah having proposed her subject in plain and simple terms, in the second verse, and summoned the princes and potentates of the earth to listen to her song, as if the whole world were interested in the event which she was about to celebrate, she presents to them an object supremely worthy of their attention and reverence, namely, the great JEHOVAH marching in awful state before the armies of his people, and delivering to them his dreadful law from

Sinai, while universal Nature bears witness to the presence of the Creator and Lord of all: "The "earth trembling, the mountains melting, the "powers of heaven shaken." From thence she turns a weeping eye to the recent miseries of her yet bleeding country, and summons her compatriots to gratitude and joy for the deliverance of that day, from the recollection of the cruel restraints under which they so lately lived, and of the calamities which they endured: and she rises into holy rapture at the thought, that a gracious Providence had not only wrought salvation for his people, but made her the blessed instrument of effecting it. But in recalling the memory of former evils in order to awaken holy joy, she fails not to trace those evils up to their proper source, in order to excite holy sorrow and contrition: "They chose new gods; then "was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear "seen among forty thousand in Israel?" Verse 8.

The great object of the prophetess is to impress this everlasting and unchangeable truth, that sin is the ruin of any nation, and that salvation is of the Lord. The moment a new God is set up, behold a new enemy is in the gate. That instant the idol is pulled down, the hope of Israel revives. The poetic question of Deborah, "Was there a shield or "spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" expresses the highest degree of political dejection and distress; and it represents the insulting foe as not only filling all their borders with present consternation, but also, as undermining all their hope for the

time to come; stripping them of every kind of armour both for defence and attack; to such a degree, that not one man out of forty thousand was furnished for the field.

A Jewish Rabbin (Sal. Jarchi) has given a turn somewhat different to the words of the text, and not an absurd one: "Has Israel chosen new gods? then "was war in the gates. Was there shield or spear "seen among forty thousand?" that is to say, "From "the time that Israel made choice of strange gods, "they were under a necessity of maintaining war in "their gates; or, of supporting a standing army "for defence against the inroads of their enemies. "But now that you offer yourselves willingly to the "Lord, and put away the strange gods which are "among you, see whether you have any need of "shield or spear against the most formidable and "numerous hosts of foes, against the thousands and "forty thousands of Canaan? No, JEHOVAH himself is your shield and buckler, he fights your "battles. Heaven and earth combine to destroy "the adversary; the stars in their courses fight "against Sisera, the river Kishon swallows them up." "My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that "offered themselves willingly among the people. "Bless ye the Lord. Speak, ye that ride on white "asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the "way. They that are delivered from the noise of "archers in the places of drawing water; there "shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, "even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of

" his villages in Israel; then shall the people of the " Lord go down to the gates." Ver. 9—11. That we may enter into the true spirit of the patriotic bard, let us suppose, what it is apparent she has in view, namely, severally to address the various orders and descriptions of men, whereof the Israelitish state was composed, and who had each a peculiar, as well as a common interest, in the salvation which they celebrated. She begins with her companions in the warfare, who, roused by her exhortations, and by a sense of their country's wrongs, had cheerfully offered themselves to this laborious and hazardous service. " My heart is toward the governors of " Israel, that offered themselves willingly among " the people. Bless ye the Lord." Verse 9. They best knew how little was due to human skill and valour, and how much to the gracious and powerful interposition of Heaven; let them therefore lead the band, and ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name. She next turns to the civil governors and judges of the land, and invites them to continue the song: " Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that " sit in judgment, and walk by the way." Verse 10. Such was the simple state in which the rulers Israel travelled from place to place, administering justice. The ideas, in her address to them, are tender and pathetic, and may be thus extended: " Alas! " my associates in government, it was but yester- " day that we were rulers without subjects, judges " without a tribunal, and without authority: the

"lives and property of Israel were not secured and "protected by law, but were at the disposal of a foreign lawless despot; and your progress through "the land in the exercise of your high office, was "checked and overawed by a licentious banditti. "Let us rejoice together, that government has re-"verted to its channel; the highways are no "longer blocked up, and therefore no longer unoc-"cupied. Place your thrones of judgment where "you will, in the gate, in the highway, the com-"munication is open, there is none to make you "afraid, the enemies whom you have seen, you "shall see them no more again for ever."

Her next address seems to be made to the shepherds of the lately oppressed country: "They are "delivered from the noise of archers in the places "of drawing water; there shall they rehearse the "righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous "acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in "Israel; then shall the people of the Lord go "down to the gates." Verse 11. They are represented as trembling at the sound of their own feet among the pebbles of the brook, lest thereby they should awaken the attention of their rapacious masters; they are afraid to drive their flocks to the watering-place, lest they should expose themselves and their harmless fleecy charge to the cruel shafts of the archer, ever on the watch to gall and annoy them. But now there, even there, in the very scene of their sorrow and misery, where the rustling

of a leaf durst not be heard, they shall break out together into singing; there, free from sorrow, free from fear, "shall they rehearse the righteous acts of "the Lord, even the righteous acts to the inha- "bitants of the villages in Israel." Finally, she calls upon the inhabitants of the villages, the husbandmen and vine-dressers, to add their voices to the swelling band, on recovering their tranquillity, on being restored to the felicity of labouring for themselves, and saved from the mortification of seeing lazy, insolent strangers devouring the fruit of their painful toil, and repairing as before, in happier days, to their own gates, to their own judges for justice and judgment. Thus we hear, as it were, the tuneful choir, gradually increasing in number, the peasant taking up the song which the shepherd had put into his mouth, the shepherd following the magistrate, the magistrate the soldier, till all Israel becomes one voice, one heart, one soul, to celebrate the high praises of God. Faint representation of that more glorious consummation, that purer triumph, that more auspicious day, that inexpressibly more important salvation, to which the believer in Christ Jesus looks forward in hope.

The voice of this universal chorus having ceased, a solemn pause of some moments seems to ensue; when the divinely inspired poetess awakes to new rapture, and the harmony of myriads of joyful voices subsides into the melody of one simple strain: "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a "song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive,

"thou son of Abinoam." Verse 12. What genuine touches of nature have we here, what simplicity, what pathos, what sublimity! She seems to regret her exhausted powers; her spirit is still willing; she cannot bear to cease so soon from so divine an employ; she starts into fresh enthusiasm. Having put words of praise into the mouths of a whole saved people, she takes up her own peculiar strain, "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter "a song:" And then, turning to the companion of her victory, she excites him to make a public display of the wonderful trophies of that wondrous day: "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity cap- "tive, thou son of Abinoam." Exhibit them in chains who had forged chains for the hands and feet of Israel; lead them captive who led in captivity the free-born sons of God; show triumphantly the spoils of them that spoiled thee; "the prey taken "from the mighty, and the lawful captive deli- "vered;" them that "oppressed thee fed with "their own flesh, and drunken with their own "blood, as with sweet wine;" a righteous "God "contending with them, who contended with thee." —"Thou son of Abinoam!" She rouses her noble colleague to excel in praise as he had excelled in counsel and courage, by one of the most powerful motives of human conduct, the honour of his father's name and family. Let the names of Barak and Abinoam be transmitted hand in hand, and with respect, to the latest generations; let the world know that on Abinoam a gracious Providence con-

forced the distinguished honour of being the father of the father of his country.

It is not ancestry, it is not country that can bestow celebrity on a deedless name, on an idle or worthless character; it is illustrious virtue, it is superior wisdom, it is useful ability that confers nobility, true nobility on families, and celebrity on countries. Contending cities claim the honour of giving birth to Homer. Strip Athens of her renowned sons, and she sinks into a mass of rocks and sand. How would the heart of Abinoam glow with delight, as often as the sound of his name reached his ears, in connexion with that of a son whom a grateful country acknowledged and celebrated with songs as its saviour!

In the 13th verse we see the low and reduced state of Israel again brought into view, to prepare for a fresh discovery of the power and goodness of God, and to exhibit, in another point of light, the solidity, strength, and security of his church "out "of weakness made strong," "waxing," in a moment, "valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the "aliens."—"Then he made him that remaineth "have dominion over the nobles among the people: "the Lord made me have dominion over the "mighty." Verse 13. In two striking particulars this gracious interposition of Heaven is emphatically pointed out. "He made him that remaineth to have "dominion." It was not the strength of Israel which God employed in crushing the "nobles" and

guide of Canaan: it was not by opposing force to force, skill to skill, that Providence decided the contest; but by a scattered, broken remainder; but by a dispirited handful, that durst not trust themselves in the plain against the enemy; but by an unarmed rabble whom Sisera held in contempt, that Jehovah trampled the glory of Jabin in the dust, as by a cake of barley bread rolling down upon a tent and levelling it with the ground.

To set the divine sovereignty in a still stronger light, Deborah suggests, but not in the spirit of self-confidence, that when God did appear for his people, he did it, not by kindling martial ardour and resentment in manly bosoms, by putting the machine in motion in the usual way; but by creating a new thing in the earth; by endowing a woman with more than manly sagacity and resolution; by making a woman the life and soul of a sinking nation; in order that God himself might have the undivided praise. "The Lord made me to have "dominion over the mighty." Is it not somewhat remarkable, that Deborah is only once described as the *wife* of Lapidoth; whereas Barak is repeatedly, both in history and in song, brought forward as the *son* of such a father. Is it to mark the base degeneracy of Israel at this period; all masculine virtue extinguished, and its importance sunk; the only trace of the existence of the man, that he was the husband of such a woman? The repetition of this relation therefore may have been omitted, because it would have reflected reiterated disgrace

upon the one, without adding much to, perhaps somewhat detracting from, the glory of the other. Whereas the blazoning of a son's praise, instead of detracting from, is the most gratifying addition to a father's honour.

In the passage which follows, the prophetess goes with a poetical and prophetic enthusiasm into a detail of the distinguishing characters of the several tribes of Israel, according to the part which they had taken, or neglected to take, in the cause of their country, at this trying crisis, which at present I shall simply quote, annex a single remark, and then conclude. "And the princes of Issachar were "with Deborah: even Issachar, and also Barak: "he was sent on foot into the valley. For the "divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of "heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, "to hear the bleatings of the flocks? for the divi- "sions of Reuben there were great searchings of "heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why "did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on "the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebu- "lun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded "their lives unto the death in the high places of the "field." Verses 15—18. This is the third time that prophetic inspiration has presented us with the discriminating features of the sons of Israel, and of the tribes which descended from them, at three different periods, and in very different situations.—Jacob on his dying bed, Moses on the wing to

instead mount Nebo, and Deborah on the defeat of Sisera. The comparative view of Israel at these distant periods seems to me a subject of curious, pleasant, and not useless, disquisition, and I mean to devote the meditation of a particular evening to it.

The season (December 31) arrests us now, and demands a series of reflections suited to winter, and change, and decay, and death. The past rushes upon memory and affections in an impetuous tide. The future still presents the same impenetrable curtain to our eager eyes. We go on fondly planning, and after a thousand proofs of vanity, return to treasure up for ourselves vexation of spirit. But we shall be relieved at length, and ere long land on that shore where fear and hope are no longer. If permitted to enter on the commencement of another year, we shall endeavour to improve that kind indulgence, by endeavouring to suggest reflections suited to the occasion. If permitted to advance to a second sabbath in a new year, we shall attempt to resume our accustomed pursuits. If to any, this be the last opportunity of the kind, the solemn farewell is now taken. And kind is that Providence which does not always let us know when we are saying "finally farewell;" which permits the bitterness of death to pass before we are sensible it is come. Wo, wo, wo to the man who is punished with the foresight of the evil that is coming upon him. The exploits of a Deborah and a Barak now live only in the page of history; their song is

how to be found only in a few measured words, whose rhythm is lost, whose sense is obscure, whose spirit is evaporated. But, my friends, we have this day been commemorating, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, an event which will never sink in oblivion, never spend its force, never lose its importance. We have this day been carrying on, keeping up the song, which the enraptured shepherds of Bethlehem caught two thousand years ago from a choir of the heavenly host, which is ever pleasing, ever new; let us again resume it, and teach it to our children. "Glory, glory to God in the highest, "and on earth peace, good will towards men." "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be "unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto "the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen. Hallelujah!

LECTURE X.

JUDGES V. 20, 21.

They fought from heaven: the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon: O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

IN turning over the hallowed page of inspiration, and in contemplating the various revolutions of human affairs which it unfolds, we seem transported to a superior region; we behold the earthly ball rolling round beneath our feet; we witness the birth, the progress, the dissolution of nations; we learn to correct the prejudices of education, and our narrowness of conception; we no longer ignorantly admire, nor superciliously despise our fellow-creatures; we adore the great Father and Lord of all, who "has of one blood formed all nations of men "to inhabit upon the face of the whole earth," and "whose kingdom ruleth over all." From that elevation we observe, with humble acquiescence and holy joy, the designs of eternal Providence, maturing and executing themselves; the individual passing away, but the species permanent; states and kingdoms changing their form, their spirit, their character, but human nature the same under every government, in every climate, under every sky. We

behold regions, and periods, and nations rising into notice, into eminence, into importance, by the talents, the virtues, the address of one man, of one woman; and returning again to obscurity and insignificance, through a defect of wisdom, of public spirit, of exertion.

The history of perhaps no nation exhibits such striking and instructive variety of character and event, as that of the posterity of Abraham. It is interesting in itself, and it is closely connected with the general interests of mankind. That people through a dispersion of near two thousand years have preserved an existence. Hated, despised, and persecuted by all other nations, they remain unextirpated, a monument at once of the vengeance and of the care of Heaven: and no unequivocal intimations from the oracles of truth, hold them up as the objects of eternal Providence, in events of superior magnitude yet to take place.

We have followed the successive changes which they underwent, with successive emotions of astonishment, exultation, indignation, and sorrow. And we find them, at the defeat of Sisera and his host, in a situation highly critical and interesting. The prophetess Deborah in this celebrated song, goes into a comparative delineation of the respective merit and demerit of the several tribes: and thereby enables us to estimate the particular character of each, at different æras of their political existence. Jacob on his death bed, and Moses on the wing to depart, in his valedictory address, present us with a

similar opportunity; of which we are now to avail ourselves, in the two-fold view of extending a little our pittance of knowledge of human nature, and increasing our admiration of, and dependance upon the divine Providence.

In the dying benediction of Jacob, Judah, his fourth son, and the tribe which should spring from him, make a most conspicuous figure. The spirit of prophecy employs every image expressive of power, greatness, plenteousness, and duration, to represent the future eminence and superiority of that tribe. In all the musters which were made of the people during the forty years wandering in the wilderness, and in the distribution of place and station according to divine appointment, in their encampments and removals, we still find Judah excelling in number and strength, and occupying the post of honour. But Moses takes leave of that tribe, with a very slight degree of notice; and in the song of Deborah their name is not so much as mentioned, nor is any allusion made to any exploit of theirs, in celebrating the triumph of that eventful day. Indeed the spirit and pre-eminence of Judah seems to have been gradually on the decline, from the days of Caleb, who conquered and dispossessed the sons of Anak; till they were revived, maintained, and extended under David and Solomon. And for several centuries we find this prerogative tribe, which was destined to the lasting honours of royalty and rule, sleeping in oblivion and unimportance with the insignificant tribe of Simeon, which

hardly ever achieved any action, or produced any personage worthy of being remembered. Of so much consequence is one man in a tribe, in a nation, in a world.

But the person and tribe the most distinguished in the prophecy of Jacob, and in the blessing of Moses, are also the most distinguished in this triumphant anthem, Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, raised by the destination and interposition of high Heaven to power and precedency over his elder brother. To the exertions of this branch of the house of Joseph, in conjunction with those of Zebulun and Naphtali, the victory now by the blessing of God obtained over the armies of Canaan was chiefly to be ascribed. The spirit of their father Joshua, dead in so many other of the tribes of Israel, is alive in them, and happily is propitious to the common cause. A severe censure of the conduct of the two tribes and a half beyond the river is more than insinuated; it is brought directly forward. They are represented as totally lost to all public spirit, and wrapt up in cold selfishness and indifference. Jordan was a kind of defence to them from the Canaanitish foe, and the cries of their oppressed brethren beyond the river are drowned in the more interesting bleatings of their own flocks. The same spirit of selfishness is represented as pervading the tribes who inhabited the sea-coasts, Dan and Asher, and who, subsisting by trade, and absorbed by the love of gain, steeled their hearts to the feelings of sympathy and huma-

nity. Drawing their supplies from the ocean, they forget they have a country; and under the influence of one domineering lust, all the better claims of the human heart are suppressed and silenced. They pursue their merchandise, as the others attended to their sheep-farms, regardless what their wretched countrymen meanwhile endured. "For the divi-"sions of Reuben there were great thoughts of "heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, "to hear the bleatings of the flocks? for the divi-"sions of Reuben there were great searchings of "heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why "did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on "the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches." Verses 15—17.

Such is the general view of the state of Israel at this period, which the words of Deborah convey. The import of many of the expressions which the prophetess employs to convey her feelings on this occasion, we pretend not to understand or to explain. Is it any wonder that in a poetical composition upwards of three thousand years old, in a language so little studied, referring to a history of which the outline only is drawn, there should be many things difficult to be understood? This much is evident upon the face of it, that Israel at that unhappy period exhibited a spectacle, bearing but too near a resemblance to what our own times have seen dreadfully realized—A whole host of foes, a world in arms, combined to work the downfall of our sinful, devoted country—Internal discord, the extinction of

public virtue, the dominion of barefaced iniquity—But the arm of the Lord is revealed, and salvation is wrought.

The picture which the poetess draws of the desperate state of Israelitish affairs is truly affecting; and it is a happy preparation for a display of that unexpected and astonishing relief which had just turned their sorrow into gladness. Behold Judah lulled asleep into listless inaction, without exertion, without existence: a fourth part of the national force, on the other side Jordan, carelessly tending their flocks: another fourth devoted to their private traffic; the sword of judgment in the feeble hand of a female; confederated kings threatening their utter extirpation; enemies numerous, "strong, and "lively, and hating them with a cruel hatred." What Power can dissipate the gathered storm? That Power which says to the roaring ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here "shall thy proud waves be stayed."—"They fought "from heaven: the stars in their courses fought "against Sisera." Verse 20. Behold all nature engaged in the cause of Israel's God. The heavenly host first take up the quarrel; angels, legions of "angels that excel in strength:"—"the least of "whom could wield these elements." The most powerful and splendid parts of inanimate nature feel the alarm, and join their influence; "the stars in "their courses." The earth quickly hears the heavens; the waters swell and rage; Kishon increased, most probably, by the recent dreadful tempest which

had fallen from the air, rises suddenly upon them, and, like the Red Sea of old, swallows up as in a moment the enemy and the avenger.

There is a singular force and beauty in the repetition of the name of the river, with the addition of the epithet "ancient." It is natural for men to value themselves on the antiquity of their country, and its cities. It is the fond term which, in the honest pride and exultation of our hearts, we affix to our own land; it seems to confer additional dignity and importance; we associate in the idea, the valour and success of former times; we feel our hearts attracted as to a common parent; filial affection and brotherly love revive at the sound. In the enthusiasm of pious and poetical inspiration, she bestows animation and passion on the flood; she represents it as rising in pride and joy, and overflowing its banks, to serve the cause of ancient friends, lying under the rod of insolence and oppression. And the period pathetically closes, with the prophetess, in a single word, apostrophizing herself, as the honoured, happy instrument of co-operating with intelligent and inanimated nature, in trampling pride and cruelty into the dust. "O my soul, thou hast "trodden down strength."

I have already anticipated much of what I had to say, on the subject of the glowing eulogium which Deborah pronounces on the conduct of "Jael the "wife of Heber." Permit me only to repeat, that in order to our fully adopting the sentiments of the Israelitish poetess, we must be acquainted with

many circumstances of the case, which the conciseness of the sacred history enables us not to discover; that there is a singularity in the whole conduct and occasion of the business, which forbids it to be drawn into a precedent, and pleaded in ordinary cases as an example or an excuse; that we are to distinguish carefully betwixt the poetic ardour and enthusiasm of a female bard and patriot, and the calm unimpassioned praise and censure of sound reason, or the deliberate approbation of the God of truth, mercy, and justice. We know certainly that God cannot love nor commend perfidy, cruelty, or revenge. But he justly may, and often does, employ the outrageous passions of one great offender to punish those of another. And it is evident that through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misconception, the wisest of men are very incompetent judges of the ways and works of the Almighty.

The winding up of this sacred poem suggests the most satisfactory apology for the conduct of Jael, and accounts at the same time for the warmth of the strains in which Deborah celebrates that conduct. It is the horrid use that conquerors usually made of victory, to which I allude. The wretched females of the vanquished people fell a prey to the brutal lust of the victors. This was a case so common, that "the mother of Sisera and her wise "ladies" are represented as so lost to feminine delicacy and compassion, as remorselessly to exult in the thought of portioning out the virgins of Israel to Sisera and his soldiers, as the mere instruments

of a brutal pleasure; as an article of horrid booty for the lawless plunderer. "The mother of Sisera "looked out at a window, and cried through the "lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why "tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies "answered her; yea, she returned answer to herself, "Have they not sped? have they not divided the "prey, to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera "a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of "needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on "both sides, meet for the necks of them that take "the spoil?" Verses 28—30. Now, may we not suppose both Jael and Deborah animated with a holy indignation against the intended violators of their sex's modesty and honour, and with a holy joy on the defeat of their ungracious purpose? May we not innocently suppose a mixture of virtuous female spirit inspiring what the one acted and the other sung? Our pity for the fallen warrior, and for his untimely, inglorious fate, must of course abate, when we consider that a righteous and merciful Providence, by whatever means, shortened a life, and stopped a career, which threatened the life, the virtue, the happiness of thousands.

In personifying the character of Sisera's mother and her attendants, Deborah presents us with a happy imitation of a passage in the song of Moses, on the triumphant passage of the Red Sea; where the poet insinuates himself, by a bold figure of eloquence, into the counsels of Pharaoh, overhears their formidable resolutions, and in the close of the

scene, rejoices in seeing their counsels, once so much dreaded, turned into foolishness by the grace and power of Heaven, "The enemy said, I will "pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: "my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw "my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou "didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; "they sank as lead in the mighty waters." Exodus xv. 9, 10. So here Deborah brings in the matrons of Canaan as anticipating the fruits of victory, prematurely enjoying the triumph of the subjection of the Israelitish damsels to their own pride, and to the pleasure of their warriors; and she inspirits the gratitude and joy of her fair countrywomen, by gently hinting at the dreadful hazard which they run. This too, of course, diminishes our concern for the cruel disappointment which the mother of Sisera endured, looking and looking from her window, but still looking in vain for him who was never more to return: expecting and expecting that lingering chariot; which the ancient river Kishon had long ere now swept down its stream; flushed with hope, only to make calamity more bitter. And let that hope be for ever blasted, which could be accomplished only by what humanity shudders to think of.

Having thus enjoyed self-gratulation, and called forth the grateful congratulations of her delivered country, and with heroic ardour trampled on disappointed lust, insolence, and ambition, she now aims a nobler flight. The world and its transitory interests and employments disappear. The throne

of God meets her enraptured eye. Private, personal, national animosity are no more: all, all is lost in the higher, unlimited, unchanging interests of the divine glory. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." This is but prophetic enunciation of what needs must be. After one revolution has obliterated another, after one mortal interest has swallowed another up—after the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free, are lost and forgotten, the honours of the divine justice and mercy shall flourish and prevail. They that are afar from him, of whatever other name or description, shall perish; and the workers of iniquity shall be destroyed.

But the pious leader of the heavenly theme, as if unwilling to shut up her song with an idea so gloomy as the awful displeasure of the great God against his adversaries, relieves herself and us, by taking up the more encouraging view of the favour of Jehovah to his friends, and thus she fervently breathes out her soul: "But let them that love him "be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Next to the great Lord of nature himself, who is,

> ——————to us invisible,
> Or dimly seen, in these his lowest works;
>
> MILTON.

that glorious creature of his power, the sun, is the most striking and impressive of all objects. And poets of every description have enriched and ennobled their compositions by allusions to the glorious orb of day, "of this great world the eye and soul," as

the brightest inanimate image of Deity here below, the fountain of light, the dispenser of vital warmth, the parent of joy. The inspired sacred writers have likewise happily employed it to represent the most glorious animated image of God in our world, a wise and good man "going from strength to "strength:" shining as a light in a dark place; silently, without expectation of return, without upbraiding, in an unceasing revolution of diffusing happiness; aiming at resemblance to his Creator, by becoming a god to his fellow-creatures. It is thus that Deborah concludes her song; with a warm effusion of faith, and hope, and desire, that righteousness might abound and increase, that good men might be in succession raised up; each in his day a light to his country, to mankind: "going forth "as the sun in his might," from lustre to still higher lustre, from usefulness to usefulness, without diminution, and without end. By the same simple but powerful imagery, the wise man represents the progress of true goodness; "the path of the just "is as the shining light, that shineth more and "more unto the perfect day." And Wisdom itself, by a similar suggestion, animates the zeal and supports the industry of those who were to teach his religion to the nations of the earth; "Ye are the "light of the world.—Let your light so shine before "men, that they may see your good works, and "glorify your Father which is in heaven."

To the whole is affixed an historical note, short

indeed, but highly interesting and important, "And 'the land had rest forty years." This is the noblest eulogium of Deborah, the most honourable display of her talents and virtues. If there be feelings worthy of envy, they are those of this exalted woman, on reflecting that God had honoured her to restore liberty and peace to her country; and to establish such a system of administration of justice, of civil government, of military discipline, and of religious worship, as preserved the public tranquillity for forty years together. How effectually may every individual serve the community! Of what importance then is every, the meanest individual! How lasting and how extensive is the influence of real worth! there is one way in which every man may be a public blessing, may become a saviour of his country—by cultivating the private virtues of the man and of the Christian.

I proceed to illustrate the female character, its amiableness, usefulness, and importance, in persons and scenes of a very different complexion; in the less glaring, but not less instructive history of Ruth the Moabitess, and of Naomi her mother-in-law; happy to escape the scenes of horror and blood which are the subject of the remainder of the history of the Israelitish judges.

LECTURE XI.

RUTH I. 1—5.

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: And they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons, and her husband.

THE perpetual vicissitude which prevails in the system of the Universe, and in the conduct of Providence, is adapted to the nature, and conducive to the happiness of man. The succession of day and night, alternate labour and repose, the variations of the changing seasons, lend to each, as it returns, its peculiar beauty and fitness. We are kept still looking forward, we are ever hovering on the wing of expectation, we are rising from attainment to attainment, we are pressing on to some future mark, pursuing some yet unpossessed prize.

The hireling, supported by the prospect of receiving the evening's reward, cheerfully fulfils the work of the day. The husbandman without regret perceives the glory of the summer passing away, because he lifts up his eyes and "beholds the fields white unto "the harvest;" and he submits joyfully to the painful toil of autumn, in contemplation of the rest and comfort which he shall enjoy, when these same fields shall be white with snow. It is hunger that gives a relish to food; it is pain that recommends ease. The value of abundance is known only to those who have suffered want, and we are little sensible what we owe to God for the blessing of health, till it is interrupted by sickness.

The very plagues which mortality is heir to, have undoubtedly their uses and their ends: and the sword may be as necessary to draw off the gross humours of the moral world, as storm and tempest are to disturb the mortal stagnation, and to chase away the poisonous vapours, of the natural. Weak, short-sighted man is assuredly unqualified to decide concerning the ways and works of infinite wisdom; but weak, labouring, wretched man may surely repose unlimited confidence in infinite goodness.

During the dreadful times when there was no king in Israel, the whole head was so sick, the whole heart so faint, the whole mass so corrupted, that an ocean of blood must be drained off before it can be restored to soundness again. Not only one rotten limb, but the whole body is in danger of perishing, and nothing but a painful operation can

save it. The skilful, firm, but gentle hand of Providence takes up the instrument, cuts out the disease, and then tenderly binds up the bleeding wounds. Relieved from the distress of beholding brother lifting up the spear against brother, from hearing the shouts of the victor, and the groans of the dying, we retire to contemplate and to partake of the noiseless scenes of domestic life; to observe the wholesome sorrows and the guiltless joys of calmness and obscurity; to join in the triumphs of sensibility, and to solace in the soft effusions of nature; to "smile with the simple, and feed with the poor."

The little history on which we are now entering is one of those which every where, and at all seasons, must afford pleasure and instruction. It is a most interesting display of ordinary life, of simple manners, of good and honest hearts; of the power of friendship, and the rewards of virtue. It forms an important link in the chain of Providence and the history of redemption. There is perhaps no story that has been wrought into so many different forms, transfused into so many different languages, accommodated to so many different situations, as the history of Ruth. It is felt from the cottage up to the palace, by the rustic and the courtier, by the orphan gleaner in the field and the king's daughter. The man of taste delights in it on account of the artless structure, elegant diction, and judicious arrangement of the tender tale. The friend of virtuous sensibility delights in it for the gentle emotions which it excites, and the useful lessons which it inculcates.

The pious soul rejoices in it, from the enlarged, the instructive, the consolatory views of the divine Providence which it unfolds. The inquiring and devout Christian prizes it, as standing in connexion with the ground of his faith, and contributing to strengthen the evidence, and explain the nature, of "those things wherein he has been instructed," and on which he rests for salvation. Happy the man who, possessing all these qualities, shall peruse and employ it as a corrector and guide to the imagination, as a support to the spirit, as a light to the understanding, a monitor to the conscience, a guard to the affections, and a faithful instructor to the heart.

The particular era of this story is not marked by the sacred penman, neither has he been directed to affix his name to his precious little work. In general, it could not be in the times of boisterous anarchy and wild uproar, that Boaz cut down his barley, and Ruth gleaned after the reapers. The fruits of the field were protected to the owner by lawful authority, and justice was administered by the elders in the gate.

If we consider that the life of man was now reduced to the common standard, that David was the fourth in order of succession from Boaz, and if we allow thirty or thirty-five years to be the medium standard of distance from one generation to another, the marriage of Boaz with Ruth will be thrown upon the short administration of his townsman Ibzan, the successor of Jephtha, of which we have

only this brief account: "And after him Ibzan of "Bethlehem judged Israel." Judges xxii. 8.

Samuel is generally understood to have written both this and the preceding, and thereby to have preserved the historical series of events from Joshua to himself *almost* unbroken; and also the genealogical deduction of succession down to David, in whom the royal line of the house of Judah commenced, *altogether* uninterrupted. And while we behold Rahab the harlot, a woman of Jericho, and Ruth the Moabitess, not only admitted to the rank of mothers in Israel, but mothers of a race of kings, mothers in the line of "Messiah the prince," we are admonished, as Peter was long afterward on a different occasion, "not to call that common or "unclean which God hath purified."

Israel was now enjoying the blessing of good government, but the land is visited with a calamity which no sagacity of government could foresee or prevent, and which no human power could remove—with famine. Bethlehem itself, the house of bread, so called from the fertility of the circumjacent fields, sinks under the pressure of this sore evil, and Elimelech, one of the chiefs of his tribe, is, like the most illustrious of his ancestors, driven to seek subsistence in a strange land.

Every land, according to its place on the globe, has its peculiar climate, soil, production. One is watered by the clouds of heaven, and another by an inundation of the waters of the earth. Here the rain descends according to no fixed law, either as

to season or quantity, there it is measured to a drop, and timed to a moment. On the regularity or uncertainty of these distributions by the hand of nature, or the intervention of Providence, depends the comfort, nay the very sustention of human life; on them depends all the variation of vegetable produce, as to plenty or scarcity, as to greatness, wholesomeness, pleasantness, and their contraries. Hence the same country is one year as the garden of God for beauty and abundance, and the next is as the waste howling wilderness; Canaan now flows with milk and honey, and gives bread to the full, and anon eats up its inhabitants. We hear an offended and a merciful God, by the mouth of the same prophet, reproving and threatening human thoughtlessness and ingratitude in relation to this interesting subject, in these glowing terms: "She did not know that I "gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied "her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal; "therefore will I return and take away my corn in "the time thereof, and my wine in the season "thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax, "given to cover her nakedness. And I will destroy "her vines and her fig-trees, of which she said, "These are my rewards which my lovers have given "me; and I will make them a forest, and the beasts "of the field shall eat them." And thus relents the God of grace towards penitent returning children; "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, "and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come "to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I

" will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the " earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the " wine and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel; and " I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will " have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy." Such is the mysterious scale of both mercy and judgment. Thus universal nature is combined in one firm league to oppress and confound God's adversary. Thus every creature and every event united in preserving the existence, and in promoting the happiness, of his repenting, dutiful, obedient children.

Elimelech seeks and finds refuge in Moab, for " the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" and he has given commandment, " Let mine out- " casts dwell with thee, Moab;" and that one word disarms in an instant national animosity, represses the rage of the lion, quenches the violence of fire. The fugitive of Bethlehem-Judah finds kindness and protection among inveterate enemies; Daniel sleeps secure amongst the fiercest of the savage tribes; and the three children of the captivity walk unhurt in the midst of the flaming furnace.

We see, at first, nothing but one of those instances which every day occur, of the sad reverses to which individuals, families, states, are liable; the downfall and distress of an ancient and reputable house, struggling with penury, and forced into exile; but we soon discover that the Eternal eye is fixed on a nobler object, that the hand of Omnipotence is preparing the materials and laying the

foundation of a more magnificent fabric; that infinite wisdom is bringing low the royal house of Bethlehem, only to restore it with greater splendour.

We have before us at once the cure of pride and of despair. Behold, O man of an hundred ancestors, and of an hundred thousand acres, behold Elimelech the son of Abraham, poor and despised; behold the head of the tribe of Judah, a stranger in a strange land, existing through sufferance, supplied through foreign bounty; and remember by what a brittle tenure thy privileges and possessions are held. Consider, child of adversity, whom no man knows, whom no one regards, consider yonder neglected, reduced, extinguished family, and behold from the ashes of the expiring phœnix an immortal offspring arising, whose flight neither time nor space can limit; and feel thine own importance, and aim only at high things, and trust in Omnipotence for the execution of its own eternal purpose.

In a country and among a people where names were not mere arbitrary sounds, but conveyed a meaning connected with character, with histor with expectation, those of Elimelech, "my God "king," and of his wife Naomi, "the pleasant one from their peculiar import, must have a referen to certain circumstances in their history which s not recorded. The former might be dictated by the spirit of prophecy, and be significant, without the intention of them who imposed, or of him who bore it, of the future greatness to which the family, through the favour of Heaven, should arise, in the

persons of David, of Solomon, and of that long succession of princes which finally centred, and was absorbed, in the person of Christ, David's son, yet David's Lord. The particulars of his own story which have reached us are too few and too general to admit of our discerning any reference or application of his name to his character, office, or condition: but we know enough of the character and history of Naomi, to justify the suitableness of the appellation to her person, dispositions, and final attainments.

In the disasters which befall, and in the successes which attend, certain families and individuals, we behold an apparent partiality of distribution that confounds and overwhelms us. Death enters into that house, passes from couch to couch, spares neither root nor branch; the insatiate fiend never says it is enough. Whatever that poor man attempts, be the scheme ever so judiciously formed, ever so diligently prosecuted, uniformly fails; the winds as they change, the stars in their courses, fight against him. The very mistakes of his neighbour turn prosperously, his sails are always full, his children multiply, his wealth increases, his mountain stands strong. Is God therefore unwise, capricious, partial, or unjust? No, but we are blind, contracted, presumptuous. We can discern, can comprehend only here and there a little fragment of his works, we are gone before the event has explained itself; it requires the capacity, the eternity of God himself, to take in the mighty whole of his plan.

The house of Elimelech exhibits an affecting instance of the inequality we have been mentioning. The sad account of famine, of banishment, of degradation, of dependance, is at length closed with death. Disease of body co-operating with distress of mind, probably the effect of it, shortens his days, and, terminating his own worldly misery, dreadfully aggravates the woes of the unhappy survivors. Wretched mother, left to struggle alone with poverty, solitude, danger, and neglect; far from friends, encompassed with enemies, loaded with the charge of two fatherless children, not more the objects of affection than the sources of anxiety and care! While Elimelech lived, penury was hardly felt as a burden; in exile thou wert always at home; secluded from society, the conversation of one still dispelled the gloom. Thy sons afforded only delight, because that delight was participated in by him who had a common interest with you in them: but all is now changed, every load is accumulated sevenfold, every comfort is embittered, every prospect is clouded: the past presents nothing but regret; the future discloses nothing but despair.

Naomi seems to have given up at this period all thoughts of returning to her native country, and making a virtue of dire necessity, attempts to naturalize her family in the land of Moab, by allying her sons, through marriage, to the inhabitants of the country. The sense of the loss which she has sustained gradually yields to the lenient hand of time, and to the sweet hope of seeing the house of her

beloved husband built up, and his name revived in the persons of his grand-children. Alas, what is the hope of man! the flatterer has been only decoying her into a greater depth of woe: her two remaining props sink one after another into the dust; all that the eyes desire is taken away with stroke upon stroke; and, to fill up the measure of a mother's wretchedness, both her sons die childless, and hope expires with them. Now she is a widow indeed, and exhautsed nature sinks under the pressure.

It is the opinion of many interpreters, that the premature death of the young men was a judgment from Heaven, to punish their illegal intermarriage with strange and idolatrous women. It becomes not man to judge: and we know that God executeth only righteous judgment; and that He in wrath still remembers mercy.

Thus in three short lines the sacred historian has delivered a tragic tale which comes home to the bosom of every one that possesses a spark of sensibility. It is a domestic story; it represents scenes which may, which do happen every day. It admonishes every one in how many points he is vulnerable, how defenceless he is against the thunderbolts of Heaven. It awfully displays the evil of sin, and the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. If such be the temporal effects of his vengeance, how bitter must be the cup which his just displeasure mingles for incorrigible offenders, in a state of final retribution! How pleasing is it to reflect that trials of this sort do not

always flow from anger, that they are the wholesome severity of a father, that they aim at producing real good, that they in the issue really "yield "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." The darkness of night at length yields to the glorious orb of day, the shadow of death is turned into the morning, and the desolate is as she who hath a husband.

This makes way for the introduction of the heroine of this eventful history; and we become interested in her from the very first moment. The Jewish writers, in order to heighten our respect for Ruth, perhaps from a pitiful desire to exalt their own ancestry, make her the daughter of a king of Moab, and as they are never timorous in making assertions, or in forming conjectures on such occasions, they tell you her father was Eglon, whom Ehud slew. It is hardly probable that a prince of that country would have given his daughter in marriage to a needy adventurer who had banished himself from his country through necessity. But of little importance is it whether she were born a princess or no. Nature has adorned her with qualities such as are not always to be found in the courts of kings; qualities which best adorn high birth, and which ennoble obscurity and indigence, namely, fidelity and attachment. She possesses a soul capable of fond respect for departed worth, and for living virtue. She displays a magnanimity to sacrifice every thing which the heart holds dear, to decency, to friendship, and to religion; magnanimity to encounter, without repining, painful toil

and humiliating dependence, in fulfilling the duties of gratitude, humanity, and piety. How eloquent is she when she speaks, how great when she says nothing, how transcendently exalted in all she thinks, speaks, and acts! With what divine art, shall I say, is she introduced in the sacred drama? After we have been melted into pity by the calamities of Naomi's family, and seen the widowed mourner sinking under wave upon wave; and seen the prospect of progeny, the last darling hope of an Israelitish matron, rudely torn from her, lo, an angel in the form of a damsel of Moab, a mourner and a widow like herself, appears to comfort her, and makes her to know by sweet experience that he, that she, has not lost all, who has found a kind and faithful friend. What is the sound of the trumpet, and a long train of mute and splendid harbingers, compared to the simple preparation of unaffected nature! Let us wait her approach in silent expectation; and muse on what is past.

—Behold one generation of men goeth and another cometh; one planet arising as another sets, every human advantage balanced by its corresponding inconveniency, every loss compensated by a comfort that grows out of it.

—Behold the purpose of the Eternal mind maintaining its ground amidst all the tossings and tempests of this troubled ocean, triumphing over opposition, serving and promoting itself by the wrath of man and the malice of hell, out of darkness rising into lustre, "out of weakness made strong,"

by the energy of the great first cause, acquiring life, vigour, and prosperity from the extinction of means, from the destruction and death of secondary causes,

Attend to the great leading object of divine revelation, to which all others refer, to which all are subservient, in which all are absorbed and lost. I will make mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of Moses and the prophets; of Boaz and Ruth. "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to "them that know me; behold Philistia and Tyre "with Ethiopia: This man was born there; and of "Zion it shall be said, This man was born in her; "and the Highest himself shall establish her. The "Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, "that this man was born there." May our names be written in the Lamb's book of life, among the living in Jerusalem!

The introduction of those personages and events, one after another, were remote steps of the preparation of the gospel of peace. And every person now born into the church of Christ, and every event now taking place in the administration of human affairs, is a little space in the great scale of eternal Providence, and is a gradual preparation for the final consummation of all things. Let "thy "kingdom come," O God! Let Satan's kingdom be destroyed; let the kingdom of grace be advanced, ourselves and others brought into, and preserved in it, and let the kingdom of glory be hastened! Amen!

LECTURE XII.

RUTH I. 14—18.

And they lift up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

THE calm, untumultuous, unglaring scenes of private life, afford less abundant matter for the pen of the historian, than intrigues of state, senatorial contention, or the tremendous operations of the tented field; but they supply the moralist and the teacher of religion with more pleasing, more ample, and more generally interesting topics of useful information, and of salutary instruction. What princes are, what statesman meditate, what heroes achieve, is rather an object of curiosity than of utility. They never can become examples to the bulk of mankind. It is when they have descended

from their public eminence, when they have retired to their private and domestic station, when the potentate is lost in the man, that they become objects of attention, patterns for imitation, or beacons set up for admonition and caution.

For the same reason, the meek, the modest, the noiseless exhibition and exercise of female excellence, occupy a smaller space in the annals of human nature, than the noisy, bustling, forensic pursuits and employments of the other sex. But when feminine worth is gently drawn out of the obscurity which it loves, and advantageously placed in the light which it naturally shuns, O how amiable, how irresistible, how attractive it is! A wise and good woman shines by not seeking to shine; she is most eloquent when she is silent, and she obtains all her will by yielding, by submission, by patience, by self-denial.

Scripture, as it excels in every thing, so it peculiarly excels in delineating and unfolding the female character, both in respect of the quantity exhibited, and of the delicacy, force, and effect of the design. We have already seen this exemplified in a variety of instances—in the dignified conjugal attachment and respect, in the matron-like, conscious, impatient superiority of Sarah—in the maternal partiality, eagerness, and address of Rebekah—in the jealous discontent and impatience of Rachel—in the winning condescension and the melting commiseration of Pharaoh's daughter—in the patriotic ardour, the prophetic elevation, the magisterial dignity of Deborah the wife of Lapidoth—in the unre-

lenting firmness, and the daring enterprising spirit of Jael the wife of Heber.

Female vice and worthlessness are delineated on the sacred page with equal skill, truth, and justice, from the insolence of Hagar and the treachery of Delilah, down to the implacable vengeance of Herodias, and the insatiate cruelty of her accursed daughter.

Three more female portraits are now presented for our inspection, and our improvement; all expressive of characters essentially different, all possessing features of striking resemblance, all exhibiting qualities which create and keep alive and interest, all copies from Nature, all pourtrayed by the hand of Him who knows what is in man.

We have witnessed the wretchedness and sympathized in the sorrows of Naomi, *my pleasant one*, reduced from rank and fulness to obscurity and indigence, banished from her country and friends, a stranger in a strange land, robbed of her husband, bereaved of her children; having no protector save Heaven, no hope or refuge but in the peaceful grave. Behold the thrice widowed mourner bowing the head, and hiding the face in silent grief. She is dumb, she opens not her mouth, because the Lord hath done it. The miserable partners of her woe only increase and imbitter it. Two young women, like herself widows, childless, comfortless; fondly attached to her, and tenderly beloved by her, because fondly attached to the memory of their husbands; but their mutual affection rendered a punishment, not a plea-

sure, by the pressure of poverty and the bitterness of neglect. At length she is roused from the stupefaction of grief by tidings from her country, from her dear native city, and a ray of hope dispels the gloom of her soul. She "hears in the country of "Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in "giving them bread."

In the wisdom and goodness of Providence, there is a healing balm provided for every wound. The lenient hand of time soothes the troubled soul to peace; the agitation of the mind at last wearies it out, and lulls it asleep, and its weakness becomes its strength. Though in misery we cleave to the love of life, and having lost our comforts one after another, we are still enabled to look forward with fond expectation to a new source of joy. And when all temporal hope is extinguished and reluctantly given up, the spirit asserts its own immortality, and rests in hope beyond the grave. Naomi is reduced to a melancholy, a mortifying alternative; of continuing a poor, deserted exile in the land of Moab, or of returning to Bethlehem-Judah, stripped of all her wealth, of all her glory; to be an object at best of pity, perhaps of contempt. On this last however she resolves, flattering herself that change of place and change of objects may alleviate her distress.

The two young Moabitesses, in uniting themselves to men of Israel, had renounced their own kindred and country, perhaps their native gods; and therefore they listen with joy to the proposal of their mother-in-law, to return to Canaan. It is the

more pleasing to observe this union of sentiment and affection, that the relation in question is seldom found favourable to cordiality and harmony. It furnishes a presumptive proof of the goodness of all the three, and they had indeed a most mournful bond of union among themselves—common loss, common misery: and the heart seems to have felt and acknowledged the ties which alliance had formed, and which the hand of death had rivetted.

Behold then the mother and her daughters turning their back on the painfully pleasing scenes of joys and sorrows past, unattended, unprotected, unbefriended, disregarded; as sad a retinue as ever wandered from place to place. They are hardly in motion from their place, when Naomi, penetrated with a lively sense of gratitude for friendship so generous and so disinterested, overwhelmed with the prospects of the still greater misery in which these dutiful young women were about to involve themselves, from their love to her, and unwilling to be outdone in kindness, earnestly entreats them to return home again. She urges upon them every consideration that reason, that affection, that prudence could suggest, to induce them to separate from a wretch so friendless and forlorn, so helpless, so hopeless, as herself. To suffer alone is now all the consolation she either expects or seems to wish; the destitute condition of these sisters in affliction is now her heaviest burthen. Indeed the situation of those three pilgrims has in it something wonderfully pathetic and interesting. There they are upon

the road, on foot, with all the weakness, ignorance, timidity, uncertainty, and irresolution of their sex; not knowing which way to bend their course, exposed to the craft, violence, or insult of every one they met; sinking under the recollection of what they had endured, shrinking from the apprehension of what might yet be before them. They attempt to comfort each other, and in doing that, every one is seeking some slender consolation for herself. Think on the failure of bread, on the failure of money, on the approaches of night, on the natural terrors and dangers of darkness, on the savageness of wild beasts, and the more formidable savageness of wicked men. Think on the unkindness and indifference of an unfeeling world, and on the darker frowns of angry Heaven. We are disposed to weep while we reflect on Jacob, a fugitive from his father's house, composing his head to rest upon a pillow of stone, under the canopy of the open sky; at reflecting on Joseph, torn from his father's embrace, sold into slavery, cast into a dungeon; but I find here something infinitely more deplorable. Jacob and Joseph were men, flushed with youthful spirits, with youthful hope: the vigour of their minds had not been broken down by the iron hand of affliction, their prospects were enlivened with the promises and visions of the Almighty; but these unhappy wanderers have drunk deep of the cup of adversity; their society is worse than solitude; despair hangs over all their future prospects. Stand still and shed the tear of compassion over them, ye daughters of

affluence, prosperity, and ease, who start at a shadow, who scream at the sight of a harmless mouse, who tremble at the rustling of a leaf shaken by the wind; ye who never knew the heart of a stranger, never felt the keen biting of the wind of heaven, never beheld the stern aspect of hunger, never endured the surly blow or scornful look of pride and cruelty. Or rather weep over them, ye whose wounds are still bleeding, to whom wearisome days and nights have been appointed, who by the experience of misery, have learned to pity and to succour the miserable. May the God of mercy, the friend of the orphan, the judge of the widow, the refuge of the distressed, have mercy upon them, and conduct them in safety to their desired haven!

Which shall we most admire, the generosity and disinterestedness of the mother, or the steadiness, spirit, and resolution of the daughters? How pleasurable is strife of a certain kind, the strife of good will, of magnanimity, of gratitude, of piety, of self-denial! The language, the sentiments, are the language and sentiments of nature; they flow from the heart, and they reach the heart. "And Naomi said "unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to "her mother's house; the Lord deal kindly with you "as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The "Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you, "in the house of her husband. Then she kissed "them. And they lift up their voice and wept." Verses 8, 9.

The good woman herself admits that sufficient respect has been paid to filial and conjugal tender-

ness; she wishes and prays as a recompense for their kindness to the living and devotedness to the memory of the dead, more lasting and more auspicious connexions with husbands of their own country. She proposes not, recommends not the affected, constrained, involuntary retirement and sequestration of prudish, squeamish virtue; and they, on their part, assume no unnatural airs of immortal grief; they form no flimsy suspicious vows of undeviating, unalterable attachment; they make no clamorous, unmeaning, deceptious protestation of love extinguished and never to be rekindled, the pitiful artifice of little minds to flatter themselves, and catch the admiration of others. How much more emphatical is the silent, unprotesting reply of Orpah and Ruth! "She kissed them; and they lift up "their voice and wept." What charming eloquence is heard, is seen, is felt in those tears! Have these lovely damsels less regard for their departed lords, are they more eager to form new alliances, that they say nothing? I cannot believe it. Noisy grief is quickly over, it soon spends itself. Sincerity seldom calls in the aid of exclamation, vehemence, and vows; but dubious, staggering fidelity is glad to support itself with the parade of woe, and by the pomp of declamation.

Their persevering, determined, unprotesting friendship, but endears them the more to their venerable parent, and inclines her the more powerfully to resist their inclination, and to prevent the sacrifice which they were disposed to make; and again she has recourse to more earnest and tender expos-

tulation, resolved to offer up a noble sacrifice to maternal tenderness in her turn. "And Naomi said, "Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with "me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, "that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my "daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have "a husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I "should have a husband also to-night, and should "also bear sons, would ye tarry for them till they "were grown? would ye stay for them from "having husbands? nay, my daughters: for it "grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand "of the Lord is gone out against me." Verses 11—13.

What sweet touches of unsophisticated nature press upon the heart, in perusing this address! beyond the pomp and power of art to reach. Who is not melted at hearing the undissembled wailings of a good and honest mind, mourning for others, not itself; calmly surrendering its own interest in the joys of life, but anxiously desirous to procure and preserve them for those whom she loved as her own soul; nobly resigning that cordial of cordials, virtuous friendship, when it could not be enjoyed but to the detriment of those who felt and expressed it; composed to the prospect and suffering of solitary anguish, provided her amiable children were restored to the rank, affluence, and comfort which they so well deserved. How poor and contemptible are the contentions for precedency and pre-eminence, the emulation of fortune and dress, the rage of admi-

ration and conquest, compared to this! How pleasant is it to see an humble fortune dignified and supported by generosity and greatness of mind!

The touchstone is now applied to the affection of the two sisters, and their different characters and merits are finally disclosed. Orpah suffers herself to be persuaded; with regret we behold her resolution overcome; we behold her separating from her mother-in-law, with the valedictory kiss of peace, and returning to her country and her gods; and we hear of her no more. But Ruth cleaves to her former choice; unmoved by the example of her sister, or by the entreaties of her mother, she persists in her purpose; the desertion of Orpah only knits her heart the faster to her adopted parent, and in words far sweeter than the nightingale's song, she breathes out her unalterable resolution to live and to die with her. How could Naomi find in her heart to make another attempt to shake off so lovely a companion? How delighted must she have been in yielding the triumph of kindness to a pleader so irresistible! "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or "to return from following after thee: for whither "thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I "will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and "thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, "and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to "me, and more also, if aught but death part thee "and me." Verses 16, 17.

The mother is every way out-done, overcome, and she contends no longer,—to persist farther had

been cruelty not friendship; and thus mutual sympathy and deliberate choice have, under the direction of all-ruling Providence, formed an union dearer than the ties of interest, or even the bonds of nature, know; and thus the same breath which extinguishes the fainter spark, blows up the stronger into a purer, brighter flame; and thus the God who has all hearts and all events in his hand, ever rears a refuge for the miserable, provides remedy against despair, and extracts a precious essence from calamity which operates its own cure. "When she saw "that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, "then she left speaking unto her." Verse 18. And thus Ruth stands without an equal, without a rival. And how has she gained the glorious superiority over a sister? By a lofty tone and an overbearing spirit; by the poisoned whisper and the dark insinuation; by smoothness of forehead and malignity of heart? No, but by perseverance in well doing and adherence to rectitude; by modest firmness and heart-affecting simplicity; by undissembled affection and unaffecting piety.—O goodness, how pure, how sincere, how satisfactory are the honours which crown thy head and dilate thy heart! —

It is impossible to tire in contemplating an object so transcendently excellent. In that fair form all the feminine virtues and graces love to reside. We have pointed out some of them; let us meditate for a moment on that which is the crown and glory of all the rest.—Estimable for her conjugal fidelity and filial attachment; great in her voluntary renuncia-

tion of the world, and patient submission to poverty, hardship, and contempt; how superlatively great, how supremely estimable does she appear, arrayed in the robe of unfeigned piety, and triumphant faith in God! The world may perhaps condemn her for preferring the society, country, and prospects, of so poor a woman as Naomi, to the friendship of her own kindred, the possessions of her native home, the allurements of present ease and comfort. Had she conferred with flesh and blood, how very different had the decision been! But the same divine principle which caused Moses to "refuse to be "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" and which taught him "to esteem the reproach of Christ "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," determined this amiable creature to withdraw from the companions of her youth, from the protection of her father's house, and from the religious worship of her ancestors: and to follow a destitute forlorn widow from country to country, to cast her subsistence upon the care of Providence, and to look for her reward beyond the grave.

Observe these distinct qualities of the religious principle by which she was actuated.

I. It was *deliberate*, the result of reflection, comparison, and choice, not the prejudice of education, the determination of self-interest, nor the momentary effect of levity and caprice. Her prejudices, her partialities, her worldly interests were all clearly on the other side. The idolatrous rites of Moab were fascinating to a young mind, not yet beyond a taste

for pleasure; the aspect of the religion of Canaan was rather ungainly and forbidding, and to adopt it implied the renunciation of all that the heart naturally holds dear. When she therefore thus solemnly affirms, "Your God shall be my God," it is in effect saying, "I have counted the cost, "I know whom I have believed. I have opened my "mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. I "have subscribed with my hand to the God of "Jacob. Blessed be the day that I came into con- "nexion with an Israelitish family. It has indeed "cost me many tears, pierced through my heart "with many sorrows, it is banishing me from my "dear native clime, from the endearments of paren- "tal affection, from ease, honour, and abundance, "driving me among strangers, exposing me to "struggle with uncertainty, anxiety, necessity, "neglect, and scorn, but my resolution is fixed: "none of these things move me; every sacrifice, "every loss, every disgrace, is infinitely more than "compensated by having Israel's God for my God." Which leads to observe a

II. Feature of Ruth's religious character; it was *steady* and *persevering*. It might at first have been mere respect for the opinions and practice of the husband of her youth; the mere decency that suited an adopted daughter of Israel; but this had long ceased to be a motive; had it amounted but to this, it had been buried in the grave of her departed lord; but what was at first complaisance and decency grows up into inquiry; inquiry produces hesitation

and still more serious inquiry; this improves into conviction, and conviction is followed by a determination not to be moved or shaken, and she continues steadfast to the end. Her constancy, it must be allowed, was put to severe trials. Orpah has gone back. Naomi carries her expostulation up to importunity, I had almost said, to downright violence; the difficulties and hardships of the way were increasing not diminishing upon her. Had not "the heart been established by grace," so many, such accumulated discouragements, must have subdued the ardour of her spirit, and sent her back after her sister; but she has put her hand to the plough, and must not look back. Observe, she does not attempt to reason, does not oppose argument to argument, but, "being fully persuaded in "her own mind," adheres firmly to her point, and argues irresistibly by not arguing at all, and she prevails by entreaty. See that your cause be good, my fair friend, persist in it, prosecute it thus, and be assured of the victory.

III. Observe finally, as Ruth's religious principle was deliberate, was steady, and persevering, so it was *lively, efficacious, practical.* We hear nothing of the prattle of piety, nothing of the violence of a young and a female proselyte, no question of doubtful disputation introduced, about places and modes of worship, about Jerusalem and this mountain; nothing of the religion that floats merely in the head, and bubbles upon the tongue; no, her religion is seen, not heard; it "works by love, it purifies the

" heart, it overcomes the world." It offers up a grand sacrifice unto God, the body and spirit, affection and substance, youth, beauty, parentage, the pleasures and the pride of life. Let me see a single instance of this sort, and I will believe the convert to be more in earnest, than by exhibiting all the wordy zeal of a thousand polemics.

Indeed it is by action that this truly excellent woman expresses all her inward feelings. Her affection to her husband is not heard in loud lamentation over his tomb, but in cleaving to all that remained of him, his mother, his people, his country, and his God. Her affection to his mother is not expressed in the set phrase of condolence and compliment; but in adhering to her when all had forsaken her, in labouring for her subsistence, in submitting to her counsel; and her reverence for his God is manifested not merely in adopting the language and observing the rites of Canaan, but in relinquishing for ever, and with abhorrence, the gods beyond the flood, and every thing connected with their abominable rites.

Every circumstance of the case and character under review administers plain and important instruction. And, being a case in ordinary life, Ruth stands forth a pattern and instructor to young persons, in particular, whose situation may resemble her own.

Young woman, you may have married into a strange family. You have, of course, adopted the kindred, the pursuits, the friendships, and, to a

certain degree, the religion of your husband. It is your duty, and you will find it to be your interest, to let him and his connexions know, from your general deportment, that you are satisfied with the choice which you have made. Learn to give up your own prejudices in favour of country, of parentage, of customs, of opinions. Unless where the sacred rights of conscience are concerned, deem no sacrifice too great for the maintenance or restoration of domestic peace. As far as lieth in you, "whither "he goeth, go thou; and lodge where he lodgeth; "let his people be thy people, and his God thy "God." You will thereby preserve and secure his affection; you will harmonize family interests and intimacies, instead of disturbing them: if yours be the better religion, this is the way to bring over to it the man of no religion, or of an erroneous one; and if it be the worse, your relinquishing it, on conviction, will be at once a token of conjugal affection, a mark of good understanding, and a reasonable service toward God.

Have you had in early life the calamity of becoming a widow? It is a distressing, a delicate situation. It calls for every maxim of prudence, every counsel of friendship, every caution of experience, every support of piety. If you are a mourner indeed, you are already guarded against affectation; you will find rational and certain relief in attending to and performing the duties of your station. You will neither seek a hasty cure of sorrow by precipitately plunging into the world, nor attempt an

unnatural prolongation of it by affected retirement and sequestration. The tongue will utter no rash vows; the pang of separation will dictate no ensnaring resolutions; the will of Providence will be respected, obeyed, followed. Respect for the dead is best expressed by dutifulness to the living.

You have before you an useful example of firmness blended with female softness, of resolution heightened and adorned by sensibility. Lately, like Ruth, you had one who thought and acted for you; one who joyfully endured the burden and heat of the day, that your body and mind might enjoy repose. But now necessity is laid upon you. You must awake and arise to think and act for yourself. And here, as in every case, Nature has annexed the recompense to the duty. The mental powers are enfeebled, and at length destroyed by disuse and inaction. Exertion invigorates the mind, and composes by directing it. The listlessness of indolence undermines health; the activity of useful employment is the simplest and most infallible medicine for bodily complaints. And the most direct road to an honourable and happy second connexion, probably, is to guard carefully against all vehement expression of either inclination or aversion on the subject.

All these, however, are merely lessons of prudence adapted to the life that now is; and however important in themselves, unless aided and supported by a higher principle, they will constitute at most

the decent kinswoman, or the respectable sufferer. In Ruth we have this higher principle likewise beautifully exemplified—rational, modest, unaffected piety. True religion sits well on persons of either sex, and in all situations; but its aspect is peculiarly amiable in a female form, and in particular situations. Youth, beauty, and sorrow united, present a most interesting object—a daughter weeping at a parent's tomb; a mother mourning over "the babe that milked her," and "refusing to be "comforted;" a widow embracing the urn which contains the ashes of the husband of her youth—in all their affliction we are afflicted, we cannot refrain from mingling our tears with theirs. Let religion be infused into these lovely forms, and mark how the interest rises, how the frame is embellished, how the deportment is ennobled! The eye of that dutiful child is turned upward, her heart is delivered from oppression, her trembling lips pronounce, "When my father and my mother forsake me, "then the Lord will take me up."—"My father who "art in Heaven!"—The mother withdraws from the breathless clay, reconciled to the stroke which bereaved her, "goes her way, and eats bread, and "her countenance is no more sad," for her Make has said to her, "Why weepest thou; and why "eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?"—The widowed mourner "gives her mortal interest up; "and makes her God her all."

Young woman, whatever thy condition may be;

whether thou art in thy father's house, or married to an husband; at home, or in a strange land; in society or solitude; followed or neglected; be this thy monitor, this thy guide, this thy refuge—"The "love of God shed abroad in thy heart;" "the "fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom;" "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." However easy, gentle, flexible, complying, in other respects, where your religious principles, where the testimony of a good conscience, where your duty to your Creator are concerned, be firm and resolute, "be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in "the work of the Lord." Thus shall youth be guarded and beauty adorned; thus shall society be sweetened and solitude cheered, thus shall prosperity be sanctified and adversity soothed; thus shall life, even to old age and decay, be rendered useful and respectable; and thus shall death and the grave be stripped of all that is terrible in them.

LECTURE XIII.

RUTH I. 19—22.

So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them; and they said; Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me; so Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

OF the calamities to which human life is exposed, a few only are to be accounted real evils; the rest are imaginary and fantastical. Want of health is real woe; but what proportion do the hours of pain and sickness bear to the years of ease and comfort and joy? Want of bread is real distress, but it is very seldom the work of Nature, and therefore ought not, in justice, to be introduced into the list of the unavoidable ills which flesh is heir to. The loss of friends is a sore evil, but even wounds from this sharp-pointed weapon are closed at length by the gentle hand of time, and by the tender consolations of religion.

Whence then arise the unceasing, the universal murmurings of discontent, of desire, of impatience? Men fix their standard of felicity too high, and all that they have attained goes for nothing, because one darling object is still out of reach; or they groan and sigh under the weight of some petty disaster, which scarce deserves the name, while ten thousand substantial blessings are daily falling on their heads unnoticed, unacknowledged, unenjoyed. Compare, O man, thy possessions with thy privations, compare thy comforts with thy deserts, compare thy condition with thy neighbour's, consider how far, how very far thy state is on this side *worst*, and learn to give God thanks. Repine not that some wants are unsupplied, that some griefs are endured, that some designs have been frustrated, while so many unmerited good things are left, while hope remains, while there is recourse to Heaven. Behold these two forlorn wanderers, widowed, friendless, destitute, and cease from thy complaints, and stretch out thy hand to succour the miserable.

In the glorious strife of affection Ruth has nobly prevailed. Impelled by the fond recollection of endearments past, and now no more, prompted by filial duty and tenderness to the mother of her choice, attracted, animated, upheld by the powers and prospects of religion, she composedly yields up her worldly all, takes up her cross, and bears it patiently along from Moab to Bethlehem-Judah. The history is silent on the subject of their journey. It is easy to conceive the anxieties, the terrors, the

fatigues, the sufferings of female travellers, on a route of at least a hundred and twenty miles across the Arnon, across the Jordan, over mountains, through solitudes, without a protector, without a guide, without money. But that God who is the friend of the destitute and the refuge of the miserable, that God who was preparing for them infinitely more than they could ask, wish, or think, guides and guards them by the way, and brings them at length to their desired resting place.

These are not the only female pilgrims whom the sacred page has presented to our view, advancing by slow and painful stages to Bethlehem of Judah. Upwards of thirteen hundred years after this period, we behold a still more illustrious female traveller, and in circumstances still more delicate, on the road from Nazareth of Galilee, to her native city. But it was not to take possession of the inheritance of her fathers; it was not to repose in the lap of ease and indulgence; it was not to deposit the anxieties of approaching child-birth in the bosom of a fond and sympathizing parent. But it was to know the heart of a stranger, and to feel the bitterness of unkindness and neglect; a traveller so friendless that not a door would open to receive her, so poor that she cannot purchase the accomodations of an inn; overtaken by Nature's inevitable hour, "she brings forth her first-born Son in a "stable, and lays him in the manger, because there "was no room for them in the inn." But through such humiliating circumstances of meanness and

poverty, what a display of glory and magnificence was the arm of Jehovah preparing! What an important station do the simple annals of these poor women hold in the history of mankind! What celebrity, in the eyes of all nations, have they conferred on Bethlehem, on their country! How a thousand years shrink into a point before that God who "sees the end from the beginning!" How the purposes of Heaven are accomplished to one iota, to one tittle! How places and times are determined of Him who saith, as one having authority, "My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my "pleasure."

One of the advantages, and not the least, of travelling abroad, is the joy which the thought of returning home inspires; but this is a consolation which Naomi's return is not permitted to enjoy. She brings back no treasures to purchase attention, to command respect, to excite envy. She is accompanied with no husband, no son, to maintain her cause, or to cheer her solitude: she brings back nothing but emptiness, dereliction, and tears. A great part of her ancient acquaintance and friends are gone, as well as her own family. Those who remain hardly know her again, so much are her looks impaired and disfigured with grief. A new generation has arisen, to whom she is an utter stranger, and who are utter strangers to her. But in a little city a trifling event makes a great noise. The curiosity of the whole town is excited by the appearance of these two insignificant fugitives; and

various we may suppose were the inquiries set on foot, the conjectures formed, the remarks made, the censures passed on their account. This is the never-failing inconveniency of inconsiderable places. Where there is abundance of idleness, abundance of ill-nature, every man is a spy upon his neighbour, every one is at leisure to attend to the affairs of another, because he is but half occupied by his own. We have here enough of inquiry, enough of wonder, but not a single word of compassion, of kindness, of hospitality; and Naomi might have gone without a roof to shelter her head, or a morsel of bread to sustain sinking nature, but for the industry and attachment of her amiable daughter-in-law.

Base, unfeeling world, that can feast itself on the orphan's tears and the widow's sorrow! See there they are, every one from his own business, or rather his own idleness, to stare and talk a wretched woman out of countenance; the whisper goes round, the finger points, the scandal of ten years' standing is revived, and a new colouring is given to it. Affected pity and real indifference wound the heart which God himself has just bruised, whose husband and children He has taken to himself. The wretched mourner seems to feel it; she bursts into an agony of grief, and thus vents the bitterness of her soul: "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the "Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I "went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home "again empty: why then call ye me Naomi,

" seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the " Almighty hath afflicted me?" Verses 20, 21. What simple, but what forcible language the heart speaks! She dwells on the minute circumstances of her case, takes up her own name as a theme of woe, changes the fond appellation of parental affection, of parental hope, Naomi, on which Providence hath poured out the wormwood and gall of disappointment, into one better adapted to her tragical history. The past presents nothing but happiness passed away as a shadow; rank, and opulence, and importance gone, gone never to return. The future spreads a gloom unirradiated by a single gleam of hope. She apprehends no change of things but the oppressive change from evil to worse.

But yet her misery admits of alleviation. It comes from God; she sees the hand of a Father in her affliction, she kisses the rod, and commands the soul to peace. To endure distress the fruit of our own folly, to suffer from the pride, cruelty, and carelessness of a man like ourselves, is grievous, is unsupportable, it drinks up our spirits. But the evil that comes immediately from God has its own antidote blended into its substance; we drink the poison and the medicine from the same chalice, and at the same instant; the one destroys the effect of the other; their joint operation is salutary, is life-giving, not deadly. Was that the voice of God which I heard? Spake it not in thunder? Said it not, " Take now " thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, " and offer him for a burnt offering?" It is well;

it was the voice of God, and that is enough. I will offer up the sacrifice, I will surrender my dearest delight, I cannot tell how the promise is to be accomplished consistently with my obedience and submission, but the command and the promise proceed from the same lips; I leave all to him.

From all that we see, Naomi had slender motives and poor encouragement to return to her own country: we cannot tell what determined her resolution; it might be a little fit of female impatience, occasioned by some piece of Moabitish insolence or unkindness; it might be the mere restlessness of a mind ill at ease, grasping at the shadow of felicity merely from change of place; it might be the ardent desire of home, of the scenes of childish simplicity, innocence, and joy, which in certain circumstances all men feel, and by which the conduct of all is to a certain degree regulated. Whatever it were it came from above, it was over-ruled of infinite wisdom, it was, unknown to itself, acting in subserviency to a most important event: and it is thus, that little, unnoticed, unknown powers, put the great machine in motion, produce effects that astonish, and delight, and bless mankind.

The same all-ruling Providence is conspicuous in determining the *season* of Naomi's return. On this hinged all the mighty consequences of Ruth's acquaintance and connexion with Boaz—the birth of kings, the transmission of empire, the accomplishment of ancient prophecy, the hopes of the human race. Had this apparently unconsequential journey

been accelerated, had it been retarded a month, a week, a single day, the parties might never have met. Contingent to men, it was foreseen, fixed, disposed, and matured by Him "who is wonderful in "counsel, and excellent in working."

Every one observes and records the great incidents of his life. But would you, O man, have rational pleasure blended with youthful instruction, attend to little things, trace matters of highest moment up to their source; and behold thy fate stand quivering on a needle's point, and a colour given to thy whole future life, thy eternal state fixed by a reed shaken with the wind, by an accidental concurrence which thou wert neither seeking nor avoiding; and rejoice to think that all things are under the direction of unerring wisdom, of all-subduing mercy; that they are "working together for good."

Does this teach a lesson of levity and inconsideration? Darest thou to trifle with thy everlasting concerns because there is a God who ruleth and judgeth in the earth, who doeth all things after the counsel of his own will? God forbid. Presumptuously to lead the decrees of Providence, impiously to resist them, or timidly to draw back, are equally offensive to a righteous, a holy, and wise God.

We have seen the unhappy Naomi stripped of almost every earthly good; husband, children, friends, means, country, comfort; it is the dark midnight hour with her. No, there is one little lamp left burning, to dissipate the gloom, to prevent despair—the sacred flame of virtuous friendship.

No, the sun of righteousness is hastening to the brightness of his arising. The name after all was propitious and prophetic; God brings it about in his own way, and it is "wondrous in our eyes."

The continuation of this story will carry us on to the contemplation of scenes of rural simplicity, for the enjoyment of which, grandeur might well relinquish its pride and pomp, its vanity and vexation of spirit, and rejoice in the exchange. Let us meanwhile pause and reflect on the history of Naomi as administering useful instruction.

1st. As an admonition never to despair. God frequently brings his people to that mournful spectacle, hope expiring, that he may have the undivided honour of reviving it again, and that he may be acknowledged as the one pure and perennial fountain of light, and life, and joy. The condition of Jacob, of Joseph, of Naomi, all preach one and the same doctrine; all proclaim that the time of man's extremity is God's opportunity.

2dly. Let us call, let us reckon nothing mean or contemptible which God employs, or may be pleased to employ, in his service. The notice of the King of Kings impresses dignity and importance, confers true nobility on the low born child, the beggar, the outcast, the slave. On them all he has stamped his own image; and their present and every future condition are the work of his Providence. "It is not "the will of your Father in Heaven that one of "these little ones should perish:" and if destined to salvation, to what worldly distinction may they

not aspire, may they not arrive? Carefully mark the progress of children: study the bent of their dispositions, of their talents: endeavour to put them in a train which Nature and Providence seem to have pointed out: attend to what constitutes their real consequence in life, and leave the issue to Him who governs all events.

3dly. Observe how the great Ruler of the Universe contrasts and connects great thing with small, that he may humble the pride of man, and expose the nothingness of the glory of this world. That forlorn gleaner, and Boaz the wealthy: the exile from Moab, and the resident possessor of the fertile plains of Bethlehem-Judah, seem wonderfully remote from each other. Their condition is as opposite as human life can well present: but in the eye of Heaven they are already one. She is but a single step from being lady of the harvest which she gleans, "an help meet" for its Lord, and the sovereign mistress of those servants at whose aspect she now trembles, the meanest of whom she now looks up to as her superior. Childless and a widow, her family, her own children, are but three steps from the throne—the throne of Judah and Israel;—and in the purpose of the Eternal, "the fulness of time" is hastening to exhibit to an astonished world, in the person of this woman's seed, "that Prince of "peace, of the increase of whose government and "peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of "David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and "to establish it with judgment and with justice,

"from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the "LORD of Hosts will perform this." The period is approaching, men and brethren, when Bethlehem-Judah shall display greater wonders, contrasts more confounding, than these. The time is at hand, when another forlorn damsel of the same race, and her outcast babe, shall appear in contrast with all that is stupendous, striking, formidable, venerable, in heaven and earth, shall rise above all, give laws to all, eclipse all. Behold that "babe lying in a "manger, in a stable, because there is no room for "Him in the inn," controlling the counsels of Augustus, the mighty master of the world; behold Him drawing princes and wise men from the East with treasures of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, to his feet. Behold the face of heaven irradiated, enriched with a new star, to mark the way which led to his cradle: while a multitude of the heavenly host announce in rapturous strains the birth of the lowly infant. Behold "a man of sorrows and ac-"quainted with grief,"—"of no reputation;"—"in "the form of a servant;"—"numbered with trans-"gressors;"—"obedient to death, even the death "of the cross."—Behold Him "highly exalted;" "leading captivity captive;"—"all the angels of "God worshipping him;" invested with "a name "that is above every name;"—"crowned with glory "and honour;"—"coming in the clouds of Heaven!" To Him let my knee bow, and my tongue confess. "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be "continued as long as the sun: and men shall be

" blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed. " Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who " only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his " glorious name for ever : and let the whole earth be " filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen." Psalm lxxii. 17—19.

4thly. In the adoption of Ruth into the church of God, and " the commonwealth of Israel," we have another dawning ray of hope arising upon the Gentile nations. The tide is beginning imperceptibly to rise and swell, which shall at length become an overflowing ocean. " In that seed shall all the " nations of the earth be blessed." That stranger shall be employed in bringing forward the mighty plan to maturity. " Ethiopia shall stretch out her " hands to God."—" They shall come from the east " and from the west, and shall sit down with Abra- " ham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Hea- " ven."—" Verily God is no respecter of persons."

LECTURE XIV.

RUTH II. 1—3.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech: and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of a field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

PROVIDENCE has graciously annexed to honest industry both respectability and happiness. The purest and most delicious enjoyment that human life admits of, perhaps, is when a man sits down with those whom he loves, to the temperate indulgence of that refreshment and repose which he has just earned and sweetened with his labour. The greatest and wisest and best of men are ever presented to us as engaged in virtuous employment and exertion: as deriving health, subsistence, reputation, and comfort from the exercise, not the inactivity, of their bodily and mental powers: and, happily, the scenes in which every man is conversant seem to him the most interesting of all, his own station the most eminent or useful, his own pursuits the most impor-

tant. Hence a certain degree of self-complacency, of self-satisfaction, pervades the whole; every one is acting in his own sphere; while infinite wisdom binds all together by invisible or unnoticed bands, and the various members, without knowledge or design, co-operate from the common benefit, and fulfil the great design of Heaven.

Idleness is not more dishonourable than it is inimical to real felicity. The sluggard at once defeats the purpose of his Maker, and destroys his own peace: And what was denounced against man as a punishment, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou "eat bread," like every other punishment that comes from above, is converted into a blessing, and, as in every other case, the Great God is just and merciful at once; just, in imposing on the fallen creature the necessity of labouring; merciful in rendering the fruit of it so sweet.

But can the inhabitants of a great, commercial, polished *city*, find either amusement or instruction in contemplating the rude and simple manners of ancient times; in listening to the history of the inglorious toils of the husbandman; in tracing the operations of an art, the very terms of which they do not understand; in observing the mean employments of poverty and wretchedness, which they only pity or despise? Whether they can derive amusement or instruction from such things as these or not, may not courtly pride be admonished in behalf of the lowly, rustic sons of want and industry,

in the words of two sweet singing bards of our own country?

"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
"Their homely joys, and destiny obscure:
"Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
"The short and simple annals of the poor."

GRAY'S *Church-Yard.*

—Nor ye who live
"In luxury and ease, in pomp and pride,
"Think these lost themes unworthy of your ear."

THOMSON'S *Spring.*

We have heard the artless tale of Naomi's woe and of Ruth's attachment. We have accompanied the deserted, widowed mother and daughter-in-law from Moab to Bethlehem-Judah, the city of their departed husbands: but, alas, all the reception they meet with is stupid wonder, silly curiosity, or insulting pity. We hear of no kind contention to entertain the stranger and succour the distressed. The season of reaping was come; but for them no golden harvest waved in the wind, for them no mower was preparing his sickle; their poverty was but embittered by the sight of plenty diffused around; and the misery of Naomi's fall is dreadfully aggravated by the prosperity which Elimelech's nearest relations were enjoying.

Of these the most distinguished was Boaz, whom the sacred historian introduces to our acquaintance as "a mighty man of wealth." Riches, like every other gift of God, become a blessing or a curse,

just according to the use that is made of them. Riches are a solid good, when they are received with thankfulness, enjoyed with moderation, and employed in the service of God and of mankind: but they are perverted into a sore evil when they engender pride and harden the heart, as is too generally the case; when they purchase fuel for the lusts, or are fabricated into a golden image, to become the unworthy object of adoration. Had Boaz been merely a man of wealth, his name had not deserved a place in these sacred memoirs; but, though a rich man, he was not slothful in business; he was a man of humanity, of intelligence, of discretion, of affability; a man that feared the Lord, that did justly, that loved mercy. He was ennobled by qualities which great possessions cannot confer, and which do not, with fugitive treasures, fly away as an eagle towards heaven.

Behold the mysterious distribution of the gifts of Providence! The family of one "brother is waxen "poor, and fallen into decay;" that of the other is shining in splendour, affluence, and renown. Hasty and partial views of the Divine conduct are always puzzling and distressful; calm and comprehensive investigation will ever lead to composure and acquiescence.

What must these helpless women do for daily bread? They sit neglected and forlorn; but despondency will only increase the calamity. Necessity suggests many expedients. While health, vir-

tue, and friendship remain, all is not lost; and Heaven frequently permits the current of human felicity to spend itself to the very lowest ebb, that its own hand may be acknowledged in the means which caused the flood to rise and swell again.

The proposal of Ruth to her mother-in-law discovers, in every point of view, a noble and ingenuous spirit, and an excellent heart. She will do nothing without the consent and advice of the venerable matron who had become father and mother, country, friends, and every thing to her. Begging is the last miserable refuge of age or infirmity, of disease or sloth; she scorns to think of recurring to it, while she has youth, health, and strength to labour, and while there was a field of lawful employment. An ordinary mind, in her situation, would have vented itself in unavailing womanish lamentations; perhaps in unkind upbraidings of the ancient woman who was the cause of all the distress which she endured: she would have been for dispatching Naomi up and down among her wealthy relations and towns-folks, to solicit protection and subsistence. No, it is more honourable in her eyes to earn food by her own labour; she conceals the anguish which wrung her own heart, from fear of adding affliction to the afflicted. The season of the year was favourable; and happily the law of that God whom she had deliberately taken for her God, had made provision for persons in her destitute condition.

The same bounty which poured the abundance of

autumn into the lap of the mighty had reserved a pittance for the support of the famished and the friendless. How the mercy of Jehovah bursts upon us in every dispensation and in every event! In wisdom he has permitted distinctions of rank and fortune to take place; in compassion he has taken care to make provision for the wants of the necessitous: so that while industry and pity remain, no one is reduced to absolute despair.

It is with pleasure that we recur to the words of the law, and trace that God who "careth for oxen," much more solicitous about the support and consolation of the miserable part of the rational creation. "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, "thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy "field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of "thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vine-"yard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy "vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and "stranger: I am the Lord your God." Leviticus xix. 9, 10. And again, "When ye reap the har-"vest of your land, thou shalt not make clean rid-"dance of the corners of thy field when thou reap-"est, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy "harvest; thou shalt leave them unto the poor "and to the stranger: I am the Lord your God." Leviticus xxiii. 22. And again, in recapitulating the law in Deuteronomy; "When thou cuttest down "thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf "in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: "it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and

" for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless " thee in the work of thine hands. When thou " beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the " boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the " fatherless, and for the widow. When thou ga- " therest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not " glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, " for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou " shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the " land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do " this thing." Deut. xxiv. 19—22.

In this law several remarkable circumstances, tending to illustrate the law of nature in general, and the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation in particular, press themselves upon our notice.

1st. The consideration and recollection of their own and of their father's misery in Egypt, is urged as the powerful motive to pity, to spare, and to succour. " A Syrian ready to perish" on the road to Padanaram " was my father."—" A generation of " slaves in Egypt were my progenitors, let me there- " fore commiserate, and receive, and cherish the " forlorn traveller: let me treat my own captive, " bondman, dependant, with gentleness and hu- " manity." Who gives charity? Not unfeeling wealth nor giddy dissipation; but the man who has known want, who once stood in need of a friend, who has been himself succoured in the hour of calamity. Who is it that relents and forgives? Not cold-blooded, meritless, constitutional virtue; but restored, recovered frailty; goodness which arose

the purer and the stronger from having fallen. Who is liberal and generous? Not the nobly born, the unvaryingly prosperous, but magnanimity nursed on the breast of adversity; the prince whom native worth, whom conscious dignity, whom the experience of human woe has taught to devise liberal things, to do good, and to communicate. But is hereditary greatness, unvarying opulence, unhumbled, unmortified success always cold, selfish, unfeeling? God forbid. High birth, lineal honours, the accumulating wealth of many generations sometimes put on their most beautiful garments, and borrow lustre from condescension, sympathy, and beneficence. Is successful adversity, illuminated obscurity, aggrandized littleness, always merciful, condescending, generous, and humane? Ah no: the poor wretch frequently forgets himself; he condemns the arts by which he arose, he spurns the ladder on which he climbed to eminence and distinction, and tries to make his upstart greatness bear a mimic resemblance to antique dignity, by aping the viler not the nobler qualities of traditional importance,

Again, 2dly. Observe, the law inculcates pity to the poor and wretched by the most glorious of all examples; "I am the Lord, who had compassion "upon you in your misery, who delivered you from "the furnace, who drove out the nations from be- "fore you, who planted you in the land, who fills "thy garner and makes thy wine-press to overflow; "and who only asks, in return, a mite or two fo,

"the sons and daughters of affliction, those few "ears which thy haste has let fall to the ground, "that sheaf which has accidentally dropped from "thy ear, that little corner of thy field which the "sickle has spared; and which that starving creature, "by nature thy equal, by providence thy inferior, "is waiting to pick up and devour. He is an object "of tenderness and affection to me, see therefore "that thou neglect him not, that thou defraud him "not, that thou distress him not."

3dly. The law plainly supposes that there may be an over-anxiety and solicitude about things in their own nature lawful and innocent, which it therefore aims at repressing: it supposes that there may be an eagerness of accumulation which defeats itself, a scattering abroad which produces increase, a withholding of more than is meet, and it tendeth only to poverty; that diffusing, not hoarding up abundance, is the proper use of it.

4thly. The law had a double object in view, namely the improvement of the affluent, and the relief of the poor. It thus became a mutual benefit; the one was blessed in giving, the other in receiving. The greater blessedness however was on the side of the giver, as the blessedness of the Creator is superior to that of the creature. It is as much an ordination of Providence, that "the poor should "never cease out of the land," as that "the earth "should yield her increase," and the spheres perform their stated revolutions: And while they do exist, the Great Lord and Preserver of all things is

concerned to make suitable provision for them. The rich are *his* stewards, and *their* store-keepers: He that gleans his own field to the last ear is a thief and a robber as much as he who plunders his neighbour's granary; he robs God, he plunders the needy and the destitute, he does what he can to subvert the Divine government, he would make the law of charity and mercy of none effect; he bars his own plea for pardon at a throne of grace: he mars the possession of all that he has; he cankers his own enjoyment, and affixes the seal to his own condemnation.

5thly. The law particularly describes the objects which it meant to relieve, "the stranger, the father-"less, and the widow." Unhappy Ruth! her title to the wretched offal from the hand of the reaper was but too well established. She united in her own person all these characters of woe. Her melancholy claim to pity and support was fearfully multiplied, and a three-fold burden presses her down to the ground: nevertheless she entreats as a boon what she might have demanded and have taken as a right.

Her trust in and submission to the direction of Providence sweetly accord with her filial affection and tenderness, and with a noble independency of spirit: she is determined to labour, she disdains not to employ the necessary means for supplying herself and aged parent with food, but she leaves the direction of her footsteps to high Heaven; she is in the way of her duty, and she deposits all anxiety

about the issue in the bosom of her Heavenly Father. What a happy mixture of fortitude and resignation! It cannot but prosper.

Having obtained the consent of her mother, who perhaps might have a presentiment of what was approaching, behold her up with the dawn, pensive timorous, and slow, advancing to the fields: the country all before her, where to choose her place of toil, and Providence her guide; with the downcast look of ingenuous modesty, the timidity which sour misfortune inspires, the firm step of conscious rectitude, and the flushed cheek of kindling hope. By some nameless unaccountable circumstance, heaven-directed she unknowingly bends her course to the field and reapers of Boaz. She has done her part, she has made the sacrifice which conscience and affection demanded, she has submitted cheerfully to the hardships which necessity imposed, she has put herself in the way of relief which her situation pointed out. God is good, and takes all the rest upon himself. He who ordered her flight to Canaan at the time of barley-harvest, when Nature, and Providence, and the law, concurred to find her subsistence, orders her path to that field, where every thing, without the knowledge of the parties concerned, was prepared and arranged for the high scenes now ready to be acted.

The order of human procedure generally is from blaze to smoke, from noise and bustle to nothing, from mighty preparation to feebleness of execution. The divine conduct, on the contrary, is a glorious

rise from obscurity into light, from "small begin-
"nings to a latter end greatly increased;" from "the
"mouth of babes and sucklings He ordaineth
"strength," and by a concurrence of circumstances which no human sagacity could foresee, and which no human power could either bring together or keep asunder, raises a neglected gleaner in the field into the lady of the domain, and a fugitive of Moab into a mother in Israel; a mother of kings whose name shall never expire but with the dissolution of Nature.

At this period of the story let us pause and meditate

—On the power which regulates and controls all the affairs of men, who has all hearts and all events in his hand, who "poureth contempt upon princes, "and bringeth to nought the wisdom of the prudent;" who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth "up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set "him with princes, even with the princes of his "people; he maketh the barren woman to keep "house, and to be a joyful mother of children." Is there a God who "doeth according to his will in "the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants "of the earth?" than let me never "be high-mind-"ed, but fear" always before him, for I am never out of his reach, never concealed from his eye, never sheltered from his justice. Is there a God who judgeth in the earth, in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, to whom the miserable never look, never cry in vain! then let me never sink into despair. I am not too

humble for his notice, my disease is not beyond his skill to cure, my wants are not too numerous for his supplies, nor my transgressions beyond the multitude of his tender mercies. Doth not he deck the lily and feed the raven? a sparrow riseth not on the wing, falleth not to the ground without my Heavenly "Father. Hitherto hath the Lord helped," and "his "hand is not shortened, nor his ear heavy, nor his "bowels of compassion restrained."

Meditate again, On what ground you have encouragement to ask, and to expect the divine protection and favour. Have you given up all for God? Have you good hope through grace that you are reconciled to God through the blood of his Son? Have you a good conscience toward God that you are in the proper use of appointed means? Can you look up with confidence and say, "Lord, thou knowest all "things, thou knowest that I have not folded my "hands to sleep, that I have not set down in "sullen discontent, that I have not charged thee "foolishly, that I have not fled to unjustifiable "methods of relief? I have not impiously striven "with my Maker, nor presumptuously expected a "miracle to be wrought in my behalf. I have in "much weakness, but in trembling hope, endea-"voured to do my duty; and I now, Lord, cast all "my care, cast my burden upon thee." Look into the history of divine interpositions. Were they in compliment to the peevish and capricious, were they extorted by the loud lamentations or the secret murmurings of insolence and ingratitude? Were

they the pillows smoothed by the hand of weak indulgence for the drowsy head of sloth and indifference to repose on? No, but they were the seasonable cordial of parental affection to a fainting child; the reward which wisdom and goodness bestow on diligence and perseverance; the indissoluble union which God has established between human exertion and divine co-operation; they were the recompense of labour and vigilance, they were the answer of prayer.

Meditate yet again, On the true dignity of human nature, on the true glory of man and of woman also; —honest, useful employment. It consists not in idle, luxurious enjoyment, it is not to do nothing, to be eternally waited upon and ministered unto, to grow torpid by inaction, to slumber away life in a lethargic dream, and to lose the powers of the soul and body by disuse; but to preserve and promote health by moderate exercise, to earn cheerfulness and self-approbation by the sweet consciousness that you are not living wholly in vain, and to rise into importance by being somewhat useful to your fellow-creatures. In the eye of sober, unbiassed reason, whether of the two is the more pleasing, the more respectable sight; and which is, in her own mind, the happier of the two, Ruth laden with the ears of corn which she had toiled to gather, hastening home to the hut of obscurity, to administer food and comfort to old age and sorrow; or a modern belle issuing forth under a load of uneasy finery, to imaginary triumphs, and to certain dis-

appointment? Who sleeps soundest at night, and who awakes and arises in the best health and spirits next day? I expect not an answer. The thing speaks for itself; and I have purposely forborne to state the case so strongly as might have been done. The virtuous damsel has in part received her reward, but a greater and a better is preparing for her. The mother and daughter have been arranging their little matters with discretion; and the great God has been preparing his agents, putting his armies in motion; all is made ready, is made to meet, is made to work together, is made to prosper by Him who sees the perfect man in the embryo, the end from the beginning, the effect in its primary cause, the eternal chain in every series and in all its extent.

LECTURE XV.

RUTH II. 4.

And behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you: and they answered him, The Lord bless thee.

THE short and simple sentence which I have read might be made the subject of a volume.—I intend to make it at least the subject of a Lecture, and I entreat your patient attention to a few of the obvious, but neither uninteresting nor unimportant views which it exhibits of life and manners, of morals and religion.

Men of different characters, from various motives, and for various purposes, might be supposed to assume the plain, unadorned history of the barley-harvest of Boaz, as an useful and instructive topic of address, and, according to the spirit by which they were actuated, and the end which they had in view, might reason upon it in this manner.

I. The prudent, careful man would build upon it a system of attention, diligence, and economy. "Behold," would he say, "behold Boaz, the "wealthy and the wise, in his field, among his "servants, seeing every thing with his own eyes, "giving his orders in person, taking care that

"every one should be in his own place, and perform-
"ing his particular duty. The air and exercise
"connected with the operations of husbandry are
"conducive to health, to comfort; they promote
"his interest, they enliven his spirits; moderate
"labour makes rest welcome. See, his presence is
"a check upon idleness, upon carelessness, upon
"discord; it calls forth industry, it creates honest
"emulation; it reconciles the peasant to his toil to
"see the master participating in it. He has brought
"himself down to the level of the poor labourer,
"who seems to have risen in proportion. See,
"nothing escapes his notice, not even a wretched
"gleaner behind the reapers; he must be informed
"of every thing; of the minutest circumstance he
"will judge for himself.

"Young man, set out in life, and conduct your
"progress on such a principle, on such a model as
"this. It is the certain road to affluence, to re-
"spectability; you are thereby at once serving
"yourself, your dependants, and your country.
"Whatever be thy station, whatever thy employ-
"ment, let thy heart be in it; let thy time and thy
"attention be devoted to it. '*Be thou diligent to*
"*know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy*
"*herds.*' '*Be not slothful in business.*' Let every
"thing be done in its season; '*let every thing be*
"*done decently and in order.*' '*The hand of the*
"*diligent maketh rich.*' '*Seest thou a man dili-*
"*gent in his business? He shall stand before kings;*
"*he shall not stand before mean men.*'

" To these might be added innumerable admoni-
" tions and arguments, drawn from Scripture, from
" reason, from history, from experience, all tending
" to demonstrate the wisdom, the utility, the
" necessity of doing what thy hand findeth to do,
" with thy *might;* and to prove the folly, the
" danger, the misery of sloth and inattention. But
" example is beyond all precept. Survey yonder
" field; from Ruth up to Boaz all are busy, all
" are pleased and cheerful, all are happy. Be in-
" structed, my son, by the prospect; and learn that
" God, and nature, and reason, have inseparably
" connected industry and felicity; have made bodily
" health and inward peace, prosperity and impor-
" tance, to flow from virtuous, temperate exertion,
" as the stream from its source."

II. The moralist would take up the subject in a point of view somewhat different. " Observe," would he say, " the reciprocal duties arising out of
" the mutual relations of human life. We have
" them here beautifully exemplified in the relation of
" master and servant. Besides the more obvious
" obligations of justice, on the one, in faithfully
" performing the stipulated labour; on the other,
" in punctually bestowing the promised wages of the
" hireling, behold the tacit obligations of mutual
" affection and benevolence. Obligations founded
" not indeed upon a written law, but interwoven
" with the constitution and frame of our nature, and

" which the man who feels not, acknowledges not, the
" man who neglects or violates, let his adherence to
" the letter of the law be ever so close and exact, is a
" traitor to God and to society. Nay, he is a traitor
" to himself, by cutting off one of the purest sources
" of his own enjoyment, and at the same time is de-
" priving mankind of one of their justest claims.

" Boaz and his reapers meet with mutual cor-
" diality. They give and receive the salutation of
" peace. He accosts them as a father would his
" children, not as a task-master would the miserable
" drudges subjected to his authority. They address
" him with the kindly and humble familiarity of
" sons, not the distant timidity of slaves trembling
" for fear of the rod. They exact the price of their
" service as a debt, but they receive the gentle
" language and smiles of their employer as a
" favour. He expects them to be honest and diligent,
" for conscience' sake; but contentment with their
" condition, and good-will to himself, he thankfully
" receives as an unconditioned extraordinary effort
" to promote his interest.

" Suppose, for a moment, the temper and cha-
" racter of both to be changed; and the force of
" the example will be more clearly understood, and
" more powerfully felt. Without supposing any
" one precept of morality, or dictate of religion
" infringed, what a different aspect would the field
" of Boaz wear! Lo, where comes the surly, stately,
" self-important lord of the manor, surveying, in the

"pride of his heart his increasing store, looking "down on the humble, hardy sons of toil, as mere "beasts of burden designed to minister to his con- "veniency. He vouchsafes them never a word, "except perhaps to complain, to threaten, or to "upbraid; and then, in sullen silence and state he "retires again. The insulted labourers on the other "hand regard him with terror and disgust. The "social compact is dissolved between them. No "eye welcomed his approach with a smile, no "whisper of gratulation conveyed his name from "ear to ear, no tongue pronounced '*God bless him.*' "The half-smothered execration pursued his with- "drawing steps, and he well deserved it.

"What thinkest thou, my young friend, of the "picture? Learn from it, that to doing justly "there must be added loving mercy, and walking "humbly. Learn that the duties and felicities of "human life consist in numberless, nameless, un- "definable little offices which every one may learn "without a teacher, and which every one may if he "will perform. All have it not in their power to "supply the poor, to heal the sick, to succour the "distressed. Opportunity does not every day offer, "nor ability, permit to confer material, essential "benefits; but it is in the power of all to express "sympathy, to breathe a kind wish. Opportunities "every hour, every moment present themselves, "and ability never fails, of looking pleasantly, of "speaking gently and affectionately. And he is a

" wretch indeed, who knows that the unbending of " an eyebrow, the utterance of a syllable or two, " the alteration of half a tone of his voice, the " simple extension of his hand, would in a moment " relieve a heart overwhelmed with sorrow, wrung " with anguish, and who yet cruelly withholds so " slender, so easy, so cheap a consolation.

" Young man, if it be thy misfortune to have " to struggle with a harsh, ungainly, unbending " disposition, the sooner you set out in quest of " victory the better. Remember that thy own com- " fort is involved, beyond the power of separation, " with that of thy fellow-creatures. Take care that " the *manner* of showing mercy, or of conferring " obligation, mar not the *matter* of the benefit. " The man who *refuses graciously*, impresses on " the heart a more favourable idea of himself, than " he who *grants* with harshness, insolence, or pride. " True goodness considers, together with what is " written on tables of stone, what is written on '*the* " *living tables of the heart*,' and, from the heart, " communicates itself to the forehead, to the eyes, " the lip, the hand; impressing on the whole the " *law of kindness*."

III. The philosopher will cast his eyes along the group scattered over the plains adjoining to Bethlehem-Judah, and will reflect in a different manner; perhaps thus: " What an endless variety do I " observe in the ways and works of the great Creator " and Ruler of the universe! Blended with that " variety what mutual relation and dependence!

"The head, the hands, the feet; the parts which "are more noble, and those which are more dis- "honourable, forming one regular, harmonious "body, where there is nothing redundant, nothing "deficient. Every thing has its use, every thing "has its end. Shade imperceptibly softens into "shade; light imperceptibly brightens into light. "The transitions are so sweet and gradual that the "eye is never offended nor overwhelmed. It is the "same thing in the body social and politic. Every "one stands in need of another. The prince and "the peasant meet in a certain point. How many "things have they in common! How many things "are there to interest and attract each other!

"Look but to that field. The persons are few; "and the conditions are much fewer. But even "there I see the order, the subordination which Pro- "vidence has established through the whole extent "of the vast universe. There walks the dignified, "respectable proprietor of the land, who can trace "his title to possession through many generations; "he is exulting in hereditary wealth and honours, "without arrogance, vanity, or insensibility. Boaz, "a prince in his tribe, but a plain man, who knows "that he derives his subsistence from the bosom of "the earth, disdains not to mingle with his menial "servants, nor to sit down to a participation of their "homely fare, to dip his morsel in the same "vinegar, and to lie down to sleep all night in the "threshing-floor.

"There the servant who is set over the reapers

" stirs from ridge to ridge, from company to com-
" pany, the bond of union between the master and
" the labourers. Behold him as the trusted humble
" friend of Boaz, repaying confidence with fidelity;
" mark him praising the industrious, encouraging
" the faint, chiding the careless, stimulating the
" slow. As the sympathizing friend of his less
" favoured fellow-servants, recollecting how lately
" he emerged from the same obscurity and subjec-
" tion, behold him excusing the frailty of nature,
" covering the faults of thoughtlessness, adminis-
" tering reproof and chastisement with lenity and
" moderation, bestowing commendation with cheer-
" fulness and cordiality.

" As we descend, a new station, a new character
" rises in view, the glory and the strength of every
" land under heaven, the poor, the honest, the
" manly, the virtuous, the useful, the important
" part of the community. Not they *who handle*
" *the harp and the organ*, but they who put their
" hands to the plough and to the sickle. There they
" toil, there they sweat, there they sing; there they
" beguile the fatigues of the day in innocent mirth,
" and in untutored, artless, guileless, unmalignant
" conversation; and they purchase and sweeten the
" repose of the night with unoppressive industry,
" with friendly communication, and with pious, un-
" aspiring submission to the pains, the privations,
" the necessities of their lowly estate.

" These constitute the numerous, the great, and
" the good class of our fellow-creatures; who shine

" in the eye of reason, of patriotism, of philosophy, " of religion. They stand not forth the prominent " figures in the piece, but their number, their " equality, their want of characteristic distinction, " confer upon them the greater value.

" But, ah, there is beneath them a subordinate " rank, which awakens all that is human in us. " These have health, and strength, and will, to " labour; their reward is sure; they support the " heat and toil of the day with the sweet assurance " that the thickening shades, that the twelfth hour, " will bring with them the payment of their hire, " the means of subsistence, of domestic joy, of " regulated gratification. But look into the back " ground of the piece, and observe that female, that " stranger, that orphan, and her widow; to work " unable, to beg ashamed. She has seen better " days. Time was, *the wind of heaven* was not " permitted *to visit her face too roughly*: she was " waited upon, and minstered unto; now she is " become *the scorn of clowns; or lower still their* " *pity*. Where is the lowness of condition, from " whence it is not possible still to fall! Be what thou " wilt, O man, there are some looking *up* to thee " with envy and desire: be what thou wilt, there is " still cause to say, ' *God, I thank thee, I am not* " *as other men.*'

" But observe, my young friend," continues our philosophical monitor, " all those gradations, and " infinitely more than can be pointed out, are links " in the great chain of human existence; tear one

"asunder, and the concussion is felt through the "whole. The gleaner, the reaper, the overseer, "the master of the household, are so many succes- "sive steps in the same scale; the most distant are not "very remote: the nearer are hardly distinguish- "able: all are reduced to the same level before Him, "who says to Gabriel, 'Go,' and he goeth; and to "the sparrow hovering on the wing, 'Fall to the "ground,' and instantly he drops.—And again, "young man void of understanding, observe, and "observe it well, and lay it up in thine heart, how "near the extremes of human condition are to one "another! the gleaner after the reapers is but a step "or two from the possession of the whole. Wait "but a few days, and she who is liable to be insult- "ed, at best pitied, shall be in her turn caressed, "flattered, submitted to: and learn from the whole "the folly of being insolent, self-conceited or un- "kind, unsocial or uncomplying, when the sun of "prosperity shineth upon thy tabernacle: or of "being discontented, dejected, careless, or mean, "when the common ills of humanity overtake thee. "That poor inflated creature, who like another "Nebuchadnezzar talks in loud swelling words of "vanity of the *great Babylon which he has built*, I "once knew a cringing minion, ready to lick the "dust from the feet of the man whom he now struts "by as if he were a stranger. That poor boy whom "he disdains to set with the dogs of his flock is evi- "dently rising into consequence, which is one day "to eclipse all the tawdry honours of upstart genti-

" lity and self-assumed importance.—My son, derive " thy greatness from thyself, from wisdom, from vir- " tue. Take care to adorn thy station, thy posses- " sions, by native goodness. Pitiable indeed is thy " condition, if rank, or affluence, or even talents, " serve only to render thy folly or profligacy more " conspicuous."

IV. Once more, let me suppose a man of genuine piety contemplating the interesting scene before us, and entering with wonder and delight into the plans of the eternal mind. His meditations will flow in still a different channel, he will view the same object through still a different medium. " Behold," will he say, " *how sweet is the smell of a field which* " *Jehovah hath blessed!* Happy Boaz, rich in lands " and in corn, rich in man servants and maid-ser- " vants, rich in the dutiful and affectionate attach- " ment of thy people, rich in thine own integrity " and composure of spirit: but richer far in the " favour and approbation of the Almighty: *the* " *blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth* " *no sorrow therewith.* Happy family, thus dwell- " ing together in unity; where love is the govern- " ing principle, where the fear of God sweetly ex- " presses itself in unfeigned benevolence to man! " How can that house but prosper, where religion " has established her throne? Look at that happy " plain over which the bountiful hand of Nature has " spread her rich exuberance. *The Lord maketh* " *that wealth.* Behold the patriarchal master: the " meanest slave he treats like a child: hearken, the

"voice of peace and benediction dwells on his lips, "it distils like the dew. Behold the way to be "loved and respected by inferiors. Be to them an "ensample of piety, of purity, of charity; bind "them to you with cords of love; sweet and faithful, cheerful and efficient is the service of affection. These men will yield obedience not *for* "*wrath only, but for conscience' sake;* their heart is "in their work; they need no overseer; they will "neither be negligent nor dishonest: they know "that the eye of God is continually upon them; "they know that the interest of the master is their "own.

"How happily religion adapts its influence to "every relation and condition of life! How it "guards the heart alike from *foolish pride* and *im-*"*pious discontent,* at what bounty has bestowed, or "wisdom denied! How it humanizes, dignifies, "exalts the soul! How it enforces, extends, and "refines the maxims of worldly prudence! How "it illustrates, binds, and enlivens the precepts of "morality! How it amplifies, expands, regulates, "brightens the views of philosophy; referring "every thing to God, deriving all from him, carrying all back to him again! O man, till thou "hast founded thy domestic economy in religion, "thou hast not begun to keep house. Let thy possessions be ever so fair, ever so extensive, they "want their principal charm, their highest excellence, till the blessing of Heaven be asked and "obtained.

" Mark yet again, how *a good man's footsteps are* " *all ordered of the Lord. In all thy ways acknow-* " *ledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Boaz " came forth with no farther view than to see the " progress of his harvest, to salute his servants, " and to cheer their labour by his presence and ap- " proving smiles; but, lo, Providence has been " preparing for him a more enlarged view, has en- " riched his field with a nobler portion than he had " any apprehension of. *Thy ways, my king and* " *my God, thy ways are in the sea, and thy path* " *in the deep waters, and thy judgments are un-* " *searchable.* The great God is working unseen, " unnoticed. He is preparing his instruments at a " distance, is arranging his agents in the dark. Un- " seen to, unknown by one another, without concert " or design, they come forth at the moment, they " perform the part assigned them; they speak and " act in perfect unison, they accomplish the purpose " of the Eternal.—Boaz and Ruth, behold them " together in the field, remote as penury and fulness, " as obscurity and celebrity, as dependance and be- " ing depended upon. Nevertheless they meet, and " Heaven from above crowns the hallowed union " with her olive."

But might not the pious spirit annex a caution to his exhortation on this subject. " Beware of " *taking the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for* " *the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh* " *his name in vain. Holy and reverend is his name.* " Even in blessing it is to be used solemnly, piously,

"sparingly: Who then shall dare to employ it wan-
"tonly, needlessly, profanely, impiously, blasphe-
"mously? Who shall presume to abuse it, in
"swearing falsely by it, or in imprecating a curse
"under that dreadful sanction upon the head of his
"brother? Avert, merciful Heaven, avert from
"my guilty, heavy-laden country, the heavy, the
"bitter curse which this sin deserves! O let not
"profane swearing, let not wilful and deliberate
"perjury prove its ruin!"

—Thus have I endeavoured, by assuming several supposed characters, to give life and energy to the simple, rural scene under consideration. It furnishes copious matter of instruction to every teacher, and to every class of mankind. The careful, prudent man of the world; the moralist; the calm observer; the pious instructor, are all here provided with useful topics of address to their several pupils, according to their several views. The master and the servant the hireling and his employer, the rich and the poor, here meet together, and are together informed, by more than a code of laws, by plain but striking example, of their mutual relation and dependence, and of the duties which arise out of them, and of the comforts which flow from them. Happiness is here represented as built on the sure foundation of kind affections, of useful industry, of reciprocal good offices, and of the fear of the Lord. Where all these unite, that house must stand, that family must prosper. In proportion as all or any of them are wanting, a partial or total ruin must ensue. Let the apostolic

injunctions serve practically to enforce the subject. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your mas-"ters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, "in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not "with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the ser-"vants of Christ, doing the will of God from the "heart; with good will doing service, as to the "Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever "good thing any man doeth, the same shall he re-"ceive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, "forbearing threatening: knowing that your master "also is in Heaven; neither is there respect of per-"sons with him." Ephesians vi. 5—9.—"Charge "them that are rich in this world that they be not "high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but "in the living God, who giveth us richly all things "to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in "good works, ready to distribute, willing to com-"municate; laying up in store for themselves a "good foundation against the time to come, that "they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath "not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in "faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath "promised to them that love him?" James ii. 5.—"You yourselves know that these hands have mi-"nistered unto my necessities, and to them that "were with me. I have showed you all things, "how that so labouring ye ought to support the "weak, and to remember the words of the Lord

" Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give " than to receive." Acts xx. 34, 35.—" Let him " that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, " working with his hands the thing which is good, " that he may have to give to him that needeth" Ephesians iv. 28.

LECTURE XVI.

RUTH II. 5—17.

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean, and gather after the reapers amongst the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thy eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy

morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

THE life of the husbandman is full of labour and anxiety, but it is also sweetened and relieved by many peculiar delights. He must rise early, and often retire late to rest; he is exposed now to the scorching heat of the meridian sun, and now to the unwelcome damps of the night. He has to watch every aspect of the sky, and to guard against the strife of contending elements: and after all his vigilance and foresight, he has frequently the mortification to see the exertions and the hopes of a whole year destroyed in an hour. But on the other hand, the very variety which his profession admits of deceives the toils of it; his life is constantly a life of hope; his health and prosperity flow from the same source; he spends not his strength for nought and in vain; the bountiful parent Earth restores the precious seed cast into it with large increase, thirty, sixty, an hundred fold. He has the pleasure of observing the hourly progress of vegetation; of seeing his supplies coming immediately from the hand of Providence. Piety and profit are promoted by the same employments and pursuits, and the sublimest truths of religion press upon him

in the plainest and most common appearances of nature. Add to all this, the labours of the husbandman are of all others the most essential, the most important to society. Other arts may minister to wealth, to pleasure, to conveniency and comfort, but on this depends the very subsistence of human life; and to the plough and the sickle, the ingenious manufacturer, the pampered citizen, and the haughty peer, must of necessity look for the main ingredient of their daily support.

It was in this happy state of civil society, that the scene is laid which is to be the subject of this evening's meditation. It was that joyful season of the year when the ardour of summer was giving place to the milder glory of autumn; when industry was gathering in the produce of hope, when the common occupations of the sun-burnt plain had levelled the distinctions of master and servant; when all was emulation, cheerfulness, and joy, that Boaz issued forth betimes to superintend his harvest, and Ruth to glean after the reapers. Her sex, her demeanour, her employment, which bespoke her poverty, attract his notice and excite his compassion. There are persons, there are countenances, there is a deportment, which strike at first sight, and create an interest which it is impossible to account for. The great hand of Nature has in many, perhaps in most instances, engraven on the external appearance no doubtful or equivocal signs of the internal spirit and character. Ruth presented to the eye of Boaz an

undescribable somewhat, which spoke her immediately to be above the level of those common drudges, whose minds their servile condition has degraded; her native greatness shone through the veil that covered it, and it naturally led to an inquiry into her situation and connexions. The attention which her figure and occupation at first roused, her history powerfully fixes and confirms. The mournful story of Naomi, and of the Moabitish damsel her daughter-in-law, all Bethlehem-Judah had heard, but not one had stepped forth to acknowledge and relieve them. Boaz himself is faulty here. Had he been informed, as he must, of the return of his nearest relations, and of their wretched plight, he ought to have sought them out, and, unsolicited, to have ministered to their comfort. He is in this respect an instance of what is frequently to be met with in the world; of that calm, unimpassioned goodness which is abundantly disposed to succour distress when it falls in the way, but is not sufficiently zealous, and vigorous, and active, to go abroad in quest of objects to relieve. But let us not pretend to look down on moderate and ordinary beneficence, till the pure and sublime come more into use. The former neglect of Boaz, and his future zeal, shall but the more redound to the glory of God.

The short and simple tale awakens a thousand tender emotions in the bosom of the good man. He feels the sad reverses to which families, and states, and all sublunary things are exposed. He

sees one branch of his own kindred demolished, extinguished. He beholds a woman, a young woman, a widow, a stranger in a strange land, but one step above begging her bread; with a still more wretched mother to sustain by the meagre fruits of her feeble industry. He sees women of condition, his equals, fallen far below the estate of the meanest of his servants and handmaids. Self-reproach, perhaps, mingled with compassion, instantly produced a resolution to compensate past carelessness and unkindness, by all that future sympathy and friendship could bestow. The dialogue that ensues is a beautiful exhibition of the honest simplicity of Nature. The characters are supported with a happiness of expression, and displayed with a strength and exactness of colouring, worthy of him who knows what is in man.

In Boaz, which shall we most admire; his prudent attention to his own affairs, his winning condescension to his inferiors, or his pious acknowledgment of God in every thing? In his conduct to the forlorn stranger, we see a heart overflowing with benevolence, attending to minute circumstances, outrunning the expectations, the very wishes of the person whom he means to oblige. Observe his delicacy; he recommends the solitary helpless female to the society and protection of those of her own sex, and by his authority he guards her from the incivility and insults of the other. He aims at soothing her soul to peace; he would have her be-

lieve herself at home. The law obliged him to permit her to glean, but he makes a free-will offering of much more; the liquor in the vessels, the food provided for the reapers, all is tendered to her with hearty good-will. Ordinary minds feel ashamed at the sight of poor relations; they deny them, they turn away from them, and hide their faces from their own flesh. True magnanimity thinks meanly of nothing but vice, it esteems worth though clothed in rags, it considers the revolutions which affect every thing under the sun, and despises not the wretch of to-day, knowing that it may be obliged to change places with him to-morrow. Such an one was the wealthy owner of yonder happy field. The spirit of the master is diffused, it is felt over the whole extended domain. No jarring string mars their rural harmony, no contention reigns but the strife, the blessed strife, of mutual affection and attachment.

The character of Ruth opened upon us with singular grace and beauty: it unfolds itself with equal energy and propriety. She discovers, from first to last, a soul susceptible of tender and persevering attachment; ready to yield the sacrifice of ease, of rank, of estimation, of every thing, for the sake of enjoying the testimony of a good conscience, and the society that she loved. She discovers a spirit at once sweetly timid and bashful, and nobly resolute and undaunted. She inspires love by her gentleness, meekness, and complacency; she commands respect by her firmness, magnanimity, and patience.

In addressing her mother-in-law, she is all amiable warmth and earnestness; in replying to the friendly tenders of Boaz, she is all amiable reserve and modesty. In speaking to Naomi her heart flows to her lips, her words glow, her speech is copious and redundant: in answering a man, and a stranger, her words are few, she speaks by looks and gestures, and is then most eloquent when she says nothing.

I behold the effect which youth, and simplicity, and humbleness of mind, and distress, have made upon a generous and sensible heart. The artless simplicity of the Moabitish damsel have made a deeper impression than all that cunning and design could have invented to allure affection, and to impose on the understanding. Happily the progress of virtuous love advances without the consciousness of the parties concerned; it is at first a mere intercourse of civility, an attention to trifles, an interchange of kind words and pleasant looks. It grows unperceived, it gathers strength by neglect, it has arrived at maturity before it was known to exist; it gave no warning of its approach, and thereby became irresistible. And has the great Author of Nature vouchsafed in his word to delineate, in more than one instance, the nature, progress, and effects of this important and necessary passion, and shall we turn away from it with affected delicacy, or take it up and pursue it with indecent mirth? No, if we adopt and imitate the candid, guileless simplicity, and the modest reserve of Scripture, we cannot greatly err.

In the case of Boaz and Ruth it was enchantingly grateful to the former, as highly honourable to the latter, that the decision of the understanding confirmed the judgment of the eyes. He had known, admired and approved the conduct, before he had seen and admired the beauty of the person and the gracefulness of the behaviour. The charms of wisdom, virtue, and piety superadded to personal accomplishments, what a happy combination; what a foundation of felicity! The latter indeed will and must fade, but their effect is immortal; the company in which they flourished and brought forth fruit, bestows upon them a permanency not their own. How wretched is that female, all whose consequence is fled with her bloom; who depended on rank or fortune to command respect; who has lost the admiration and applause of others before she has begun to acquire the dignity of self-approbation, the only genuine source of public esteem.

The history before us strikingly displays the transition from pity to love on the one hand, from gratitude to love on the other. Compassion in Boaz, sense of obligation in Ruth, excite the same mutual affection in both. It becomes *his* pride and joy to raise her to that distinction and affluence which she so well merited; it is *her* pride and joy to repay the tenderness of her benefactor by every kind office of compliance and affection. She had hitherto pleased herself with the consciousness of having done her duty, she had not hunted after praise, she had discovered no anxiety, taken no pains

lish abroad her own merits; but honour will

follow virtue as the shadow does the substance, and the flight of the one but accelerates the pursuit of the other. And how grateful must it have been even to the modest ear of Ruth herself, to hear her conduct approved, and her qualities celebrated, by the wise and good man who had taken her under his protection, and who had admitted her to his friendship. The praise which goodness confers on goodness, the praise which a man's own heart and conscience allow to be merited, praise bestowed by one whom we love and esteem, is a feast indeed; it does equal honour, it communicates equal delight to the giver and to the receiver; it is an anticipation of the glorious rewards of the faithful, from Him whose favour is better than life. But save me, merciful Heaven, from the commendation which my own mind rejects. Save me from the approbation, the ill-informed approbation of ignorant erring man, while I have just cause to tremble under the apprehension of condemnation and punishment from a holy and righteous God.

The cordial of cordials administered by the hand of Boaz to this truly excellent woman, was his recommendation of her to the care, blessing, and protection of the Almighty. It was much, to be permitted to pick up a scanty livelihood among strangers; it was much to meet with notice and encouragement from a mighty man of wealth in a foreign land; it was highly soothing to a spirit broken by calamity, to be approved and caressed by a great and a good man; but all this was nothing compared to the

smiles of approving Heaven, in sweet accord with the serenity and composure of a quiet and approving conscience.—How cordially could she pronounce "Amen" to his affectionate and pious prayer. "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward "be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under "whose wings thou art come to trust." Verse 12.

The petition contains a piece of sweet imagery, of which interpreters have given different ideas. "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." The expression, according to some, implies an approbation of her resolution in renouncing the religion of her country and fathers, in forsaking the idol worship wherein she had been educated, and in deliberately joining herself to the Israelites and the worship of the living and true God. The words, it is alleged, have an allusion to the Schekinah, the visible glory, the symbol of the Divine presence which resided between, or under, the wings of the Cherubim, which were extended over the mercy-seat. This is as it were the point in which all the parts of the dispensation concentred, and therefore is employed to denote in brief all that related to the knowledge, belief, and service of Jehovah, in opposition to idolatry.

Others considered it as merely a tender significant image, borrowed from Nature, and frequently employed in other passages of Scripture, the image of the tender callow brood of the feathered race fleeing, in the moment of danger, for protection under the shelter of the parental wing. In either case, it

marks the providential care and the sacred security extended to all who seek refuge in the Divine wisdom and mercy. No plague shall come nigh the place where they dwell, no evil shall befall them. It unfolds the spirit of a truly good man, disposed to do every thing which humanity dictates, and which ability permits, for the relief of the sons and daughters of affliction; but deeply impressed with the belief that without the blessing and favour of Heaven the interposition of man is vain and unprofitable. He refers not to the Divine bounty as an exemption from deeds of charity and mercy, but to render his benevolence effectual, and to crown, promote, and prosper his kind intentions; to fill up the measure of his liberal design, which after all was narrowed and contracted by slenderness of ability.

The effect of the whole upon Ruth is the same which a sense of unmerited friendship from man, and the expectation of blessings from on high, will ever produce on a good and honest heart. As she rises in situation, as she rises in hope, she sinks in humility. "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, "my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and "for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-"maid, though I be not like unto one of thy hand-"maidens." Verse 13.

This draws from the benevolent lord of the harvest reiterated assurances of regard and sympathy. He again runs over the whole store of the field, lest he should have omitted any particular in his former enumeration; he again intimates a cheerful and un-

affected welcome to what she could desire, or which he had to bestow. In this, if I mistake not, may be seen the farther progress of affection. Ruth gains upon his heart by every word that she utters, by every gesture and attitude; and she pleases most *from having formed, and from pursuing, no design to please. The* greater her diffidence and self-denial are, the greater is his earnestness to bring her forward, and to support her. She was by the former order permitted to go at pleasure and serve herself *with whatever was in the field for the* general use; *now, she is invited to join* the company where Boaz *himself presided*, she is fed from his own hand, and her portion is not a scanty one, "she did eat and "was sufficed, and left." It was thus that Joseph expressed the partiality of his affection for Benjamin his own brother, his mess was five times so much as any of theirs; and thus in artless guise the growing passion of Boaz for the fair Moabitess declared itself; and thus, not in high-flown rhapsodies of unmeaning jargon, but in little attentions, in petty offices of kindness, the genuine effusions of unsophisticated nature, the generous passion of love, always will declare its existence and its quality. Happy, thrice happy banquet, far beyond all the luxury and pride of unwieldy, uneasy, unblessed magnificence. There they sit, under the open canopy of heaven, the master, the servants, the stranger, in one group. Their fare is homely, but labour has made it pleasant to sit down, and hunger gives to the food a high relish.

But what a superior relish did the morsel of Boaz himself possess! Think what a banquet, to see his numerous family around him all contented and happy; to give bread to so many, and to receive the ample return of it in their honest attachment, and in the fruits of their industry. What a luxury, to feed a hungry, to raise a sinking stranger! to *render gentle services to a deserving object, which humanity inspired, which the understanding* confirmed, which the heart directed, and which Heaven approved! What a desert, to reflect that all these comforts flowed from a heavenly Father's beneficence, that thus he was "twice blessed," blessed in receiving, blessed in giving.

The felicity of Ruth was far from being so pure and perfect. She felt the depression of dependance and obligation; obligation which she had no prospect of ever being able to repay. She felt for the anxiety, distress, and want of a venerable aged woman, for whom nothing was provided; who was sitting solitary at home, brooding over past calamities, and tormenting herself with apprehensions about futurity. She can hardly swallow her own morsel, for grief to think that one more helpless, more feeble, more friendless than herself wanted the common necessaries of life; that Naomi was perhaps fasting till she returned, and, worse than fasting, tormented with solicitude about her safety. The sweetest part of the repast to Ruth was the portion which she had reserved from her own necessities for

the sustentation of her ancient, affectionate, starving parent.

Their frugal simple meal being ended, they rise up, not to play, but to work again, and to continue their labour until the evening. A fresh charge is given to the reapers, on no account to disturb or insult the lovely gleaner, and the young men are directed to find no fault with her, gather where she would, even among the sheaves before they were bound up; and to drop here and there a handful, as if by accident, to render her toil more pleasant and easy, without hurting her honest pride. This injunction could proceed only from a delicate and ingenuous mind. To have made her directly a present of the ears of corn, had been an indignity offered to her poverty; to scatter them without any apparent design was effectually to facilitate her labour, and to diminish her fatigue, without rendering the burden of obligation too grievous to be borne. The manner of conferring a benefit, it cannot be too often repeated, infinitely outweighs the matter. The comfort of human life is a combination of little, minute attentions which, taken separately, are nothing, but connected with the circumstances of time, place, and manner, as coming from the heart, as tokens of good-will, possess a value and inspire a pleasure beyond the purchase of gold and rubies.

Think of the heart-felt satisfaction of the amiable labourer, when, at the going down of the sun, on separating the straw and chaff from the good grain,

and on measuring the produce of her patience and industry, she found it amount to so considerable a quantity! Would you make a poor man happy, do not encourage him to beg. Idleness and happiness are incompatible. No, render his toil a little easier to him, teach him to draw his subsistence and his comfort from, and to build his dependance upon, himself.

And now Ruth's comfort was going to begin; it was hitherto mixed and imperfect—it now flows pure and unrestrained. She has it in her power to relieve indigence, to remove anxiety, to dispel sorrow, to make the widowed heart sing for joy. See with what exultation she produces her store, remeasures her corn, details the adventures of the day, and receives while she communicates joy. This, O virtuous friendship, is thy present great reward! Such, if pride and perverseness prevented not, is the felicity which Providence has graciously placed within every one's reach! Let me have some friendly ear, in the calmness of the evening's retreat, to listen to my tale; some sympathetic heart, to participate in my sorrows and my joys, and I care not what hardships I endure, what mortifications I meet with, through the live-long day. Friendship doubles the delights, divides, and thereby diminishes, the cares and miseries of this transitory life.

Think of the composed felicity of the ancient matron, as she surveyed the fruits of her beloved daughter's dutiful exertions, and as she heard the artless story of a harvest day's employment and

rcereation. Yes, she is the happier of the two. e joys of age are calm, untumultuous, untem- tuous; those of youth have always a mixture of ardour and impetuosity, which allays their purity, and which hastens on their dissolution.—We sincerely bid them good night, and leave them to the sweet repose of conscious integrity, of acquiescence in the will and thankfulness for the bounty of gracious Heaven, and of budding, blossoming hope of greater blessings yet to come.

—At what a small expense may a great man acquire respect, esteem, and love!—How infinitely does nature excel art!—In how simple and easy a method does Providence bring about the greatest events! "Godliness is" every way "great gain:" it has "the promise of the life that now is, and of "that which is to come."

LECTURE XVII.

RUTH II. 19—23, and *III.* 1.

And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

NOTHING is more absurd than to judge of ancient and foreign customs, by the fashion of our own country and of the present day. Language, manners, and dress, are incessantly changing their form. Were our ancestors of the last century to arise from the dead, and to appear in the habit of their own times, their great grand-children and they would

be utter strangers to one another. Their speech would be mutually unintelligible, their modes of behaviour uncouth, their apparel ridiculous. How much more must this take place, after the lapse of many centuries has intervened, and the scene has shifted to a distant land, peopled by men of a different complexion, governed by different laws, and communicating thought by means of a different language!

One of the great pleasures arising from the study of ancient history is to trace these differences, to contemplate the endless variety of the human mind, ever changing, still the same, to compare age with age, nation with nation, in order to excite admiration of the great Creator's wisdom and goodness, and to inspire love towards our fellow-creatures.

In examining the customs described in the context, let it be remembered that they are the customs of men who lived upwards of three thousand years ago, who inhabited a different quarter of the globe, whose ideas, employments, and pursuits had no manner of resemblance to ours, and who would be equally astonished, shocked, and offended, were modern and European manners made to pass in review before them. And let it be farther remembered, that we speak of *customs* and *manners* only, and not of *morals*; of circumstances which from their own nature and the current of human affairs, are liable to alteration, not of things in themselves eternal and immutable.

We have seen by what easy and natural progress

the providence of God carried on its purpose respecting the posterity of Abraham in general, and the royal line of the house of David in particular; and respecting a much higher object, to which this was a mere ministering servant, an harbinger and preparation, namely, "the manifestation of God in "the flesh," for the redemption of a lost world. We have seen the commencement of the temporal rewards of virtue, and the dawning of everlasting joy. We are now to attend the progress of divine beneficence, of providential interposition, to crown the endeavours and promote the happiness of the faithful.

Ruth has returned to her mother-in-law, laden with the fruits of honest industry, and provided with a supply for present necessity; cheered and comforted by the benevolence of a respectable stranger, and exulting in the prospect of future employment and success. Sweet are the communications of filial attachment and prosperity to the ear of maternal tenderness. It is not easy to conceive happiness more pure than was enjoyed that evening by those amiable and excellent women. Artless, undesigning Ruth seems to look no farther than to the remainder of the harvest, the continuation of her labour, and of protection and encouragement from Boaz, and to the pleasure of supporting herself and aged parent by her own exertions. But Naomi, more experienced and intelligent, begins to build on the history of what Providence had done for them

that day, a project of recompense to her beloved daughter, which her piety and affection so well merited, even no less than that of uniting her to Boaz in marriage. Was she to be blamed in this? By no means. It is criminal to outrun Providence, it is madness to think of constraining or bending it to our partial, selfish views. But it is wisdom, it is duty to exercise sagacity, to observe the ways of the Almighty, and to follow where he leads. The advice which she gives in pursuance of this design, and Ruth's ready compliance, have, according to our ideas, a very extraordinary and questionable appearance, and they seem rather calculated to defeat than to forward the end which they had in view; but modern refinement and licentiousness are little competent to judge of rustic simplicity and ancient purity. The proceeding was authorized by custom, it was free from every taint of immorality, and it had not in the eyes of the world even the semblance of indecency. The parties were all virtuous; they feared the Lord, they conformed to the laws and usages of their country, and Heaven smiled on their honest, unsullied intentions.

Had I the happiness, with a mind as pure, to address ears as chaste, imaginations as undefiled, I should without hesitation or fear enter into the detail of the transaction as it stands on the record. But regard must be had to the prejudices of the times, to the propriety and decency which custom has established, remarking at the same time, that guilt

is the parent of shame, and that an over-refined delicacy is too often the proof of a polluted heart.

The marriage of Boaz to Ruth is the only instance which we have of the application of a civil and political statute of long standing, which runs in these terms: "The land shall not be sold for ever: "for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and so- "journers with me. And in all the land of your "possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. "If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away "some of his possession, and if any of his kin come "to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his "brother sold. And if the man have none to re- "deem it, and himself be able to redeem it; then "let him count the years of the sale thereof, and "restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold "it: that he may return unto his possession. But "if he be not able to restore it to him, then that "which is sold shall remain in the hand of him "that hath bought it until the year of jubilee: and "in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return "unto his possession." Leviticus xxv. 23—28. And it stands in connexion with another law circumstantially narrated. "If brethren dwell toge- "ther, and one of them die and have no child, the "wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a "stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto "her, and take her to him to wife, and perform "the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And "it shall be, that the first-born which she beareth

"shall succeed in the name of his brother which is "dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. "And if the man like not to take his brother's "wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate "unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother "refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in "Israel, he will not perform the duty of my hus-"band's brother. Then the elders of his city shall "call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to "it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his "brother's wife come unto him in the presence of "the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, "and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, "So shall it be done unto that man that will not "build up his brother's house. And his name shall "be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his "shoe loosed." Deut. xxv. 5—10. The whole spirit of the Mosaic dispensation considers the great Jehovah as the temporal sovereign of Israel, the land as his, the supremacy his. Every Israelite received his inheritance under the express stipulation that it should not be alienated from him and from his family for ever. That if, pressed by necessity, he should sell the whole or any part of it, he himself or his nearest of kindred might at any future period redeem it; that at the worst, in the year of jubilee, it should revert unpurchased to the ancient proprietor or his representative; and thereby succession and property be preserved distinct till the purposes of Heaven should be accomplished.

To give the law farther and more certain effect,

it was enacted, That if the elder branch of the family, and the heir of the inheritance should die childless, his next elder brother or nearest male relation should marry the widow; and that the issue of such marriage should be deemed to belong to the deceased, should assume his name, and succeed to his inheritance. Here then was the family of Elimelech ready to be extinguished: he and his two sons were all dead without posterity. Naomi was past child-bearing, the lands were ready to pass into the hands of strangers for want of an heir, the hope of succession existed alone in the person of Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon. The measure therefore recommended by Naomi, and adopted by Ruth, was neither less nor more than a legal call on Boaz, as the supposed nearest kinsman of that branch of the family, to fulfil the duty of that relation: Naomi not knowing, or having forgotten, that there was a kinsman still nearer than him. Boaz, apprised of this, and respecting the laws of God and of his country, preferably to his own passions and predilection, refers the whole cause to a fair, open, judicial decision.

The conduct of Boaz throughout is exemplary and worthy of commendation: it bespeaks at once a wise and a good man. We have expatiated at considerable length on his character as a man of piety, regularity, and humanity; we have bestowed on him the just tribute of admiration and respect as a man of sensibility, as susceptible of pity for the miserable, of kindness to the stranger, of love

for a deserving object. His character acquires much additional respectability from this last consideration, connected with the delicacy of his situation as a man and a citizen. His partiality to Ruth was clear and decided. In the confidence of virtue she had put herself entirely in his power; and what use did he make of this advantage? Never was father more tender of the reputation and chastity of his daughter. Every selfish consideration is sunk in sense of propriety, in respect to the divine authority, in solicitude about the honour and interest of the woman whom he loved. His partiality to Ruth was decided, but the right of redemption was in another, and he nobly disdains to avail himself of wealth, of power, of prior possession, to the prejudice of that right. What is the victory of the warlike hero compared to this triumph of a man over himself! What are the trophies stained with blood, opposed to the silent applause of a good conscience, and to the approbation of Almighty God! I see him bringing the cause to the determination of the judges with the firmness of an honest man, with the anxiety of a man in love, and with the resignation of one who feared the Lord, and who committed all to the conduct of infinite wisdom. Characters shine by contrast. The nearer kinsman's versatility, disingenuousness, and insensibility to shame, serve as a foil to the firmness, candour, and delicacy of Boaz. When the former hears of a good bargain, when he considers the advantage of his birth as the means of stepping into a vacant inheritance upon easy terms,

he is all acquiescence and eagerness; but the moment that he hears of the condition under which he is to purchase, of the assumption of the widow, of the relief of the miserable, of transmitting the name of Elimelech, not his own, to posterity, together with his lands, he instantly cools, he submits to the infamy of having "his shoe pulled "off," of being publicly spit upon, of having his house branded with a note of disgrace, and he leaves the field open to a much better man than himself.

It is much easier to conceive than to describe the solicitude of the parties, while the cause was yet in dependance. What a blow must it have been to the heart of Boaz, when he on whom the law bestowed the preference declared his assent to the proposal; what a disappointment to the hopes of Naomi, who had evidently set her mind on this match; what a damp thrown on the wishes and expectations of Ruth, on whose susceptible heart the goodness and generosity of Boaz must have made a deep impression! What a relief to them all, to hear him solemnly retract his assent, resign his right, and submit to the penalty. Those are the genuine delights of human life at which we arrive through danger and difficulty, which are the immediate gift of Heaven, which we have not employed improper arts to acquire, and which we can therefore enjoy without shame or remorse. The felicity which we are in too great haste to grasp, which we pursue independent of God and religion, which by crooked

paths we arrive at, proves at best a cloud in the embrace, often a serpent full of deadly poison in the bosom. The very delays which Providence interposes, the sacrifices which a sense of duty offers up, the mortifications to which conscience submits, enhance the value and heighten the relish of our lawful comforts.

Let us apply this observation to the three leading personages in this interesting tale. Naomi sits down, and thus meditates with herself; "With what fair "prospects did I begin the world; the wife of a "prince, a mother in Israel, among the first in "rank, in wealth, in expectation. But how early "were my prospects clouded! I was driven by "famine from the land of promise, reduced to seek "shelter and subsistence among strangers, but sup- "ported and refreshed by the company and tender- "ness of the husband of my tender years, and the "presence and improvement of my children: find- "ing a new home in the land of Moab, my family "respected in a foreign country, reputably allied, "comfortably settled. But the cup of prosperity "was again dashed from my hand; husband and "sons, *the desire of my eyes, were taken away with* "*a stroke;* Canaan and Moab were rendered equally "a place of exile, robbed of that which rendered "all places a home, all situations a pleasure; I "was deserted of all but Heaven, and a good young "woman, once the partner of my joys, now my "sister in affliction; behold me fleeing back for the "relief of my anguish to my native soil and city,

"and mortified at finding myself there more a "stranger than among aliens; behold me providen- "tially raised into notice and consequence again, "my affectionate daughter nobly allied, the name "of Elimelech about to be revived, and his house "built up! What a strangely chequered life! "Naomi and Mara in perpetual succession! But "every thing is ordered wisely and well of Him "who sees all things at one view; the latter end is "better than the beginning; behold good arising "out of evil, and the designs of the Most High "hastening to their accomplishment. All is of the "Lord of Hosts, who is *wonderful in counsel, and* "*excellent in working*."

The reflections of the Moabitess may be supposed to run in this channel: "What a blessing for me "that I ever became united to an Israelitish family, "whatever pangs it may otherwise have cost me! "But for this I should have been like my fathers, a "worshipper of stocks and stones, the work of "men's hands; a stranger to rational piety, to "inward peace! Happy loss, which procured for me "this unspeakably great gain: propitious poverty, "which sent, which drove me out in quest of trea- "sures inestimable; blessed exile, which conducted "me to a habitation under the wings of the "Almighty! What real gain is true godliness! It "has more than the promise, it has the enjoyment "of the life that now is. Mysterious Providence, "which directed my doubtful, trembling steps to

"glean in that field, which has in a few short weeks "made such a change in my condition, which has "raised me from the lowest, meanest, most forlorn "of dependants, to the highest state of affluence, "ease, and respectability; and transplanted me "from the vast howling deserts of idolatry and "ignorance, to the fair and fertile regions of know-"ledge, of purity, of hope and joy! What is it to "comfort and maintain a mother like Naomi, to "find such a friend and husband as Boaz! It is "life from the dead. It is of that God who has "taught me to know and to choose him as my God, "and who will never fail nor forsake them who put "their trust in him."

Boaz too finds his situation greatly improved, he rejoices and gives God thanks. "My wealth was "great, my garners full, my man-servants and "maidens numerous, dutiful, and affectionate, but "I had no one to share my prosperity with me, "I was solitary in the midst of a multitude: like "Adam in Paradise, I was incapable of enjoyment, "because destitute of a companion, an help meet "for me; but God hath provided for me a virtuous "woman, whose price is above rubies. My house "has now received its brightest ornament, my "family its firmest support, my estate its most pru-"dent and faithful dispenser. I have done my duty. "I have respected the majesty of the law. I have "followed where Providence led the way, and I "have my reward, in the peace of my own mind,

" in the possession of a wise and good woman, in " the blessing of that God who has done all things " for me, and who does all things wisely and well."

Behold a match formed immediately by the hand of Providence, through the happy concurrence of little incidental circumstances; a match built, not on the brittle foundation of sordid interest, but on the solid basis of mutual affection, of generosity, of wisdom, of religion; a match pregnant with what consequences to Bethlehem-Judah, to all Israel, to the human race!

From this advantage of ground, how pleasant it is to trace the sweetly meandering course of the river of prophecy and promise united, toward the vast, the immeasurable ocean of accomplishment. Now the tribe of Judah is rising into consequence, now the royal sceptre is ready to be put into his hand, never to depart thence " till Shiloh come, of the " increase of whose government and peace there shall " be no end: to whom the gathering of the people " shall be." Now the star of Jacob begins to appear. Now the " tender plant " begins to rear its head, and the " root out of the dry ground to spring up; it " buds and blossoms as the rose, and its smell is as " the smell of Lebanon."

But what eye can discover, what created spirit take in the whole extent of " God's purpose and " grace given in Christ Jesus before the world began," and terminating in the final and everlasting redemption of a lost world, through faith in his blood? The veil of eternity is drawn over it; " 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." 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Beloved, 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." 1 John iii. 2.

The history of Ruth will be brought to a period next Lord's day.

You see, men and brethren, the object which is closely kept in view, through every era of time, under all dispensations, and by whatever instruments. The work of God cannot stand still, his purpose cannot be defeated. One generation of men goeth and another cometh, but every succeeding generation contributes to the furtherance of his design; and whether knowingly or ignorantly, voluntarily or reluctantly, all fulfil his pleasure.

None are forsaken of Providence but those who are false to themselves; and till we have done what is incumbent upon us, we have neither warrant nor encouragement to look up and wish, to expect and pray.

Nothing is dishonourable but what is sinful: Poverty which is not the effect of idleness, prodigality, or vice, has nothing shameful in it; the gleaner behind the reapers may be as truly dignified as the lord of the harvest. Let lordly wealth cease from pride, and virtuous obscurity and indigence from dejection and despair.

Waste not time, spirits, and thought in airy speculation about imaginary situations, but try to make the most of that in which infinite wisdom has seen meet to place thee.

Disdain to envy any one, at least until thou hast thoroughly examined into the estate of him whom thou art disposed to envy.

He is destitute of the happiest preparation for the relish and enjoyment of prosperity, who has not arrived at it through the path of adversity. To receive with thankfulness, to enjoy with moderation, to resign with cheerfulness, to endure with patience, is the highest pitch of human virtue.

Men are often fulfilling a plan of Providence, without intending or even being conscious of it. They are acting a double part at the same instant; the one private and personal, local and transitory, the other public, comprehensive, and permanent: they may be building up at once a private family, and the church of God; carrying on and maintaining the succession to an inheritance, to a throne, and ministering to the extension and progress of a kingdom which shall never be moved or shaken.

In the kingdom of Nature, there is high and low, mountain and valley, sameness with diversity: in the kingdom of Providence, there is difference of rank and station, of talent and accomplishment, of fortune and success, but a mutual and necessary connexion and dependance. In the kingdom of grace, there is diversity of gifts and offices, but the

same spirit; and so in the kingdom of glory, different degrees of lustre, as stars differ one from another, but one universal glory of which all the redeemed are together partakers, all being kings and priests unto God. Throughout the whole there is a gradation which at once pleases and confounds, that depresses and exalts, that inspires contentment and teaches to aspire, that now attracts to the pure fountain of uncreated light, and now repels the bold inquirer to his native darkness and distance again.

Is it pleasant to survey from the exceeding high mountain, where the Christian tabernacle is pitched, the course of that river whose streams make glad the city of our God? What will it be, from the summit of yonder eternal hills, to contemplate the whole extent of Emanuel's land "watered with the "pure river of water of life;" to mingle with the nations of them that are saved, as they expatiate through the blissful groves, planted with the tree of life: to converse with the distinguished personages who shine on this hallowed page, and shall then shine in immortal lustre; to reap with Boaz a richer harvest than ever waved on the plains of Bethlehem-Judah; to assist Naomi in raising her triumphant song of praise; and to rejoice with Ruth, and with one another, in our joint reception into God's everlasting kingdom, in our common admission into "the general assembly and church of the first-born." Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of our God. We have heard of them with the hearing of

the ear, may our eyes be blessed with the sight of them. May "the Lamb who is in the midst of the "throne lead us to living fountains of waters; "and God wipe away all tears from our eyes."— "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

LECTURE XVIII.

RUTH IV. 13—17.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife; and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age. For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

THERE is an obvious resemblance between the general plan of the Divine Providence, and the separate and detached parts of it. The life of almost every good man exhibits virtue for a season struggling with difficulty, overwhelmed with distress, but emerging, rising, triumphing at length. Through much tribulation the Christian must enter into the kingdom of God, and on his way must be often in heaviness through manifold temptations. This is the wise ordinance of infinite goodness. Opposition rouses, calls forth the latent powers of the soul; success is heightened by the danger to which we were exposed, by the trouble which it cost us, by

the pains which we took; antecedent labour sweetens rest. Hence, the passages of our own lives which we most fondly recollect and relate, and those in the lives of others which most deeply engage and interest us, are the scenes of depression, mortification, and pain through which we have passed. The perils of a battle, the horrors of a shipwreck, so dreadful at the moment, become the source of lasting joy, when the tempest has ceased to roar, and the confused noise of the warrior is hushed into silence.

Fiction, in order to please, is accordingly forced to borrow the garb of truth. The hero's sufferings, the lover's solicitude and uncertainty, the parent's anguish, the patriot's conflict, are the subject of the drama. When the ship has reached her desired haven, when the cloud disperses, when the contest is decided, the curtain must drop. Periods of prosperity cannot be the theme of history.

The vast, general system, in like manner, exhibits "the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain "together;" interest clashing with interest, spirit rising up against spirit, one purpose defeating another, universal nature apparently on the verge of confusion: Chaos and ancient Night threatening to resume their empire: but without knowledge, design, or co-operation, nay, in defiance of concert and co-operation, the whole is making a regular, steady progress; the muddy stream is working itself pure; the discordant mass is bound as in chains of adamant, the wrath of man is praising God; every succeeding

era and event is explaining and confirming that which preceded it: all is tending towards one grand consummation, which shall collect, adjust, unite, and crown the scattered parts, and demonstrate, to the conviction of every intelligent being, that all was, is, and shall be very good.

Finite capacity can contemplate and comprehend but a few fragments at most: and Scripture has furnished us with a most delicious one, in the little history of which I have now read the conclusion. The story of Ruth has been considered, by every reader of taste, as a perfect model in that species of composition. It will stand the test of the most rigid criticism, or rather, it is calculated to give instruction and law to criticism. With your patience I will attempt a brief analysis of it.

I. The *subject* is great and important beyond all that heathen antiquity presents: namely, the foundation and establishment of the regal dignity in the house of David, the type and ancestor of the Messiah. An event in which not one age, one nation, one interest is concerned, but the whole extent of time, the whole human race, the temporal, the spiritual, the everlasting interests of mankind. What is the demolition of Troy, or the settlement of Æneas in Latium, compared to this? *Paradise Lost* itself must give place to this glorious opening of *Paradise Regained.*

II. The *story* is perfect and complete in itself, or, as the critic would say, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Elimelech is driven by famine into

banishment, dies in the land of Moab, and leaves his family in distress. Here the action commences. Naomi and Ruth, united by propinquity, by affection, and by distress, are induced to return to Bethlehem-Judah, in hope of effecting a redemption of the estate which had belonged to the family, but which under the pressure of necessity had been alienated. Their reception, deportment, and progress, form the great body of the piece. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth, followed by the birth of Obed, is the conclusion of it.

III. The *conduct of the plot* is simple, natural, and easy. No extraneous matter, personage, or event is introduced, from first to last; the incidents follow, and arise out of one another, without force, without effort. No extraordinary agency appears, because none is requisite: the ordinary powers of Nature, and the ordinary course of things, are adequate to the effect intended to be produced. There is no violent or sudden transition, but a calm, rational, progressive change from deep sorrow to moderated affliction, to composed resignation, to budding hope, to dawning prosperity, to solicitous prosecution, to partial success, to final and full attainment.

The discovery of Ruth, of her character, of her virtues, of her relation to Boaz, is in the same happy style of natural simplicity and ease. On her part we see no indecent eagerness to bring herself forward, no clamorous publication of her distresses or pretensions, no affected disguise or concealment to

attract observation or to provoke inquiry: on his part there is no vehemence of exclamation, no hastiness of resolution; but in both we behold the calmness of good minds, the satisfaction which conscious virtue enjoys, in the unexpected discovery of mutual attractions and kindred worth. The situations are interesting, affecting, governed by the laws of nature and probability, and consonant to every day's experience.

IV. The *sentiments* are just, arising out of the situations, adapted to the characters, guarded equally from apathy and violence. The pathetic expostulation of Ruth with her mother-in-law, when she proposed a separation, is, in particular, a masterpiece of native eloquence: at hearing it, the heart is melted into tenderness, the tear of sympathy rushes to the eye, nature feels and acknowledges the triumph of virtue. The sentiment of impassioned sorrow glows with equal vehemence on the lips of Naomi, and excites, in the bosom of sensibility, pity mingled with respect. In Boaz we praise and admire unostentatious generosity, dignified condescension, honest, undisguised affection, a sense of impartial, inflexible, undeviating justice.

V. The *characters* are nicely discriminated, boldly designed, and uniformly supported. The grief of Naomi is verbose, impetuous, and penetrating; that of Ruth is calm, silent, melting, modest. The plans of the mother are sagacious, comprehensive; they are the result of reflection, of experience; they indicate skill, ability, resolution,

perseverance. Those of the daughter are artless and innocent; they are the suggestion of the moment, the effusion of the heart; they indicate candour, sincerity, conscious, unblushing, unsuspecting rectitude.

In Boaz the struggle between inclination, propriety, prudence, and justice is happily designed, and forcibly executed: it is a painting from Nature, and therefore cannot fail to please. His openness and fair dealing also, as was observed in a former Lecture, are finely contrasted with the selfishness, insincerity, and unsteadiness of the nearer kinsman.

The character of the servant who was over the reapers, though we have but a slight sketch of it, discovers the hand of a master, the hand of truth and nature. We see in it the beautiful and interesting portrait of unabashed, unassuming inferiority, of authority undisfigured by insolence or severity, the happy medium between power and dependence, the link in the scale of society which connects the wealthy lord with the honest labourer, the friend and companion of both.

The rest of the characters are classed in groups, but discover a characteristic and decided distinction. We have the inquisitiveness, curiosity, hard-heartedness, and indifference of an idle provincial town; the good-nature, hospitality, candour, and cheerfulness of the country.

The compliments of congratulation presented to Boaz on his marriage, and those addressed to Naomi on the birth of her grandson, clearly evince the dif-

ferent train of thought and feeling which dictated them, and mark beyond the possibility of mistake the sex and sentiment of the addressers. In a word, the ideas expressed by the several characters in this sacred drama are so peculiarly their own, that no reader of ordinary discernment needs to be told who it is that speaks: the sentiments cannot possibly be transferred from one to another.

VI. The *manners* are delineated with the same felicity of pencil. We have a faithful representation of those that are permanent and founded in nature: and of those which are local and temporary. When I observe those Bethlehemites flocking round the old woman and her outlandish daughter, plying them and one another with questions, circulating the leer and the whisper, I could suppose myself in one of the gossiping villages which surround this metropolis, whose inhabitants feed on rumour, exercise no principle but curiosity, employ no member but the tongue, or the feet, in hunting after materials for that employment. In the innocent festivity, the uncomplaining toil, the contented simplicity, the unaffected benevolence, the unprofessing piety of that field of reapers, I have mingled a thousand and a thousand times. It was the delight of childhood, it is the unpainful, the undepressing retrospect of age.

We have a representation equally faithful and just, of customs and manners which are local and temporary; some of which excite our astonishment, some shock our delicacy, and some provoke our

mirth. Such are the modes of courtship here described, the transfer of property, the forms of judicial procedure, the terms of familiar address and friendly communication; and the like. These, having no intrinsic moral excellence or turpitude, are the object of neither praise nor censure. To trace their origin or explain their nature and design, may be an innocent amusement, but it were unjust to explode them as absurd, or to run them down as ridiculous. The antiquarian will revere them for their age, the philosopher will investigate them as opening a new path to the knowledge of the human heart, the philanthropist will deal with them gently, because they are the harmless peculiarities of his fellow-creatures, and piety will respect them, as presenting another view of the endless variety discoverable in all the ways and works of the great Creator.

In the permanent manners of mankind we see the eternal sameness of the human mind, which no change of climate, times, government, education can alter: a sameness as discernible and as fixed as the number of eyes, arms, and fingers peculiar to the species. In those which are local and transient we behold the infinite and endless variety of the human powers, which no stability and uniformity of law, instruction, discipline, interest, example, can arrest and fix, a variety as discernible, as unsteady, as unaccountable, as the different shades of complexion, the conformation of feature, the mea-

surements of stature, the fluctuations of thought. Every thing satisfies, every thing confounds.

VII. Once more, the *language* of this charming little epic history, is plain and perspicuous, elegant yet unadorned, nervous yet chaste, simple yet not mean or vulgar. It consists of narration and dialogue, the former possessing the most exquisite degree of grace and ease, the latter of vivacity and force. There is no obscurity of idea, no redundancy of expression, no appearance of labour, no artful polish, no tinsel of words, no disgusting tediousness, no affected conciseness. Like the general code of Scripture, it is capable of neither increase nor diminution, without sustaining an injury.

But the least merit of the piece is its excellency as a composition. It forms a most material member of the great building of God, an important link in the chain of Providence, an interesting and instructive chapter in the history of redemption. The union of Boaz and Ruth can never lose its influence, can never spend its force. When nature expires, and all these things are dissolved, the offspring of that pair "shall shine as the brightness "of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and "ever." From that root behold a branch has arisen, to which "the nations of them that are "saved continually resort, under whose shadow "they repose, whose fruit is the source and support "of a divine life, whose leaves are for the healing of

"the nations." Let the Jew read this sacred page, and glory in his ancestry; let the scholar read it and improve his taste, and extend his knowledge; let the rustic read it and prize his humble pursuits an innocent delights; let the sons of poverty and the daughters of affliction read it and cease from despair, let them learn to "trust in the Lord, and to do "good;" let the Christian read it and "hold fast the "beginning of his confidence," and "rejoice in hope "of the glory of God."

The last obvious remark on the history, sorry I am to say it, is not highly honourable to human nature. While Naomi was poor and friendless, and forlorn, she met with little sympathy, with little countenance; she was permitted to depend for subsistence on the miserable, unproductive industry of a woman weak and wretched as herself; but no sooner is she connected with "a mighty man of "wealth," become a mother to Boaz, than the whole city is seeking to her; her own sex, in particular, we see entering into all her feelings, flattering all her natural propensities, accommodating themselves to her little wishes and desires, and trying to compensate their former coldness and neglect by every act of attention, officiousness, and zeal. Base spirit! base world! Behold kindness pressed upon a man just in proportion as he has no need of it; behold him oppressed with new friends, because he has already got too many, caressed by those who lately knew him not, praised and flattered to his face, by the very tongues which maligned

and censured him in his absence. But that man is left to continue poor because he is poor. He finds no support because he wants it, he stands unbefriended because he has no friend. Shame on the fawning sycophants that only flutter about in fair weather, that only frequent the mansions of the rich and great, that turn with the tide, that can despise ragged poverty and offer incense to ermined villany.

Let us turn with contempt from the sight, and take a last parting look of one of the worthiest, best, happiest of human beings—Naomi nursing and cherishing her little grandson in her bosom. If there be bliss on earth she now enjoyed it. Her honest scheme had succeeded, the name of her beloved husband was revived, and his house begun to be built up: her amiable and beloved daughter was nobly rewarded for her tenderness and attachment; the inheritance of Elimelech is redeemed, and reverted to its proper channel; the wisdom and goodness of Providence are fully justified, and a prospect of felicity and honour is opened which knew no bounds. The miseries of a whole life are done away in one hour, are converted into blessings, blessings heightened and improved by the memory of past woes; the name of Mara is for ever obliterated, and the original, the suitable, the prophetic name of Naomi, is restored and confirmed. The sensibilities of a *grand*-mother are peculiarly pure and delicate respecting infant offspring. All good women are fond of children, to whomsoever they

belong, how much more of their own, whom they bare with sorrow, and have brought up with solicitude: but "that I should live to see my child's "child, my being is multiplied; I am dropping into "the grave, yet reviving in that infant. I feel "myself immortal; this babe will live to put his "hand upon my eyes, and then I shall not feel the "oppression of death; if he survive I cannot all "die."—"*Lord now lettest thou thy servant de-*"*part in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salva-*"*tion.*"

The Spirit of God has drawn a veil over the feelings of the mother herself and the expression of them, and has left it to imagination to figure the felicity of Ruth, the widow of Mahlon, the daughter of Naomi, the wife of Boaz, the mother of Obed, in surveying the changes of her life, in comparing what she was with what she is.

And thus have we finished what was intended in discoursing on the book of Ruth. We have considered it as a beautiful, because natural representation of human life; as a curious and interesting detail of important facts; and as an essential, constituent part of the plan of redemption. It happily connects the history of the Israelitish judges with that of their kings, and is obviously blended with both; and while it demonstrates the care of Providence, in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, the friend of God, in prolonging his race, in multiplying his seed, in making kings to arise out of him, it unfolds the more enlarged and comprehensive

purpose of the Eternal mind; it points directly forward to that "Seed in whom all the families of the "earth shall be blessed;" it shows the subserviency of all that preceded, to the evangelical dispensation; it breathes good-will to men. The reception of Ruth, a Gentile, within the pale of the church of the living God; her advancement to honour, her participation of the privileges of a mother in Israel, are a happy prefiguration of the admission of the whole Gentile world within the bond of God's covenant. We see the work of God still going forward and prospering; the work of mercy enlarging, extending its sphere; all bending forward to that grand consummation, when "Israel too shall be saved," and the ancient people of God brought into a communication of the blessings of the Gospel, together with "the "fulness of the Gentile nations;" when there shall "be one shepherd and one sheepfold;" when Jew and Gentile shall arise together from the dead, "because Christ doth give them life."

The birth of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, brings the history of the world down to the year 2697, from the Creation, and before Christ 1307, and it conducts us to the eve of the establishment of kingly power in Israel.

How many generations of men have passed in review before us, in the course of these few years' evening exercises, from the history of Adam down to Boaz! What changes has the audience undergone, since first it collected in this view! What deep and affecting changes will a few more seasons produce!

The turning of the page will present a new preacher, new hearers, a different plan, a different arrangement, different interests, different feelings. The separation of this night may be final and permanent. We bend together, gracious God, with wonder and gratitude before thy throne. Spared together so many years longer, "cumberers of the ground" that we are; our bodies preserved in health, our minds in tranquillity: blessed with friendship, blessed with sufficiency, blessed with the means of improvement, blessed with hope! Ah, we are unworthy of the least of thy favours, and we have been distinguished by the choicest and best! Make us to feel thy goodness and our own unworthiness; help us to live more to thy glory. As our interest in the world diminishes, as years increase, as grey hairs multiply, as friends depart, as comforts fail, as eternity advances, let our faith strengthen, let our spirits rise to thee, let our prospects brighten, let our ardour after immortality kindle. The nearer we approach to thee, let our resemblance to thee become more apparent; let the Spirit of Heaven, the Spirit of the blessed Jesus, be imparted to us, that, living and dying, we may edify the world, be a blessing to all connected with us, and still enjoy inward peace. And as we separate from time to time, may it be in the sweet expectation of meeting together in the regions of everlasting purity, love, and joy. "The "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your "spirits. Amen."

LECTURE XIX.

1 *SAMUEL I.* 1—8.

Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the Lord had shut up her womb And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord; so she provoked her: therefore she wept, and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

SIMILAR causes ever have produced, and ever will produce, similar effects. You may shift the scene from one age and country to another, but like beings, the same spirit, the same passions and pursuits, arise continually to view. The difference between period and period, nation and nation, city and city, man

and man, consists merely in a few abitrary customs, various forms of speech and modes of behaviour; but the great principles of human nature, the great moving springs of human actions, are universal and invariable. What then is so absurd as to tax others with absurdity, only because their language, manners, or prejudices, do not exactly coincide with our own?

As the principles of our nature, so the rules of the divine government are similar and uniform. The views, passions, and interests of men are the hinges on which the mighty engine revolves. Every little individual moves and acts in his own proper sphere, like the stars in the firmament of heaven, but all move and act together under the influence of one great commanding power, which animates and directs the whole. Every one possesses, and feels, and exercises its separate intelligence, and all are, at the same time, checked, impelled, sustained by one supreme intelligence which is above all, through all, and in all.

The justest and most accurate, the most useful and instructive representations of human life and conduct, are to be found in this divine record. The actors in this sacred and interesting drama are personages of the very highest distinction, patriarchs and prophets, legislators and kings; but we are never permitted, for a single moment, to forget that they are also men. In their form and features we behold our own image reflected. In the emotions

by which they were agitated, in the objects which they pursued, we recognize our own aversions and desires, our own pursuits and attainments, our own mortifications and success.

We are now entering on the history of one of the greatest among the prophets, and that history is delineated by his own pencil. He begins it with a description of his father's family, previous to his own birth, and with a faithful representation of the different characters of which it was composed. And this will furnish ample matter for the present Lecture.

Elkanah, the father of Samuel, from the genealogical deduction here presented, was a Levite of the family of the Kohathites, and is denominated a man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, from his being born or residing in that city.

Men of eminence, as has often been observed, confer celebrity on cities and countries; but poor is that merit which is derived from no other source but a man's parentage, or from the place of his birth. The Levitical tribe was scattered over the whole country, and during the disorderly times which succeeded the death of Joshua, their residence and their services seem to have been regulated by no certain and fixed standard. Elkanah's ancestors for many generations are mere names in the historic page; they are shadows without a substance; and he himself borrows the fame and lustre in which he is transmitted to us, from the reputation, ability, and distinction of his nobler son; whose children,

in their turn, sink into infamy, and thence into oblivion.

The first article in Elkanah's domestic economy, presented to our consideration, is an imputation upon his wisdom, if not upon his piety: "He had two "wives." Polygamy, or a plurality of wives, was a practice at that time indeed connived at, but no where, and at no period, was it sanctioned by law: it was a practice not indeed condemned by statutes and punishments, but sufficiently condemned by effects and consequences. It is of very little importance to inquire whether it be forbidden, if it can be proved unreasonable, unwise, inexpedient. And for such proof we have but to recur to the domestic history of Abraham, of Jacob, of Elkanah, and of every family in which it prevailed. Hannah was probably the prior wife, and it is presumable, that the disappointment of not having children by her, suggested the hazardous experiment of a double marriage; and the event demonstrated that every deviation from the path of rectitude leads directly to its own chastisement.

The mortification of Hannah, already too much to bear, is grievously imbittered by the assumption of a rival in the affection of her husband, and it becomes intolerable by the fruitfulness of that rival. And thus, by one ill-advised step, all the parties are rendered unhappy, and without any high degree of criminality on any side. Elkanah's peace is incessantly disturbed by the mutual jealousy, and

bitterness, and strife of those conjoined, who separately might have contributed to soothe and soften the cares of life. The pleasure of having children is marred and impaired to Peninnah, by the ill-disguised partiality of the father of her children to another. The misery of barrenness is dreadfully aggravated to Hannah, by the cruel mocking and taunts of her merciless adversary. And what became of the children all the while? Were they likely to be well and wisely educated amidst all those domestic jarrings? Hated and opposed by more than a step-mother's rancour, spoiled by the over-indulgence of maternal tenderness, striving to compensate that rancour and hatred; secretly caressed, openly neglected by an embarrassed father, who was now afraid to express, and now to conceal the honest emotions of nature. It is not vice only that destroys human comfort. And if mere imprudence involves a man in so many difficulties and distresses, how dreadful must it be to bear continually in one's bosom the burning coal of an ill conscience.

Happily for Elkanah and his house, family discord did not extinguish family religion; he went up regularly with all his household to worship the Lord at Shiloh, at the great yearly festivals. The law commanded the attendance of the males only on such occasions; but whether it were that a higher sense of piety induced him to appear before Jehovah rejoicing with all that were his; or whether he hoped to allay the ferment of fierce and angry spirits, in the soul-composing exercises of devotion, both

his wives attended him to the service of the sanctuary, and sat down together with him at the sacrifice of peace-offering. It was wisely and well intended. The fire of malignity fades and dies in presence of the pure flame of love divine, as material fire is absorbed and extinguished when exposed to the rays of the glorious orb of day. It was well intended. Had he not reason to hope that Hannah would forget her misery, and Peninnah her pride, in the presence of God; that the power of religion, and the prospects of immortality, might haply unite those whom passion and interest had severed? But if such were his intention, he succeeded not. And that he succeeded not is to be imputed in part to his own weakness. The beloved wife must be distinguished by a "worthy portion," and to render it more insulting, at a public festival, and before envious, watchful eyes, those of Peninnah and her sons and daughters. Thus through some mixture of folly in ourselves, through the craftiness and malignity of another, or through some untowardness of arrangement, over which we had no power, and neither could foresee nor prevent, the best designs miscarry, medicine is converted into poison, and religion is made a minister of wrath and unrighteousness.

Who does not here recollect a certain "coat of "many colours," which cost so dear to him who gave, and to him who wore it? Who is not warned to guard against, or at least to conceal, partial affections, where claims are equal? Who does not

feel the importance of bringing to the altar of God a spirit elevated above all temporal considerations?

Not only was the good-natured intention of Elkanah frustrated, but the worship of God was profaned: and wretched indeed must be the state of that family, where religion not only fails to conciliate, but tends to alienate, irritate, and inflame. "Elkanah loved Hannah, but the Lord had shut "up her womb."—The absence of one desired blessing renders the possession of a thousand others tasteless and insipid. The moderating hand of eternal Providence rectifies the disorders, and counteracts the violence, of human passion; preserves the balance from a preponderancy too great, or too lasting, on either side; and conducts all to the happiest issue at length.

But an evil which comes immediately from Heaven is by that very consideration rendered both tolerable and salutary. The Lord can do nothing but what is right; in wrath he remembers love; "he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of "men, not for his pleasure, but their profit." But alas, there was mingled in Hannah's cup an ingredient which converted the whole into wormwood and gall; "her adversary also provoked her sore, "for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut "up her womb." What relish had now the double portion, though the token of a fond husband's unabated kindness? The insulting words and looks of her pitiless "adversary" are as vinegar upon nitre: how dreadful was it to have a calamity which was in-

cessantly, though secretly, preying upon her vitals, incessantly thrown in her teeth; home rendered a burthen; the place of sacrifice perverted into a habitation of discord; fire snatched with unhallowed hands from the altar of Jehovah to kindle the gloomy fire of hell! There needs no tormenting fiend to ascend from the bottomless pit, armed with scorpions, to plague and torture wretched mortals; see, they are armed like furies one against another, they exult in one another's pain; relentless, remorseless, they "say not, it is enough."

Dreadful it is to think that this angry, vengeful spirit continued to agitate and torment those unhappy women for many years together; and what is hell, but a state of unabating, growing animosity and hatred? "As he went up year by year, when "she went up to the house of the Lord, so she pro-"voked her." In female bosoms can such malignity dwell? Ah, what so bad as the good corrupted, perverted! Behold a rancour which no time could enfeeble, no sense of shame restrain, and which the sacredness of the sanctuary served only to imbitter and inflame! Can it be possible, merciful Father, can it be possible that such a fell spirit should ever have accompanied any of us to thy house of prayer? Can "the same tongue utter "blessing and cursing;" dare we say "we love "God, whom we have not seen, while we hate" or despise "a brother," a sister, "whom we have "seen?" "Search me, O God, and know my "heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see

"if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me "in the way everlasting." Psalm cxxxix, 23, 24.

It is greatly to the honour of Hannah, that all this cruel and insulting treatment drew from her no indecent return. Though grieved in spirit, provoked, fretted beyond all enduring, we hear of no furious appeal to the partial tenderness of her husband, no railing for railing, no rash malediction, no furious threatening of revenge. It is not easy to govern the spirit; it is not always possible to command the temper under offence and insult; but the tongue is in every one's power, improper words admit of no defence, and rage is but a poor apology for abuse and blasphemy. But she pines away in silent sorrow. "She wept, and did not eat." Those seasons of rejoicing before the Lord, those times of refreshing to every other daughter of Israel, were to her days of heaviness and woe. What signifies a large portion to one who has no appetite? What is the prosperity of her people, to one who, like a dried branch, is cut off from all interest in posterity, who sees the name and honours of her beloved husband passing away to the children of another, the children of one who hated her? Alas, the spirit of devotion itself is checked and repressed by the incessant, unrelenting stings of envy and jealousy; life is become a burden to her.

The deep affliction with which she was overwhelmed could not escape the attentive eyes of Elkanah. Though her tongue said nothing, her eyes, her tears, her dejection, her abstinence, her sighs,

betrayed abundantly the anguish of her soul. "Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, "why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and "why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee "than ten sons?" To what distress has the good man reduced himself? Now he severely feels the effect of his own imprudence, and laments his having tried the dangerous experiment which robbed him of all domestic quiet, which disturbed the festivity of the solemn rendezvous at Shiloh, and threatened to produce one day some tragical event in his family.

Sympathy, if it does not wholly dispel our miseries, pours at least a temporary balm into the wound, and "soothes pain for a while." Hannah becomes composed, and the feast is concluded. There is still one refuge left for the miserable, one remedy against despair, one friend able and ready to help in every time of trouble; and our eyes with complacency follow the mourner, not into her secret retirement, to spend her sorrow in unavailing tears, or to curse the day in which she was born; not into the round of giddy dissipation, to drown reflection and anxiety in the poisoned chalice of intemperate mirth and jollity; but to the place of prayer, but to the door of mercy, but to the dawn of hope.

We shall presently find, that what related to the externals of God's worship was at that time but badly conducted in Israel; the "sons of Eli were "sons of Belial," they "knew not the Lord." But be the minister who he will, the word and service

of God cannot be rendered of none effect. Not only the spirit of piety, but a sense of common decency was now lost in the Levitical priesthood: when it pleased God to make this very afflicted woman the means in his hand to restore the dignity, purity, and importance of the sacred function, to revive the decayed interests of religion, and to bring forward the great events which are so intimately connected with the things which belong to our everlasting peace.

When we look into human life, whether as exhibited on the hallowed page of inspiration, or by our own observation and experience, we shall find, that most of the "ills which flesh is heir to" may easily be traced up to some imprudence, heedlessness, or transgression of the man himself, who, before he was aware, found himself involved in difficulties and distresses the native effects of his own misconduct, but which he foresaw not, apprehended not, and which he never could intend. I know how poor a consolation it is, to tell a man, "you have nobody "but yourself to blame," and to upbraid him with the warning which you gave him, and he would not take: but it is not, for that, useless for one to discover the source, cause, and progress of his calamity. The case must be bad indeed, or his eyes must have been opened very late, or his "heart hardened "through the deceitfulness of sin," if he cannot turn to some good account the reflections of maturer judgment, the admonitions and chastisement of experience, the pain and remorse of an *ill* conscience, or the mistakes and wanderings of a *good* one.

There are steps in conduct which are irretrievable, and therefore ought not to be tampered with. The excessive use of the most wholesome food will at length overwhelm the strongest constitution; the occasional application of what is doubtful or unwholesome may undermine or waste it, but poison is certain death; and the sagacity of a brute, the understanding of a child, is sufficient to distinguish between poison and food, perhaps not between poison and medicine.

To how many gracious, social, civil, and moral purposes, may not the wise and proper use of religious services be applied? The man who has performed with understanding and feeling the *devotions of the closet*, will issue from it in a higher state of preparation for every duty of life. Filled with veneration for his heavenly Father, "who seeth," and with whom he has been conversing, "in secret," he breathes good-will to man. The emotions of every unkind, ungentle, unjust affection are stifled, extinguished, forgotten. The principles of benevolence and benignity have acquired new life and energy. He is disposed to meet the ills of life with more firmness and fortitude, and to enjoy its blessings with a more exquisite relish. Hannah, having poured out her soul to God, "went her way, and "did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." The devotion of the morning will prove the best assistant toward conducting the business of the coming day; and that of the evening is the hap-

piest review and improvement of the past. From him who habitually begins and ends every thing with God, you may reasonably expect the fruits of a good and honest heart, "speech alway with "grace seasoned with salt," and order in conduct, more than from other men: more works of mercy, more fair dealing, more steadiness in friendship; and less of the rancour of opposition, less of the self-sufficiency of pride, less of the malignity of envy; for the love of God absorbs all those baleful, malignant fires.

The *devotions of the family*, in like manner, produce the happiest effects within that sphere. How soothing, how cementing, how conciliating they are! Does common calamity press? It is alleviated, it is sanctified, it is done away, when the "care is cast upon God," when the burthen is transferred to a Father in heaven, who stands engaged to remove it, or to render it a blessing. Is domestic prosperity abounding, increasing? What an additional lustre, value, sweetness does it derive from union, from piety, from a common sense of obligation and dependance? Have offences come? Has peace been disturbed? Are the bonds which united husband and wife, parent and child, brother and brother, master and servant, unhappily broken? The moment that the healing address, "*Our* "Father who art in Heaven," reaches the ear, every soul is peace, the spirit of love pervades the whole, and the voice of discord is heard no more. When

pardon is implored from Him whom all have offended, the stony heart relents, melts, forgives, for he needs to be forgiven.

The influence of *public worship* likewise, where it has not degenerated into mere form, is the strongest cement of society. It serves to consolidate men of various ranks and conditions, with their several talents and abilities, into one compact, efficient, well organized body, ready to act with one heart and one soul, in the cause of God and their country. Little shades of difference, in men truly good, will unite instead of disjoining. Our great national assemblies are obliged, by law, to open their sittings for public business, by acts of public devotion. The reason and intention of the law, and of the practice founded upon it, are abundantly obvious. If the effect does not follow to the extent that might be wished—it must be concluded, that the devotional part of the sitting is neglected; that formality has extinguished the flame; or that difference of religious sentiment, or, what is still worse, indifference to all religion, mar and weaken and distract the whole. The prevalency of a worldly spirit must at length prove fatal to piety, and when piety is gone, public spirit is on the decline, and will not long survive.

But we have in the history under review a melancholy instance of what frequently happens to this day, and under a happier dispensation of religion—seasons and places of devotion perverted into the instruments of kindling and exercising the ungra-

cious, the unsocial, the unkind affections. How often is the sanctuary of God profaned, by being made the scene of displaying the rivalship of beauty, of dress, of equipage, of rank and affluence? The humbling services of the meek and lowly Jesus are unnaturally forced into the ministers of pride and vainglory. The tranquillity of the day of sacred rest, and its gentle, peaceful employments, give a birth, which they detest and disclaim, to the whisper of envy, and the noise of slander. The feast of love is disturbed, the sacrifice of peace is defiled by the impure claws of harpies; and "the house of "prayer, is turned into a den of thieves." "Surely, "my beloved brethren, these things ought not so to "be."

Happily for us, the influence of the Gospel, and the laws of our country, and the spirit of the times, prevent the practice which threw Elkanah's family into such a flame; and which, wherever it has prevailed, has been productive of confusion and every evil work. May a purer religion, and wiser institutions, and a more enlightened spirit produce a more perfect morality, promote domestic happiness, and extend and secure national prosperity.

We now proceed farther to unfold, from the Sacred History, the character and conduct of Hannah; earnestly praying, that with "all" the rest of "Scripture," which "is given by inspiration of "God," it may prove profitable "for doctrine, and "for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction "in righteousness."

LECTURE XX.

1 SAMUEL I. 9—18.

So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drank. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

THE support and the consolations administered by religion are adapted to the nature and necessities of man. The exercises which it prescribes

arise out of the circumstances and events of human life; and the being and perfections of God present themselves to us according as we pass from one condition to another. There are comforts which no one but God could have bestowed; there is wretchedness which God only can relieve. Hence the soul rises directly to the Giver of all good in transports of gratitude, and cleaves to Him when every other refuge fails. Hence all that is known by the name of prayer is at once the voice of Nature, the result of reason, and a dictate of religion.

What is the confession of the penitent, but the trembling hope of a guilty creature toward the God of mercy, fleeing from the judgment of unrelenting, unforgiving man; from the persecution of an awakened, an accusing conscience, to a proclamation of peace and pardon from Heaven? What is the resignation of the patient, but a devout acknowledgment of unerring wisdom, which does all things well, and which afflicts in loving-kindness? What is the cry of distress, but an appeal to Omnipotence for that assistance which the powers of Nature cannot bestow? What is adoration, but the faculties of an intelligent being lost in the contemplation of infinite perfection? Even the rash and impious appeals to Heaven which are uttered by the thoughtless and profane, demonstrate that piety and prayer are founded in the very constitution of our nature. Why does that blasphemer take the name of the Lord God in vain; why swears he by the great and terrible name of Jehovah; why is his imprecation sanctioned by that

tremendous signature; why are the emotions of anger, of pain, of surprise, of joy, enforced by the names and attributes of Deity? The wretch who thus tramples on his law, insults his authority, defies his power, is in those very acts of horror paying an involuntary homage to the God of truth and justice, and obliquely confesses that divine perfection which he has the boldness to violate.

We turn from the dreadful practice with holy indignation, to contemplate the desponding mourner fleeing for rest and relief in the bosom of a father and a God; and to learn lessons of piety, and derive nourishment to hope, from the experience of others.

We have seen the disorder of a family in Israel occasioned by the foolishness of man; we are now to consider that disorder rectified, and turned into a source of domestic joy and public felicity through the wisdom and goodness of God. The solemnity of the yearly sacrifice, and the chcerfulness of the feast, had been continually imbittered and destroyed to Hannah, by reflection on her state of reproach among the daughters of Israel, and by the merciless insults of her rival and adversary. The kind attentions, and affectionate remonstrances of a beloved husband soothe for a moment, but cannot remove, the anguish that preyed upon her heart. She looks with impatience, through the tediousness of the entertainment, to the hour of retirement; and, as soon as decency permits, she exchanges the house of mirth for the house of prayer.

"If any one is afflicted let him pray." And who is not ready to give testimony to the salutary influence of this hallowed employment? The suppliant thus disburthens the mind of a load before intolerable; the effusion of tears cools and refreshes the heart. Prayer does not always bring down the grace that is solicited, but verily it has produced its effect when the spirit is moulded into the will of the Most High. Prayer prevails not to obtain that particular blessing, but behold it is crowned with another and a greater benefit. The expected good comes not exactly at the time and in the way in which it was entreated, but it is conveyed at the most proper season, and in the fittest way; and how much is the enjoyment heightened and sweetened by the delay! Thus, whether the wrestler "as a "prince has power with God, and prevails," or by a touch is made sensible of his weakness and inferiority, God is glorified, and the divine life is promoted.

The memoirs of this good woman's life comprehend but a very short period, a few years at most. Herein consists one of the excellencies of the sacred writings. Other biographers drag you with them into dry, uninteresting details of events which had much better been forgotten. You are wearied out with the laborious display of childish prattle, the pretended prognostic of future eminence, or with the doating, imperfect, distorted recollections of a wretched old man who has outlived himself. There are in truth very few particulars in any man's life worthy of

being recorded; and of those who really have lived, a very short memoir indeed will serve all the valuable purposes of history.

Every thing of importance for us to know respecting Hannah, is what related to the birth of her son Samuel; and to that accordingly the Scripture account of her is confined. She is the fourth, as far as we recollect, on the face of the Sacred History, who is represented in nearly similar circumstances, and she is not the least respectable of the four.—"Sarah "laughed," staggering at the promise of God through unbelief. Rebekah seems to have borne her trial with listlessness and indifference; and Rachael, irritated with hers, loses all sense of shame and decency, and exclaims, "Give me children, else I die." Hannah feels her calamity as a woman, deplores it as a woman, and seeks deliverance from it as one who believed in the power and grace of God.

Observe the more delicate shades in her character. She rose not up till "after they had eaten in Shiloh, "and after they had drunk." She had patience and self-government sufficient to carry her, without any apparent disquietude, through the formalities of a public assembly, which must have been very painful, irksome, and disgusting to her. She would rather constrain herself than make others uneasy, and pine in secret rather than permit her private griefs to spread a gloom over the innocent communications of society. Tell me, if you will, that the remark is frivolous, and the doctrine unedifying. I

shall neither feel mortified nor complain, provided you permit me to think that nothing is frivolous that tends to unfold the excellence and importance of the female character, and nothing unedifying which serves to improve the better part of our species in the knowledge of the means whereby both their respectability and importance may be effectually promoted. I repeat it therefore confidently, that Hannah is here represented as exemplifying a hard lesson, but one of high importance to all her sex. Who does not know, my female friends, that your condition and place in society necessarily subject you to many cruel privations, many mortifying constraints? What heart but sympathizes with you, obliged as you are to bear and to forbear, in patience and silence, and to practise painful duty without so much as the poor reward of notice and approbation? But, trust me, you have often, when you little think of it, the admiration and esteem of the more attentive and judicious; you have the sweet consolation of reflecting that you are endeavouring to act well; you can look up in humble hope to that God who seeth in secret; and who observes and records what the world overlooks or forgets.

How pitiable, on the other hand, are those unhappy females, who dream of deriving consequence from vexing and disturbing all around them, by perpetually bringing forward their personal vexations, as if the world had nothing to mind but them, and their real or imaginary grievances.

But this, as was said, is only a shade in the

character; the great, striking feature, is a fervid, importunate, aspiring spirit of devotion. Sighs and tears are the language of Nature sinking under its own woe, of a "heart that knows its own bitterness;" prayer is the language of faith in, and hope towards God, the exertion of a soul struggling to get free, casting its burden upon the Lord, and acquiring strength from exercise. There is a beautiful and affecting copiousness in her expression. She addresses God as the Lord of universal nature, who "doth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, "and among the inhabitants of the earth; as "the "Lord of Hosts," who has all creatures, all events, in his hand, and at his disposal. The repetition of the word "handmaid" is emphatical, and powerfully expresses her humility, submission, and sense of dependance, and it is humility that lends energy to every other principle of the divine life. "From "the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and accordingly we find her diversifying her petition into all the various modes of address: "If thou "wilt indeed look on my affliction, and remember "me, and not forget me." Is this the vain repetition of the hypocrite, who thinks he shall "be "heard for his much speaking?" O no, it is the "honest effusion of a heart filled with its object, persisting in the pursuit, and rising gradually into confidence of success. It is a happy anticipation of the Saviour's doctrine, "that men ought to pray "always, and not to faint:" it is a happy example of clearness and precision in the subject matter of prayer,

of confidence in, and reliance on, the Hearer of prayer, of holy resolution to make a suitable return to prayer heard, accepted, and answered.

But what was here the expression of a devout, a praying spirit? The noise of the Pharisee, the pomp of words, the correctness that courts the applause of men? No, but the ardour of a gracious spirit, which neglects forms, which never thinks of appearance, or of the opinions of others, which, occupied with God, overlooks man. What need of words to Him who reads the secret recesses of the heart, who hears the half-breathed sigh of the prisoner in his dungeon, who collects the falling tears of the mourner, and has already granted the pious request before it is formed in the anxious breast? Strong inward emotion will of necessity imprint itself on the external appearance. The voice may be suppressed, but the features will speak; what bushel will confine the lightning of the eye? the lips will move involuntarily; the hands will raise themselves to Heaven without an admonition from vanity, and the bosom will swell to make room for the expanding heart, though no eye is present to see it, and regardless whether there be or no.

How equivocal are the signs of human passions, and how liable to mistake is the most discerning human eye? What was in the sight of God an indication of faith believing against hope, of a fervent piety which totally absorbed the senses, of a heavenly mind which rapt the very body up to the throne of God, is in the sight of Eli the disorder of

a distempered brain, the effect of excess, the lowest, the most deplorable, the most disgusting exhibition of degraded humanity. Alas! the good man, as we shall presently find, had "a beam in his own eye;" and thereby was led to discern "a mote" in that of another, where there was none. In reflecting on the rash judgment of men, the choice of David, when in a great strait, presses itself upon us with redoubled force: "Let me fall now into the hand of "the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me "not fall into the hand of man."—"If God justi- "fieth, who is he that condemneth?" But, ah! what signifies the applause of the world to him who is condemned of his own conscience, and who trembles every hour at thought of the righteous judgment of God?

I like the defence of Hannah almost as well as her prayer; it argues conscious innocence and integrity. Not a single particle of gall enters into her reply, not even a particle of honest heat and indignation, at an imputation so odious. A female charged with a breach of decency so gross as excess of wine, and not break out into a flame! Ah, her calmness and temper refute sufficiently the infamous aspersion, infinitely better than a torrent of intemperate abuse would have done. How calm, how beautiful, how lovely, how dignified is innocence! It seeks the light, it shrinks not from the eye of inspection, it defies calumny, and wraps itself up in its own pure mantle; but it disdains not, at the same time, to satisfy the honest inquirer, and to

remove the hasty suspicion of true goodness; it is always ready to render a reason, always ready to prevent its good from being evil spoken of.

The conduct of Eli is estimable in two points of view. Observing, as he thought, the temple of the Lord profaned, and the female character dishonoured, he honestly speaks out his suspicion and censure to the party concerned, instead of whispering them in the ear of a third person; and he thereby affords an opportunity of explanation, and of coming to a right understanding: and, once satisfied of his having been mistaken, he retracts his hasty judgment, and exchanges reprehension into blessing, and supplicates Heaven in favour of her whom he had rashly condemned.

To what a happy serenity is the mind of Hannah now restored! She has poured out her soul before the Lord, and has vindicated her innocence to man. The tranquillity and joy of her spirit shine in the whole of her outward deportment; her countenance brightens up, she partakes in the festivity of the season, "and is no more sad." What a different figure does the same man present to the eyes of the world, inflamed with rage, torn with envy, stung with remorse, distracted with anxiety, degraded with debauchery; or with a visage beaming benevolence, eyes animated with love, a form firm and erect from conscious integrity.

Would you wish to appear to advantage before others, take care to cleanse the inside of the cup. Purify thyself "from all filthiness of the spirit."

Let order and peace reign within: no artificial daubing applied to the outside, no splendour or elegance of apparel, no studied arrangement of the features, will do it half so well.

Looks and appearance are perhaps of inferior consequence to one sex, but they are of much to the other. With some, appearance is all in all. In that view, it is not easy to imagine the effect which the inward temper and character produce. Beauty becomes perfect ugliness, and inspires nothing but disgust, from the moment that the face begins to wear the traces of pride, contempt, envy, fury, or insolence. On the other hand, be assured, that a very homely external may be improved into perfect loveliness, by affability, gentleness, benevolence, compassion, and, above all, by a spirit of genuine piety, the parent of every grace. If there be a human being that really deserves the name of angel, a term for the most part vilely prostituted, it is a sensible woman descending from the temple, or issuing from her closet, to enter with composedness, sweetness, and satisfaction on the employments of her humble, but important station in human life.

It was through the disorder of a divided family, it was through the woe of an afflicted woman, it was amidst the corruptions of a degenerate church and a disjointed state, that God was pleased to raise up a prophet, a priest, a judge in Israel to stem the torrent, to restore the lost dignity of religion, to save a sinking nation. When events flow in an even channel, when the powers of nature produce their

effect in an uniform tenour, a blind chance, an irresistible fate, or an unintelligent arrangement receives the homage which is due only to sovereign wisdom, and all comprehensive beneficence. For this reason, God sometimes permits the great machine, as it were, to stand still, that men may observe by what hand it stopped, and by what hand it is put in motion again.

Isaac, Jacob, Samson, Samuel, four of the most eminent among the types of the great Restorer of fallen man, were introduced into the world, through the agonies of desponding nature, through the exercise of undaunted faith, and the unwearied importunity of prayer and supplication. They were the successive lights of the world, each in his day; and having every one fulfilled his day, were successively extinguished.—The great light of the world has arisen, the stars disappear, the shadows are fled away.—Patriarchs and prophets bring their glory, and lay it at his feet; a voice from Heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well "pleased; hear him."

Let not the apparently declining state of any interest lead to despair; for every evil has its remedy except despair. That cause must perish which all agree to give up as lost; a dying cause may revive and flourish by the wisdom and honest exertions of one man. Impaired health often issues in death, embarrassed circumstances in bankruptcy, an irregular life in irretrievable perdition; because the patient, the debtor, the sinner, gave himself up too

hastily, and was lost through fear of being lost. While there is "balm in Gilead, and a physician "there," no wound, however grievous, is incurable. While there is friendship, while there is compassion on earth, honest distress will find sympathy and relief. While the throne of grace is accessible, there is hope "for the chief of sinners."

And if no cause of man be desperate, who shall dare to despair of the cause of God and truth? Behold, in a posterior period of this sacred history, Esther iii. 8—15, the utter extirpation of the posterity of Abraham determined, and the plans of Providence threatened, of course, with defeat and disappointment. Behold the bloody warrant signed, and "sealed with the ring" of Ahasuerus, and thereby rendered irreversible. Behold the vengeful Haman, like the exterminating angel, with his sword drawn in his hand, ready to fall upon his prey. What can save a devoted people from destruction? *One* obscure Jew; one not admitted to the king's counsels, but who sat unregarded in the king's gate. He feels as a citizen and as a man, he laments the impending doom of his country as a citizen and a man, but he likewise acts and exerts himself like a citizen and a man, and leaves the issue to Him in whose hand are the hearts of kings—and it prospered. The remonstrance of Mordecai with the queen, at this awful crisis, is a master-piece of intrepidity, piety, and good sense, and it furnishes an useful example for the conduct of both public and private life.

"Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in "the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if "thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, "then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise "to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy "father's house shall be destroyed: and who know-"eth whether thou art come to the kingdom for "such a time as this?" Esther iv. 13, 14.—The Roman Consul, whose rashness lost the battle of Cannæ, and endangered the existence of the state, received the thanks of the Senate, "because he "had not despaired of the commonwealth."—The gallant Prince of Orange, afterwards William III. of England, when urged to submit to the victorious arms of France, which were ravaging the United Provinces, and when the ruin of the republic seemed inevitable, nobly replied, "There is one way to "secure me from the sight of my country's destruc-"tion: I will die in the last ditch." His resolution prevailed, and his country was saved from the yoke of the invader. And if confidence in a skilful, brave, and fortunate commander, can carry a handful to victory through myriads of foes, what has the Christian to fear, let difficulties and dangers be ever so many, ever so great, while conscious he is engaged in a good cause, and that he is following "the Captain of Salvation?"

We proceed to view the character and behaviour of Hannah in the hour of success and prosperity,

blessed with the answer of prayer, and exulting in the enjoyment of the purest delights, and in performing the most important duties of life and religion.—May our meditation on these things be sweet and profitable! Amen.

LECTURE XXI.

1 *SAMUEL I.* 19—23.

And they arose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house at Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up: for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

THE birth of a child is an event of much importance to those who are immediately concerned in it, and of much importance to the world. It is natural for a man to wish that his family should be built up, and his name transmitted. Every child is an accession to national strength, is one more added to the number of rational, immortal beings, is a new display of the great Creator's power, wisdom, and goodness. There lie dormant in that mind the precious seeds of faculties which are one day to

astonish, instruct, and bless mankind. Those infants, a few years hence, are to be the pillars of the state, the bulwarks of their country, the glory of the church of Christ. That young one shall by and by burst through the obscurity of his birth and the meanness of his condition; he shall become eminently useful, and shall purchase a name which ages to come shall pronounce with respect and esteem. But what is it to be known and distinguished among men? The period approaches, when God himself shall in the face of the universe acknowledge the least of these as his sons, and seat them on heavenly thrones.

It is natural for a man to wish his family built up, and for a good woman to wish the name and virtues of the husband of her youth preserved and propagated, even though she has not the fond desire, the flattering hope of being a mother in Israel. But the determinations of Providence do not always accord with the innocent propensities of the human heart, much less with the insatiate demands of pride, avarice, and ambition. Even the wise, the amiable, and the virtuous, are visited with this sore evil, the want of children. It is sometimes the calamity of those who have no other calamity. It demonstrates the imperfection of human bliss; it spreads a field for the exercise of resignation to the will of God; it furnishes both a motive and a subject for prayer: for we can carry with confidence to the throne of grace, many a petition which we should be afraid

or ashamed of preferring to a man like ourselves.—Happy is the man, happy the woman, who can deposit this and every other care in the bosom of a Father in heaven. She may sit down with Hannah, and "eat" and drink, "and be no more sad."

We are this evening presented with the history of the birth and infancy of one of those illustrious children whose fame is universally known, and which shall be had in everlasting remembrance, namely, of Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, the judge of Israel, the setter up and the terror of kings; the glory of his own age and country; and the morning star of a brighter day. The gift of this precious child was long withheld, that it might be more devoutly acknowledged and more highly prized. Men overlook the ordinary appearances of Nature, however stupendous and striking. In order therefore to rouse them to attention, and constrain them to observe the finger of God, the fiery comet is made to glare through the sky, and the earth shakes to the centre.

The blessing was sweetened to Hannah by every circumstance that can affect the fond maternal heart. A child to one who had long been afflicted with barrenness, and cruelly insulted on that account; a man-child, the answer of prayer; the power of performing for her darling infant the sweetest, and one of the most important maternal duties; and the cordial concurrence of the father in all her prudent, affectionate, and pious purposes; present enjoyment

and blossoming prospects! If there be pure and perfect bliss on earth, it is the portion of such a woman, in such a situation.

"The Lord remembered her." Was he ever unmindful or unkind? No, he delayed, and he granted in love. How much it concerns thee, O man, O woman, to know and to believe this! What can reconcile thee to the hardships of thy lot, but the persuasion that the good thou desirest is denied in wisdom, and the load that oppresses thee laid on by the hand of a Father? Trust in the Lord, and be of good cheer; the time to favour thee will come; "the Lord will provide," "the Lord will remember "thee."

"She bare a son, and called his name Samuel." Gracious is the correspondence between a devout spirit, and approving, assenting Heaven. Behold the prayer of faith ascending as on eagles' wings, and resting on the footstool of yonder radiant throne; behold the good and perfect gift coming down in return from the Father of lights. Thus the vapours exhaled from the briny deep fall back in copious showers to refresh and fertilize the earth. What a holy contention is here presented to us! The pious soul striving with God in supplication, in praise, in obedience, in faithfulness; the God of mercy striving with the meek and humble one in showing kindness, in heaping favour upon favour. *Samuel*, "asked and given of God," shall bear to the last hour of his life the memorial of his mother's fervent importunity at the throne of grace,

and of God's hearing her in the time of need. It shall serve for ever to remind himself, that he was a gift obtained of God by prayer, and devoted to God in gratitude. Every tongue that pronounces, every ear that hears the sound, shall be admonished of the union which devotion forms and maintains between earth and Heaven. The mother names, the father assents, God approves, and time confirms the nomination.

We find Elkanah and all of his family, who were fit for the journey, again on the road to Shiloh, to celebrate the great yearly festival, after the birth of his son. The bounties of Providence bind more powerfully the duties of the law upon the heart as well as upon the conscience, and thereby render religion not only a reasonable but a pleasant service. The pleasure of waiting upon God, in the ordinances of his appointment, was greatly heightened to this good man, by the company of those whom Nature had endeared to him. The length and inconvenience of the road were relieved, and sweetened, and shortened by friendly conversation, and by the mutual offices of attention and kindness. The bitterness of strife is heard no more. The sacrifice is offered up with greater ardour when one flame of affection meets another in presenting it; and the feast of peace acquires a higher relish from its being eaten in the spirit, and in the bonds of love. Social worship, as has been observed, has a most blessed effect in producing, supporting, and improving social affections. The tie of duty is strengthened between hus-

band and wife; the bond of nature between parent and child, between brother and brother, is fortified and ennobled by going together to the house of God, and by returning in company from thence. The eye of a stranger is caught and pleased with the sight of a decent family on their road to the temple. Your prayers arise with increased ardour from seeing your children around you in the house of prayer; your hearts glow with a holier gratitude when you hear their voices join in the praises which you sing. Offence has been given, behold it lost and forgotten for ever, because the parties have bowed their knees together before God and have pronounced together the petition of reconciliation and peace. "Heavenly "Father, forgive our trespasses as we forgive them "who trespass against us." Common mercies have been received; see how they increase and multiply, see with what additional satisfaction they are felt and enjoyed, while the notes of thanksgiving ascend from hearts and lips in unison. Common distress presses: lo, the burthen is already made light, the mourners have been together before the Father of mercies, the refuge of the miserable; they have poured out their hearts before God, and are lightened; they have cast all their care upon him, and are at rest.

Christians, you have no painful and expensive journey to undertake, in order to present yourselves before the Lord. Your Shiloh is at home. Of you no costly sacrifice is demanded; "offer unto the Lord "thanksgiving, and pay your vows unto the Most

"High; and call upon him in the day of trouble." Christian parent, Providence has made thee priest to that little church and congregation; bear them, as Aaron did the twelve tribes of Israel, engraven like jewels upon thy heart, to the most holy place, to the altar of incense.—

"But Hannah went not up; for she said unto "her husband, Not until the child be weaned." Every duty of life and of religion has its proper place and season. God hath said, and the great Teacher sent from God hath by both precept and practice established the word, "I will have mercy "and not sacrifice." The religion which makes light of relative duty, which teaches carelessness or neglect in our lawful worldly concerns, and which withdraws men from their place and station in society, is mistaken and erroneous; it is not the religion of the Bible; it has neither authority nor example to support it. That man is doing God service, who labours in his vocation, that he may have wherewith to do justly and to show mercy; not he who is slothful in business but eager in argument, and who gives himself to speculating, when he ought to be working with his hands. That woman is performing a religious service, who is looking well to her household; giving suck to one child and instruction to another, practising industry and economy; not she who is for ever rambling after favourite dogmas or favourite teachers; aiming at shining in the church when she ought to be shining in her most honourable sphere, her own house; and who is engaging

warmly in matters of doubtful disputation, while the food and clothing of her family are neglected. Who can call in question the piety of Hannah? And surely her absenting herself from the feast of Shiloh, on so just an occasion, will not be deemed an impeachment of it.

But though the history has led me to make these remarks, perhaps in our day they might have been spared. Have I not been combating a mistake into which neither the men nor the women of the present age are greatly disposed to fall? Ought I not rather to caution my hearers against the prevalence of a worldly spirit, to the extinction not only of the soul, but to the neglect of the very form of religion? What, warn this generation against "the danger of "being religious over-much?" What, warn them of the importance of attending to, and pursuing their temporal interest? What, caution them against frequenting the temple on working days, when they will not be diverted from the pursuit of business or pleasure on the Lord's day? I was in the wrong; and I change the object of my exhortation. To you, O men, I call, who, absorbed in frivolous, transitory occupations, forget that "one thing is "needful;" to you, who wallowing in the bounties of an indulgent Providence, regard not the hand from which all your comforts flow; to you who, rising into a little wealth, a little hope, a little consequence, have lost the recollection of your having once been needy, and obscure, and unimportant; and what is infinitely worse, have lost the

recollection and the practice of that humility, and decency, and piety, which poverty, and obscurity, and dependance, taught and enforced.

To you, O women, I call, who, without a shadow of reason; who, in the face of decency and propriety, who, in defiance of both feeling and conscience; who, intrusted with the education of children, female children, feel not the importance of the charge, or are not aware of the influence of example; who can dispense with the very externals of godliness, can become the patterns of sabbath neglect or violation; who can trifle with any thing that affects the morals or religion of the rising generation. To you I call, and say, you are treasuring up for yourselves remorse; and for these young ones whom you dearly love, shame, and sorrow, and distress. What is the lot of a female without the consolations of religion, and how is a young woman to learn religion, if not from her own mother? Let me remind you of what you once thought, felt, and resolved. You carried that child with uneasiness and anxiety in your womb; you formed a thousand fond wishes, you put up a thousand prayers, you came under a thousand engagements. You employed not perhaps the very words of Hannah, but undoubtedly you entered entirely into her views, and secretly vowed that the fruit of the womb should be "holiness to the Lord."—Well, God has been gracious to thee, and remembered thee. Thou hast survived the danger, and been delivered from the pangs of child-birth. You have enjoyed the satis-

faction of training the beloved of your soul through the dangers, difficulties, and solicitude of infancy and childhood. God has graciously done his part, and you have so far performed yours. But did your engagements cease when the infant was weaned? Did you rear that tender plant with so much anxiety, tenderness, and care, only to poison and corrupt it, after it had begun to take root, and bud, and blossom? Know you not that the inconsideration and folly of a day may destroy the pains and labour of many years; and that the eyes of children are much quicker and more retentive than their ears?

Happy that daughter, who is betimes formed to habits of discretion, of purity, of regularity, of piety, by the tender guardian and guide of her early days! Happy that mother whose attention is bent on infusing betimes, in her female offspring at least, the principles of wisdom, virtue, and true godliness; who is honoured to exemplify what she teaches, and is blessed with a docile, affectionate, and improving disciple!

The manner in which Elkanah and Hannah live and converse together is exemplary and instructive. They have one common interest, they have one darling object of affection, they express one and the same will, and in terms of mutual kindness and endearment, "She said unto her husband, I will "not go up until the child be weaned, and then I "will bring him, that he may appear before the "Lord, and there abide for ever. And Elkanah

" her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee " good, tarry until thou have weaned him, only the " Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, " and gave her son suck until she had weaned " him."

There was in all this a commanding principle of religion, of zeal for the will and glory of God, which regulated the spirit and inspired the tongue; without which, I am afraid, there is but a slender security for domestic felicity in the exercise of even good nature and good manners, much less in a mere sense of decency, or regard to the opinion of the world. These may overawe at particular seasons and in particular situations; but the fear and love of God are permanent and unvarying principles; they enforce and assist relative duty till it grows into a habit, and habit renders even difficult things easy and agreeable.

Samuel, who is his own biographer, has most judiciously drawn a veil over his infancy. Childish prognostics of future eminence are generally ridiculous and contemptible; they can impose only on the partiality of parental affection, or the credulity of superstition. The cynic snarls disdain at the relation of those premature prodigies of dawning wisdom, and the sage smiles indulgence and compassion on the fond belief. Let parents by all means amuse, delight themselves and each other with the sallies of infant, opening genius, but let them keep the delight to themselves. It is one of the joys in which "a " stranger intermeddleth not."

In the next Lecture we shall be led forward to consider the presentment of Samuel before the Lord in Shiloh; the sacrifice which accompanied that solemn ceremony; the farther discovery of the amiable and excellent spirit by which the mother was actuated: and the infant prophet's entrance on his important office.

Behold once more, Christians, the spirit of prophecy still pointing to one and the same great object. The persons and circumstances of the prophets were various; but amidst that variety some one striking feature of character, office, or condition announced "Him that was to come," more clearly or more obscurely reflected his image, and "prepared the way "of the Lord." The tongues of the prophets are many, but they all speak the same language, they all pronounce one name. The periods of their existence and predictions were widely remote, but all meet in one central point of light, in one auspicious instant, "the fulness of time," in one illustrious Personage, "to whom all give witness," in one commanding "purpose and grace"—the salvation of the world. "God, who at sundry times, and in divers "manners, spake in time past unto the fathers, by "the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto "us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of "all things, by whom also he made the worlds; "who being the brightness of his glory, and the "express image of his person, and upholding all "things by the word of his power, when he had by "himself purged our sins, sat down on the right

" hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews i. 1—3. Behold all created glory is thus absorbed in one glorious, divine person " who is above all, and " through all, and in all."—" 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." Phil. ii. 9—11.

LECTURE XXII.

1 *SAMUEL I.* 24—28.

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. And they slew a bullock and brought the child to Eli. And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

"LORD, what is man, that thou art mindful "of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest "him?" Every serious reflection on the nature, and perfections, and works of God, suggests this rapturous meditation of the holy Psalmist. Every view of Deity is at once humiliating and encouraging to the soul. We seem to shrink into nothing while we contemplate the regions of unbounded space; while the eye wanders from orb to orb, and the mind loses itself in calculating their number, distances, magnitude, lustre, and harmony; while imagination wings its daring flight to the world of spirits, and surveys myriads of angels adoring before the throne of the Most High; and "the

"spirits of just men made perfect" rejoicing "with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." But man rises into greatness and importance, when we reflect that "God created him in his own image;" that Eternal Providence exercises an unremitting solicitude about him; and that for his redemption the Son of God suffered and died.

The little concerns of individuals, and of private families, acquire value and dignity when we consider them as stamped with the seal of Omnipotence, as the operation of infinite wisdom, as links in the great chain of divine administration, and as extending their influence to eternity. But destroy this connexion, and we perceive only a strange and unaccountable scene of vanity, folly, and confusion.

The Holy Scriptures, which exhibit the justest representation, and enable us to form the justest estimate of human life, keep this continual interposition and commanding influence of divine Providence constantly in view. We meet with domestic feelings and occurrences exactly similar to our own, and we find a proof that the Bible is the word of God, in our own personal, daily experience.

The transactions which led to the scene represented in the passage now read, have been too recently submitted to your notice to need repetition. In the spirit and deportment of Elkanah and Hannah to each other, we have an useful example of conjugal complacency and affection. In the character of Hannah, we behold the feelings of the woman sweetly blended with the piety of the saint; and

we perceive the child of sorrow seeking and finding refuge in the power and mercy of God. We are now to contemplate one of the most pleasing objects that human life presents—A good and honest heart in possession of its wish, and making the proper use of the expected blessing; the spirit of prayer changed into the spirit of praise, and vows formed in the hour of distress faithfully performed.

Let our first meditations turn on the wisdom and goodness of that great Being who has established human felicity on such a solid foundation; or rather who has drawn it from so many combined sources. How manifold and how tender, in particular, are the ties which unite a mother and her son? She carried him in her womb with solicitude and uneasiness, and brought him into the world at the hazard of her life. She sustained his infant days with the blood of her own veins, and slumber was a stranger to her eyes that he might sleep in tranquillity. The first object which he distinguished was the smiling face of his guardian angel, the first sound that struck his opening ear was the murmur of maternal affection: the first idea which he formed was that of seeking refuge from want, and pain, and danger, in the fond bosom of a parent. The very anguish and trouble which she endured on his account but endear him the more to her; a sense of early, assured protection "grows "with his growth, and strengthens with his "strength," and the whole forms a bond of mutual attachment, which on one side is hardly to be dis-

solved, and on the other, is one of the most powerful securities against the inroads of vice, and is the last convulsive gasp of expiring virtue.

Nature has laid upon you, mothers, the heaviest and most important part of education. The good or the evil is already done before the child is taken out of your hands. Happily the weakness of your constitution is strengthened and upheld for the arduous task, by the force of affection, and your very labour thereby is rendered your delight. And, O how glorious is your reward! you desire, you can desire none higher, than to see your son, the son of your womb, the son of your vows, remembering and practising the early lessons which his mother taught him.

How happy was Eli in having for a pupil a child suckled, and weaned, and instructed in early life, by a Hannah! How great the goodness of the compassionate and merciful Father of all, who by means so simple, so pleasant, so powerful, so effectual, makes constant provision for the comfort, the protection, and the improvement of man!

Let us proceed to meditate for a moment, on the amiable and instructive pattern here set before us of a faithful and obedient heart. Distress naturally dictates wishes, and prayers, and vows; it makes us sensible of subjection and dependance; but when the blessing is obtained, the load removed, and the hour of performance comes, men are as forgetful and niggardly as once they were attentive and liberal. Ten lepers were cleansed, but "where are the nine?"

Has one only returned to give thanks? Ingratitude is one of those crimes which no man is either bold or depraved enough to defend, but with which all men are justly chargeable. How few earthly benefactors but have reason to complain of an ungracious return? How few parents but have that bitterness of bitterness, filial ingratitude, mingled in their cup? How verily guilty is a whole "world lying in "wickedness," before God, in this respect? There is really no merit in gratitude but what arises from its rarity; and that rarity stamps it one of the highest of moral virtues. Would it be doing injustice to the other sex, to say that gratitude is a quality more frequently to be found in the female character? I have no hesitation in affirming, that it is one of the most powerful attractions in any character, and that all other attractions whatever are good for nothing without it.

We observed formerly in the conduct of Hannah a happy mixture of piety and prudence. While the state of the child confined her to mount Ephraim, it would have been the reverse of a religious service to repair to the feast at Shiloh; when he could with safety be removed to the place of God's presence, to keep him back had been unfaithfulness and impiety. Prudence without piety will quickly degenerate into selfishness and the love of this world; it will harden the heart and lull the conscience asleep. Piety without prudence will inspire pride and intolerance; it will lead to idleness and irregularity in conduct; and, out of an affected zeal for the first table of the

law, it will erase the characters of the second, or, through negligence and disuse, suffer them to be disfigured by filth, or corrupted and impaired by rust, so as to become at length wholly illegible. Where piety and prudence are found united, the love of God and of man will perfectly consist; both tables of the law will be equally clear and distinct, and their combined influence will instruct the person by whom it is felt and understood, to "use the world so as not "to abuse it."

At length the time of presenting herself before the Lord, and of performing her vow, arrives. The precious child must be no longer hers but God's. And did he indeed cease to be the parent's, by being dedicated to the Most High? Surely no; he became hers by a firmer and more sacred tie; the parents have an interest in him unknown, unfelt before. Their treasure has acquired infinite value from the place in which it is deposited; and attendance at God's altar has conferred nobility on the little Levite which all the possessions on mount Ephraim could not countervail.

Hannah presented herself before the Lord at a former solemnity with bitter crying and tears; she "went forth then weeping, bearing precious seed, she "cometh again rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with "her; for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." She presents herself before the Lord, but neither with a contracted heart nor an empty hand. The law demanded for God the first-born of every creature. The whole tribe of which Samuel was a son

was accepted in place of the first-born of all Israel, and the first-born of her family might be redeemed by the substitution of a victim. Thus clearly was the spirit of the Gospel inculcated by the institutions of the law, and the doctrine of the atonement through the blood of the "Lamb slain from the "foundation of the world," was taught unto them as it is taught unto us. Throughout we see the innocent suffering for the guilty; from the sacrifice of Abel down to the sacrifice on mount Calvary, of "the just suffering for the unjust, that he might "bring us unto God."—

With what mixed emotions must an Israelitish parent of any sensibility have presented this sacrifice? Behold the darling child, the first-born, led to the altar, but not to bleed and die: no, that innocent lamb, that bullock in the prime of life, is to bleed and die in his stead: and, mournful to reflect, though religion does not now demand such sacrifices, necessity and the appetites of men constantly require them, and we behold the whole brute "creation groaning and "travailing in pain together," to perform the drudgery, minister to the pleasure, or with their flesh to satisfy the need of a creature much more criminal than themselves; and, as if that were too little, they are subjected to the cruelty and caprice of rational beings who have become greater brutes than themselves.

With the confidence of true goodness Hannah now addresses Eli, and reminds him of what he had probably forgotten, but which was of too much moment to herself ever to be permitted to fall into

oblivion. Eli had only seen her lips move, but heard not the words which she pronounced; and the violent emotion in which she was had conveyed very foul suspicions to his mind. These, with the dignity and calmness of conscious innocence, she repelled; and assured him, in general terms, that what he had unkindly mistaken for the effect of wine, was the agitation of an afflicted spirit, pouring out its anguish before God; but the subject of her prayer she still kept within her own breast. There was then no witness of her vow but God and her own conscience; and that was enough; it was recorded in heaven: and an honest mind will find itself equally bound by a resolution formed in secret, as by an oath administered in the face of an assembled world. With what holy exultation does she now declare her engagement, exhibit the sacred pledge of it, and proceed to the public and solemn discharge of it! "She brought the child to Eli, "and said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, "I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying "unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the "Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of "him." Verse 25—27. How sweetly affecting are the effusions of Nature, when aided and animated by devotion! How religion ennobles and dignifies every character, how it places every other quality in its fairest and most favourable point of view! How well it is adapted to every season and situation of life! It was this which fortified Hannah against the bitter insults and reproaches of her merciless adversary, and preserved her from rendering railing

for railing. It was this which taught her self-government, so that she disturbed not the solemnity of the feast with womanish complaints, but covered a sorrowful heart with a serene countenance. It was this which carried her to the house of the Lord for light, comfort, and relief. It was this which carried her reputation and advantage through the first duties of a mother; and exhibited in one, the affectionate wife, the tender parent, the devout worshipper. This filled her heart and inspired her tongue, in presenting her offering, in addressing the high priest, in raising her song of praise. And this will communicate lustre, value, and importance on every female character, whether known to the world or overlooked by it; in the secresy of the family or in the celebrity of the temple. There is a God who "seeth in secret, and will reward openly."

Eli repeats a cordial *Amen* to her pious purpose, accepts the precious trust committed unto him, and bends his knees in joyful acknowledgment of that God who had been multiplying his mercy to this family, and thus building up the house of Israel. And it is not long before he finds that this young Nazarene was provided of God, and instructed of his mother, to rectify the disorders of his own house, and to supply the place of a degenerate race of priests ripe for destruction and doomed to it, and ready to bring down a "father's grey hairs with "sorrow to the grave."

Hannah's song of praise, which follows at length

in the opening of the next chapter, merits on many accounts a separate and particular consideration. It possesses all the majesty, grace, and beauty of ancient oriental poetry. It is one of the happiest effusions of an excellent female heart labouring under a grateful sense of the highest obligations. It presents and impresses some of the justest and most interesting views of Divine Providence, and, what is above all, it discloses one of the clearest and most distinct prospects of the coming, person, and character of *Messiah*, the Prophet of prophets, King of kings, Lord of lords. Yes, Christians, for this prophetess was reserved the honour of first pronouncing in sacred song, that "name which is as "ointment poured forth," which angels mention with wonder and reverence, and which the whole company of the redeemed shall one day proclaim with "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" MESSIAH, the anointed of the Lord—whom the world so long expected, who in the fulness of time appeared, whom unbelieving Jews refused to acknowledge; whom they despised, rejected, crucified, and put to death; whom "God has exalted a prince and Saviour "to give repentance and the remission of sins;" to whose second coming the course of Nature, the evolutions of Providence, the hopes and fears of every heart of man, the earnest expectation of the creature, and the hand-writing of God in Scripture, all, all directly point.

The next Lecture will be an attempt to illustrate, and practically to improve, Hannah's song of praise.

May we bring to it a portion of that Spirit which inspired the lips of her who sung, and directed the pen of him who wrote. Let me conclude the present, with calling on every one present to recollect personal obligations, and to walk suitably to them. Call to remembrance vows formed on a bed of languishing, in the hour of difficulty, in the instant of danger, at the table of the Lord, and thankfully pay them: as knowing that "it is better not to vow, "than to vow and not to pay."

Desire more earnestly the best gifts; spiritual, heavenly, eternal blessings. By all means in your vows, stipulate for your portion of present and temporal good things, saying with Jacob, "If God will "be with me, and will keep me in this way that I "go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment "to put on; so that I come again to my father's "house in peace: then shall the Lord be my God;" Genesis xxviii. 20, 21; and with Hannah, pouring out the bitterness of an oppressed heart before God, and begging relief of the Father of mercies, saying, "O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the "affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, "and not forget thine handmaid." But forget not withal to stipulate with Solomon, for "an under "standing heart," to prize and to improve mercies already bestowed: and with Jabez, calling on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that thou wouldest bless "me indeed, and that thine hand might be with

"me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil "that it may not grieve me."

Hannah promised to devote to the Lord the child which should be given her; and ye have solemnly engaged to yield yourselves unto God; and "ye "are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." —"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mer- "cies of God, that ye present your bodies a living "sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is "your reasonable service. And be not conformed "to this world: but be ye transformed by the re- "newing of your mind, that ye may prove what is "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of "God." Rom. xii. 1, 2.

LECTURE XXIII.

1 *SAMUEL II.* 1—10.

And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased; so that the barren hath borne seven: and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

IN man, the master-piece of creation, are discernible various kinds of life, distinct from each other, yet most wonderfully blended and united, so as to

form one great and astonishing whole.—The animal, the intellectual, the moral life: to which we add, in man as he came from the hands of his Creator, and in man "renewed" by grace "in the spirit of his "mind," the spiritual and divine life, the dawning light, the earnest and pledge, the celestial foretaste of everlasting life.

The first of these we enjoy in common with the beasts that perish. Like theirs our bodies grow and decline. Like them we are led by sense and appetite, and are susceptible of pleasure and pain. And like them we arose out of the earth, are supported by it, and feel ourselves returning to it again.

The second, or intellectual life, raises man far above every other animal. He possesses the power of thought, that productive faculty of the Almighty; that image of God in our nature. He contemplates, compares, reflects, reasons, plans, performs. By means of this he exercises dominion over all other creatures. Inferior to many in some respects, by this he renders himself superior to all; and he reduces all their powers to the subjection and obedience of himself.

The moral life places man in society: it connects him with intelligent beings like himself: it opens a capacious field of duty and of enjoyment; it stamps him an object of approbation or of blame, of reward or of punishment.

The divine life unites man to the Author and Supporter of his existence, the source of all his comforts,

the foundation of all his hopes: to God the witness and the judge of all his actions; the avenger of all unrighteousness, "the rewarder of them who dili-"gently seek him."

To Adam, as an animal, God said, "Be fruitful, "and multiply, and replenish the earth: Behold, I "have given you every herb bearing seed, which is "upon the face of all the earth; and every tree in the "which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you "it shall be for meat."

In Adam the intellectual life discovered itself, when the Lord God brought unto him "every "beast of the field and every fowl of the air, to see "what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam "called every living creature, that was the name "thereof."

God having implanted a principle of moral life in man, said, "It is not good that the man should be "alone; I will make him an help meet for him;" "he "took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, "to dress it and to keep it; and commanded the man, "saying, Of every tree of the garden thou may-"est freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of "good and evil thou shalt not eat of it. For in the "day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

In Adam the spiritual and divine life was perfected, when "God created man in his own image." It was extinguished and lost when by transgression he fell: it was revived by the promise of the Messiah, and of salvation through his blood; and it will be

completely recovered when the image of God is restored through the Spirit of sanctification.

All these different kinds of life have their several and corresponding expressions; and according as any one prevails, such is the character of the man. When the habitual cry is, "What shall I eat, what "shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" it is easy to determine what life is predominant: it is easy to discern when the brute runs away with the man. Solomon may be given as an instance of the prevalence of intellectual life. He looked through nature, and "spake of trees, from the cedar-tree "that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that "springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts "and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." "His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the chil-"dren of the east country, and all the wisdom of "Egypt."—The Psalmist has presented us with an exquisite representation of the moral life of man, (would to God it were more frequently realized,) in the fifteenth Psalm: "He that walketh uprightly, "and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth "in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his "tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh "up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose "eyes a vile person is contemned: but he honoureth "them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his "own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth "not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward "against the innocent. He that doeth these things

"shall never be moved." Verses 2—5. Where shall we look for an example of the highest life of God in the soul? Nature stands silent, the whole world lies dead; it presents every kind of life but this. Where is the model to which to refer? Where is the idea of this most exalted excellence of our nature? It is to be found. "I came not to do "mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him "who sent me." Read and ponder the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, and discover the author, the example, the giver of this divine life; and aspire after a participation of it.

We have some of these holy aspirations in the passage now read. We behold a spirit alive unto God, sinking the creature in the Creator, discerning God in every object, and in every event that arises, referring all things to Him "who doth ac-"cording to his will in the armies of Heaven, and "among the inhabitants of the earth." Let us blend our spirits with that of pious Hannah, and may God grant us to know and feel the happiness of having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

"Hannah prayed." In affliction she prayed; and in prosperity she prayed. Tears and smiles are not more the expression of their corresponding emotions, than supplication and thanksgiving are of that life which dictates them, in a suitableness to the various aspects of Divine Providence. Sorrow is no longer sorrow when it is poured out into the

bosom of sympathy and tenderness. Every joy is multiplied an hundredfold by every communication of it to the ear and the heart of friendship. Hannah prays, "and her countenance is no more sad." She restores her earnestly expected son to God, and is infinitely enriched by the restitution. Whether the child cry for relief, or express its gratitude by caresses and looks of satisfaction, it is equally grateful and soothing to the fond parental heart. And will the great God in very deed vouchsafe to make himself known to us by the name of the Hearer of prayer? Is he exalted to show mercy? Can he be pleased with the effusions of a thankful heart? Thoughtless, inconsiderate creatures that we are; blind to our highest interest, dead to our purest joy! We see nothing of God in that distress, in that deliverance. We attended to the creature only, and therefore found no comfort. We endured without hope, and we enjoyed without relish. Happy soul, that can command itself to peace and say, I have poured out my anguish before the Lord, I have cast all my care upon him, my burthen is no longer mine but his. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the "Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. He hath "delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from "tears, and my feet from falling."

In the first transports of her joy, Hannah forgets every thing but the glorious object of it. The insults of Peninnah, her delight in Samuel, stand for a while suspended; they are lost and forgotten in the contemplation of Him who had delivered her

from the one, and bestowed the other upon her. But God, as he is in himself, cannot long be an object of contemplation to mortals. It is only by what he doth that he can be known, and loved, and enjoyed by us. The soul springs up to God, is instantly repelled and overwhelmed by "light inac-"cessible and full of glory," and seeks relief and employment in surveying the ways and works of God.

"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord." But "who "is this king of glory?"—The spirit shrinks with reverence from the inquiry; and the heart sweetly slides into the observation and acknowledgment of what an incomprehensible Jehovah hath done. "Mine horn is exalted in the Lord." "The horn," in Scripture language, is the emblem of strength and empire. She was till now undistinguished, unprized, unimportant in Israel; a wife, without the honour of being a mother. But now she has risen into lustre, and place, and pre-eminence. Her Samuel is to her "a crown of glory and a diadem "for beauty!" She had power with God and prevailed; she asked, and God granted her request. This is naturally blended in her mind with the derision and cruel mocking which she had endured. For the very devotions of fallen creatures must savour of the calamities to which they are exposed, and the imperfection in which they are involved. Both nature and piety accordingly concur in dictating the expression of thankfulness which follows, "My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies:"

Here the woman speaks; but the saint instantly subjoins, "because I rejoice in thy salvation."

When the life of God is completely formed in the soul, every particle of human corruption shall be purged away. There shall be no feeling nor recollection of unkindness or enmity. And in proportion as evil affections are rooted out, and kind affections are implanted, cherished, and promoted, so is the image of God impressed, renewed, and preserved. The love of God perfected shall obliterate and efface every trace of resentment against man.

After a short vibration on this string, the heart of the worshipper seems to recur with increased complacency and delight to a worthier subject of meditation, and loses herself in infinite perfection. "There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none "beside thee; neither is there any rock like our "God." When we attempt to meditate upon God thought fails. When we attempt to address ourselves to him language fails. In vain do we look round for a similitude that may enable us to form a clearer perception of his nature. It is his glory to be single and alone; to defy and prevent every idea of resemblance or comparison. When the whole world of nature is explored, when all the powers of nature are exhausted, the soul falls back upon itself, shrinks into nothing from the daring attempt, and exclaims, "There is none beside thee," "there is "none holy as the Lord." "Who can find out the "Almighty unto perfection!"

Hannah awakes from this holy rapture, to con-

template this incomprehensible Jehovah as exercising an intelligent, uncontrollable, irresistible authority over all the ways of men; as the wise and righteous Governor of the world, whom none can successfully oppose, from whose notice none can possibly conceal himself. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength." Verses 3, 4. Behold the cure of pride. There is a God on high, from whom descended every advantage which one possesses above another, who carefully notes the use that is made of his benefits, and who will demand an account of them; who "seeth the proud afar off, but has respect unto the lowly." "By him actions are *weighed*;" they are judged not according to their apparent circumstances, nor by the maxims of the world, nor the rank of the parties concerned, but according to truth, according to the real merit or demerit of the action, according to the thoughts and intent of the heart. Thus is the mouth of arrogancy effectually shut, and the whole world laid low in the dust before a holy and righteous God. "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength." Even in this world, "the Lord maketh himself known by the judgments which he executes;" and causeth men to change conditions, and turneth the world upside down. The affairs of men, like the frame of

nature, are in a state of perpetual revolution, and the history of mankind is simply an account of the rise and depression of wretched mortals by means not of their own contrivance, by events which they could not foresee, and over which they had no power. The victor of to-day is to-morrow a captive, and he who now lieth "among the pots, "shall come forth as the wings of a dove covered "with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

The greater part of Hannah's song of praise is employed in making a more enlarged display of the wisdom and justice of the Divine Providence in the government of the world. "They that were full "have hired themselves out for bread." Some are born to ease and affluence, and through indolence, inattention, or prodigality, reduce themselves to want. Some acquire wealth by frugality and industry. But however gotten, it is but an uncertain possession, and we daily see multitudes, not through any apparent fault of their own, "waxing poor and falling "into decay." Others as unaccountably rise into distinction and opulence. There is an unseen hand which gives and takes away. In prosperity there is no ground of insolence and triumph; in adversity no reason to despair.

Her own peculiar felicity again presents itself to view, and the incense of praise ascends to heaven. "The barren hath borne seven, and she that hath "many children is waxed feeble." There is a Jewish legend which saith, that for every child that Hannah bare, one of Peninnah's died. It is a mere

conjecture; Hannah's triumphant song is rather a proof of the contrary. She discovers a spirit too excellent in other respects, to permit us to suppose her capable of rejoicing in the devastation which the hand of God had wrought, much less in the destruction of her own husband's family. That heart must be lost to every feeling of humanity, lost to decency, lost to the fear of God, which can make the calamity of another, especially such a calamity, a ground of self-gratulation and complacency, or a subject of thanksgiving to a holy and merciful God, as if he could become a party to our petty jealousies and contentions. No, a spirit so regulated as hers, so patient under mortification, so long nurtured in the school of affliction, so observant of, and submissive to, the will of Providence, could not taste the mortality of even Peninnah's children as a source of joy. Her expressions amount to no more than a devout and humble acknowledgment of unerring wisdom, of unimpeachable justice, in conducting all the affairs of this world: in building up families, and in bringing them low; in exercising an absolute right of sovereignty which will not be compelled to give account of its matters to any one. The gift of children is not always withheld in anger, nor bestowed in kindness, as the character and history of Eli's family will shortly evince.

She proceeds to pursue the same idea of a divine superintendance in every thing, through a variety of particulars strikingly contrasted one with another, all aiming at the same end: all calculated to enforce

the same practical lesson. "The Lord killeth, "and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave, "and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and "maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and "lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set "them among princes, and to make them inherit "the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth "are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon "them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and "the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by "strength shall no man prevail." Verses 6—9.

In the conclusion of her song, Hannah, rapt into futurity, no doubt by the spirit of prophecy, contemplates the final consummation of the great mystery of Providence, as issuing in the establishment of universal order; in the suppression and punishment of vice; and in the unchangeable and permanent glory of a Redeemer's kingdom. The same hand which balances the spheres, which conducts all the affairs of men, which preserves harmony and prevents confusion, in both the natural and moral worlds, shall at length, by another Almighty *fiat*, "make all things new." Then "the "adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; "out of heaven shall he thunder upon them."—"But who may abide the day of his coming? and "who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like "a refiner's fire; and he shall sit as a refiner and "purifier of silver." Chastisement shall therefore be preceded by righteous judgment, that every

mouth may be stopped before God. "The Lord "shall judge the ends of the earth." Now these words of the prophetic mother of Samuel, taken in connexion with the clearer and fuller display of a judgment to come in the writings of the New Testament clearly point out that glorious and divine person in whose hallowed name the song terminates—God's *anointed*. A woman was honoured first to announce the Saviour of the world under that description; and a succession of prophets henceforward hold it up to the eyes of succeeding generations, as "all their salvation, and all their desire." Samuel, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, each in his day, proclaims the approach of this King of Glory, of whom all who were *anointed* with material oil, whether as priests, or prophets, or kings, were but a shadow; and in whose superior lustre they disappeared, as the light of the stars is absorbed in the splendour of the sun. The prophetess celebrates Jehovah, who "shall judge the ends of the earth," as that "king" to whom all "authority is committed, to whom all "strength is given," as that "*anointed*" One, Messiah the prince, whose "horn" should be finally "exalted," and before the brightness of whose coming, all disorder, iniquity, and misery shall flee away; who shall first "judge the "earth," and then reign for ever and ever.

And thus is the voice of this holy woman, near twelve hundred years before Messiah's day, in perfect unison with the tongue of Christ himself, and

of the apostles of the Lord, after his ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. "The "Father judgeth no man; but hath committed "all judgment unto the Son: that all men should "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the "Father which hath sent him." John v. 22, 23. "God now commandeth all men every where to re- "pent: because he 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." Acts xvii. 30, 31. "The king- "doms of this world are become the kingdoms of our "Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever "and ever." Rev. xi. 15. And such, in every age, is the native expression of a soul alive to God, the natural aspiration of the spiritual and divine life.

Art thou, O man, through grace a partaker of it? You shall "know it by its fruits." As it increases corruption dies. "If Christ be in you, the body is "dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because "of righteousness." Rom. viii. 10. To be destitute of this life, in whatever state of perfection the intellectual life may be, is to be under the power of everlasting death, a death of trespasses and sins. But if its very first breathings are felt, however feebly, it is a new creation begun, it is "Christ in you, the "hope of glory." Attempts will be made to extinguish it, but in vain. Like its author, it is immortal. It may be oppressed, it may be suspended, it may

at seasons lie dormant, but it cannot expire. It doth not always make itself sensible to the eyes and ears of the world; for the believer's "life is *hid* with "Christ in God;" but "when Christ, who is "our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear "with him in glory." Col. iii. 4. "Beloved, 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." 1 John iii. 2.

LECTURE XXIV.

1 *SAMUEL II.* 18—21.

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

THE character of most men is formed and fixed before it is apprehended that they have, or can have, any character at all. Many vainly and fatally imagine that the few first years of life may be disposed of as you please: that a little neglect may easily be repaired, that a little irregularity may easily be rectified. This is saying in other words, "Never regard the morning; sleep it, trifle it, riot "it away; a little closer application at noon will "recover the loss." "The spring returns, the flowers "appear upon the earth, the time of the singing of "birds is come. No matter; it is soon enough to "think of the labours of spring. Sing with the "birds, skip with the fawn, the diligence of a more "advanced, more propitious season will bring every

"thing round; and the year shall be crowned with "the horn of plenty." A single ray of reason is sufficient to detect and expose such absurdity: yet human conduct exhibits it in almost universal prevalence. Infancy and childhood are vilely cast away; the morning is lost; the seed-time neglected—And what is the consequence? A life full of confusion, and an old age full of regret: a day of unnecessary toil, and a night of vexation: a hurried summer, a meagre autumn, a comfortless winter.

It is the ordinance of Providence, that the heaviest and most important part of education should devolve upon the mother. It begins before the child is born; her passions and habits affect the fruit of her womb. From her bosom the infant draws the precious juice of health and virtue, or the baleful poison of vice and disease. The fleeting period which he passes under the shadow of her wing is a season sacred to wisdom and piety. If the mother lead not her son to the hallowed spring, if she fail to disclose to his eager eye and panting heart the loveliness of goodness, the excellency of religion; if she permit the luxuriant soil to be over-run with briers and thorns, in vain will she strive to redeem the lost opportunity by restraints and punishments, by precepts and masters, by schools and colleges, in a more advanced stage of life. The good or the mischief is done by the time that he comes out of her hands.

That Providence which has imposed this employment on the feebler sex as a task, has most graciously contrived to render it one of the highest and

most exquisite of female comforts; as in truth all the impositions, nay, the very chastisements of Heaven are really blessings. Let the woman who has given suck tell if she can, "how tender it is to love the babe that "milks her." Ask that mother if there be any joy like the joy of hearing her child repeat the lessons which she taught him. Ask her if she recollects or regards her pain and anguish; her anxious days and sleepless nights. Ask her if all is not forgotten and lost in the progress which expanding faculties have made, and in the richer harvest which they promise. Ask if she has not already received more than her reward. If the representation of the case be just, let it procure for dutiful mothers the respect and gratitude which they so well merit? let it reconcile their minds to what is painful and laborious in their lot? let it raise them to their due rank and importance in society; and let it stimulate them to perseverance in well doing, in the full assurance that they shall in no wise lose their reward.

The passage of holy writ, on the consideration of which we are now entering, is a very affecting representation of the effects and consequences of a good and of a bad education, exemplified in the conduct of Hannah the mother of Samuel, and of Eli the father of Hophni and Phinehas.—Scripture, instead of multiplying precept upon precept, leads us at once into human life, and exhibits the law written in the event. It instructs us how to bring up children, by delineating the dreadful consequences of excessive lenity and indulgence on the one hand,

and by displaying the happy fruits of early piety, regularity, and self-government on the other. This theme, being by far the more pleasing of the two, and coming in more regularly in the order of history, shall obtain the preference in the course of our inquiry. Though, indeed, attention to the one must of necessity bring forward the other; and the good fortify and recommend itself by contrast with the evil.

The education of Samuel began in the pious resolution of his mother before he was conceived in the womb. "If thou wilt give unto thine handmaid a "man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord "all the days of his life." Every parent receives every child under a tacit engagement to the same purpose; and the command of God, from the moment of the birth, is, "Rear that child for me." I have watched over him while he lay in darkness, "mine eyes saw his substance yet being unperfect; "in my book all his members were written, which in "continuance were fashioned, when as yet there "was none of them. I added the immortal prin-"ciple to the finished limbs; I stamped my image "upon him. There my hand has scattered the seeds "of wisdom and happiness; to thy fostering care I "commit that tender plant. Cared for, it will "abundantly reward thy toil; neglected, it will "grow into a sharp thorn to tear thy flesh. Every "day, every hour is producing a change in it; "grow it will and must. What it grows into depends "upon thyself. Of thy hand will I require it."

As Samuel was to be a Nazarite to God from the womb, the law prescribed to the mother certain ceremonial observances respecting her own conduct, and the treatment of her own person, which corresponded to that high destination. Abstinence, in particular, from certain kinds of meat and drink, which might eventually affect the bodily or mental constitution of the unborn infant. With those prescriptions we have no room to doubt Hannah punctually complied. And here we fix the second stage, or if you will, erect the second pillar of education. The commands of God are none of them arbitrary and capricious, but are founded in reason and the nature of things. Whatever strongly affects the mother during the months of pregnancy, beyond all doubt affects her offspring, whether it be violent liquors or violent passions. It belongs to another profession than mine to account for this, and to determine how far the sympathy goes. But the general belief of it would most certainly have a very happy effect in procuring attention to female health, regularity, and tranquillity in that delicate and interesting situation. The comfort of both parent and child, to the end of life; what do I say? through the whole of their existence, may be concerned in it.

As soon as Samuel was born, we find Hannah devoting undivided attention to the first and sweetest of maternal offices. "The woman tarried at home, "and gave her son suck, until she weaned him." Nature and inclination concur in pressing this duty upon every mother. The instances of real inability

are too few to merit consideration. The performance of it carries its own recompense in its bosom; the neglect is, first and last, its own punishment. Without considering at present its connexion with the health and comfort of both parties, let us attend for a moment to its influence on morals, and as constituting a branch of education. Is not parental and filial affection the first bond of society, and the foundation of all virtue? It is this which arms a delicate female with patience which no pain nor labour can exhaust, with fortitude which no calamity can subdue, with courage which no difficulty or danger can intimidate. It is this which first inspires the infant purpose to excel, which blows the sacred spark of gratitude into a flame, which first awakens and animates the latent seeds of immortality in the human soul. The first perception of the child is the sweet sense of obligation and dependance: he feels himself far advanced in a commerce of reciprocal affection the moment he becomes conscious of his existence; and he finds himself engaged in habits of goodness, long before he understands the meaning of words. And is it fit that these kind affections should be transferred to a stranger? Who can be so well qualified to communicate those earliest and best lessons, as a mother? Can you complain that your child is cold, indifferent, or averse to you, when you set the example of coldness, indifference, and aversion, and preferred a little ease or pleasure to his health and comfort, and what is infinitely more, to his early, infant

morals? Can you hope from a hireling, who must have renounced nature too, as well as yourself, what God and nature, and decency, and regard to your own real well-being, have pressed upon you in vain? It was so much a primary duty in the eyes of Hannah, that her attendance on the duties of the sanctuary at Shiloh gave place to it; she revered the ordinance of that God, who says, "I will have mercy and not "sacrifice;" and religious service is interrupted for a season, to be resumed with greater ardour and effect, when the duties of life were faithfully discharged.

At what age the child was weaned, the history relates not. He remained under the tuition of his mother till he was of a proper age to be presented to the Lord, in the place which he had chosen to put his name there, and to be put under the instruction of Eli, and prepared for the service of the tabernacle. And we shall presently find that he was infinitely more indebted to the solicitous attention of a pious mother for his progress in divine knowledge, than he afterwards was to the superintendance of the high priest of Israel, who knew so ill to rule his own house, and to whom of a pupil he became a teacher.

I am well aware of the difficulty of forming a plan of religious instruction for children.—Scripture suggests the happiest, the most obvious, and the most effectual. It ought to come from the children themselves. They are desirous of information. If left to themselves they will think and inquire. Their questions will point out the mode of instruction.

Do not be over anxious to take the lead, but carefully follow them. Their ideas will be directed by what they observe and feel; and strong facts and appearances of nature will make a deep and lasting impression upon them. He who knows what is in man has accordingly given us, in a particular example, a general rule of proceeding in this great article: "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee "in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou "shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord "brought us up out of Egypt, from the house of "bondage. And it came to pass when Pharaoh "would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the "first-born in the land of Egypt." It was probably thus that Hannah instructed her darling son; she stored his memory with interesting facts, and touched his heart by affecting representations of the mercy and judgment of God, exemplified in the history of his own forefathers. Milk is the proper food of babes, strong meat belongeth to them who are of full age. A dry precept is but half understood, and is speedily forgotten; but a tale of distress, the triumph of goodness over malevolence and opposition, the merited shame and punishment of wickedness, these are easily understood, are long retained, and the impression is not to be effaced.

We advance to the fourth stage of wise and good education, of which we have the pattern before us. The same principle which induced Hannah to keep her son at home for a season, and to abide with him,

constrained her to send him from home and to give up her interest in him, when the service of God and the greater good of the child demanded the sacrifice. This is just the reverse of what high life, at least with us, daily presents. You shall see a mother who hardly inquired after her child at the time of life when her tenderness was most necessary to him, all at once assuming the parent, exercising an affected tenderness which he no longer needs, reducing him to childhood after he is becoming a man, and endeavouring to compensate by an after-growth of affection, the unkindness and neglect which blighted the early blossoms of the spring. She can suffer him no longer out of her sight. The discipline which her own wickedness has rendered necessary to his improvement is reprobated as cruelty, and the poor youth is frequently ruined by having at one time no mother at all, and at another one too much. I honour the firmness of Hannah, as much as I love her motherly softness and attachment. To possess with gratitude, to cherish a worthy object with tenderness, and to resign it with steadiness and magnanimity, is equally an object of admiration and of esteem. Observe the mixed emotions which animate and correct her countenance as she conducts her well-beloved son to the altar. The saint speaks in that eye, sparkling with delight as she devotes what she holds most dear in the world to Him from whom she had by holy importunity obtained him; the tear rushes to it, and all the mother

stands confessed as she retires. Piety has prevailed and presented the offering: Nature feels but submits.

It is easier to conceive than to describe what was the state of her mind as she returned from Shiloh to Ramah: think on the anxiety and regret at leaving her Samuel behind: on the satisfaction and delight of reflecting in what hands she had left him, and to what care she had committed him. But we hear of no wild project formed of removing the whole family to reside at Shiloh, in order to indulge a fond mother's partial affection with the continual presence of her little minion. No, the same spirit of prudence, the same domestic regards, the same sense of duty, which once engaged her to prefer attention to Samuel to attendance on the sacred festival, now engage her to prefer the unostentatious employments of a wife and the mistress of a family at Ramah, to the sacredness of the tabernacle, and the care of an only son, a first-born. But the heart of a mother finds, and flies to the innocent refuge which nature pointed out. She employs her mind and her hands during the intervals of the feast about her absent son; "his mother made him a little coat, "and brought it to him from year to year, when "she came up with her husband to offer the yearly "sacrifice." O how pure, how cheap, how satisfying are the pleasures of virtue! No words can express the inward, the incommunicable joy of that mother, as her fingers wove the threads of that little coat, as her eyes saw it grow into shape, and

colour, and shade, as the increasing stature of the wearer rendered the increase of her labour necessary. You must be converted and become a little child, a dutiful, affectionate, and pious child, like Samuel, to conceive the delight of seeing his parents return, of putting on his new garment, of exhibiting his mother's present. These nothings are the bond of affection among virtuous minds, and are the source of their felicity.

This we settle as a more advanced stage of education, as far as it depends upon the mother. To part with the child firmly and unreluctantly when the proper hour of separation comes; to preserve the commerce of affection by works and messages of kindness; and to subject every feeling and pursuit to the known and declared will of God. Let no one, O woman, usurp thy province, let no one step between thee and thy child, and steal his affections from thee. What, suffer him to have a step-mother while thou art yet living! Forbid it nature, forbid it decency, forbid it religion. But the hour of separation is arrived, you have done your duty, he must now pass into other hands; as a mother you retained him, as a mother resign him. You have not laboured in vain: you have not spent your strength for nought and in vain. Be of good cheer, you have trained him up in the way in which he should go, and when old he will not depart from it. Your heart shall rejoice in him many days hence. He shall be to thee a crown of glory when thou art dropping into the grave.

The disorderly state of Eli's family, the consequence of a careless and neglected education, will, through the Divine permission, be the subject of the next Lecture.

I conclude with addressing myself in a very few words, First, to the parents of the other sex. You may see what a heavy burden God and Nature have laid upon the weaker of the two. You are bound in justice, in humanity, in gratitude, to alleviate it. To no purpose will the mother watch and toil unless you co-operate. She has part of her reward in her very employment; her recompense will be complete if she obtain you approbation, and retain your affection. Has offence arisen, does calamity press, is the spirit ruffled, is her person changed? reflect, she is the mother of thy child; perhaps she lost her looks, her health, it may be her spirits and temper, in doing the duty of a mother. She ought to be the more estimable in your eyes.

Let me next speak for a moment to ingenuous youth. Young man, superadded to all the other motives to virtue, if you feel not the force of this you are lost indeed. There is a worthy woman in the world who loves you as her own soul, who gave you your first nourishment and instruction, who brought you into life at the risk of her own, to whom nothing that affects you can be a matter of indifference. She is jealous over you with a holy jealousy. If you tread in the ways of wisdom, how her heart will be satisfied within her! If you decline from the right path, if you become "a son of Belial," you will

rend her with severer pangs than those which she endured in bringing you into the world. And can your heart permit you to plunge a dagger into the heart of your own mother? Who does not shudder at the thought of a parricide so detestable, so monstrous? For a mother's sake, renounce that "covenant with death:" retrace thy wandering steps, resume the reins of self-government, and return to real rest and joy.

Young woman, let thine eyes be still toward the nurse, the guide, the comforter, the refuge of thy early years. Alleviate, by partaking of the burdens and labours of her station; dissipate her solicitude; soothe her pains; give her cause to bless the day that she bare thee. Trust in her as thy most prudent counsellor, as thy most assured friend, as thy most intelligent instructor. Do her good, and not evil, all the days of thy life. Rise into usefulness, into importance, into respectability, by marking her footsteps, imbibing her spirit, following her example. A daughter unkind, undutiful, ungrateful to a mother, is of all monsters the most odious and disgusting. Youthful excellence is never more amiable and attractive, than when it seeks retreat and retirement under the maternal wing, and, shrinking from the public eye, seeks its reward in a mother's smile of approbation.

LECTURE XXV.

1 *SAMUEL II.* 12—17, 23, 24.

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. And the priest's custom with the people was, that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand: and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot: all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself: so they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest: for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently; and then take as much as thy soul desireth, then he would answer him, Nay, but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress.

PERFECTION consists in the happy medium between the too little and too much. It is eminently conspicuous in every thing that comes immediately from God. "He is the rock, his work is "perfect, and all his ways are judgment." Contemplate the stupendous whole, or examine the minutest

part, and you find no redundancy, no defect. All is good, yea, very good. But man is ever in the extreme. Now under the power of an indolence which shrinks from every appearance of difficulty or danger, and now hurried on by a zeal which overleaps all the bounds of wisdom and discretion. Now he cannot be prevailed on to begin, and now nothing can persuade him to stop. He makes his very good to be evil spoken of by imprudence and excess in the manner of performing it.

In nothing is human ignorance and frailty more apparent than in the important article of education. It is conducted, at one time, with a severity that intimidates and overwhelms; at another, with a lenity that flatters, encourages, and fosters vice. One is driven into an evil course by despair, another drawn into it, and fortified in it by excessive indulgence. It is in truth no easy task to manage this matter aright. The modes of treatment are as various as the character and dispositions of the young persons who are the subjects of it. The application of a general rule is impracticable and absurd. The discipline which would oppress one child is hardly sufficient to restrain another within any bounds of decency. It is happy when the child is inured to habits of restraint and submission from the cradle. If the mother has discharged her duty tolerably, the business of the father and master is half executed. Last Lord's-day we had the satisfaction of observing the effects of an early good education, in the example of Hannah the mother of Samuel. We saw in her conduct a happy mixture of tenderness and resolu-

tion; of attention to domestic employments, and regard to the offices of religion; of moderated anxiety about the safety and comfort of her son's person, and prudent concern about the culture of his mind. We are this evening to meditate on a subject much less pleasing, but not less instructive: the ruinous effects of education neglected: youth licentious and unrestrained sinking gradually into universal depravity, and finally issuing in accumulated wretchedness and untimely death. We behold a father weak and indulgent: sons profligate and abandoned; a God holy, righteous, and just.

Observe, in the entrance, the provision which infinite wisdom has been making to supply the breach which was ready to be made in the priesthood. The measure of the iniquity of Eli's sons was nearly full, their destruction was hastening on: Samuel is already born, instructed in, prepared for, the service of the tabernacle; and the care of a pious mother has been employed in the hand of Providence to counteract the criminal negligence and carelessness of a too easy father.

The representation given us of the degeneracy and dissoluteness of the Levitical family equals, if not exceeds, all that history relates of the irregularity and impurity of idol worship. The law had made a decent, and even an ample provision for them who ministered at the altar, but it had carefully guarded against whatever tended to countenance luxury, excess. But behold every thing confounded.

directors of religious worship are become the patterns of impiety. There is no reverence of God, no regard to man. Before the fat of the sacrifice smokes upon the altar of Jehovah, the choicest pieces of the victim are served up on the abominable table of a luxurious priest. The pious worshipper has his offering marred, his spirit discomposed, the festival of his family peace disturbed and defrauded, and indecencies, too shocking to be mentioned, close the scene of riot and intemperance.

All this is easily to be traced up to early habits of indulgence: men could not have become thus wicked all at once. Had the authority of the father, had the sanctity of the high priest, had the severity of the judge, interposed to check and punish the first deviation from propriety, it had never come to this. We may judge of the gentleness with which slighter offences were reproved, when the most atrocious transgressions meet with so mild a rebuke as this, "Nay, my sons, it is no "good report that I hear." This is rather an invitation to commit iniquity, than the vengeance of a magistrate to expose and suppress it. To point out the aggravations of Eli's offence is neither malicious nor useless; it is written, among the other things in this book, for our instruction, and by the blessing of God it may prove salutary, as a beacon pointing out the rock on which others have made wreck.

Against his personal virtue no censure is insinuated. He seems to have been one of those quiet,

easy, good-natured men, who love not to have their tranquillity disturbed, and who are loth to disturb that of others; who without being vicious themselves, by a passive tameness become the undesigned abettors of the sins of other men. The corruption of the times must indeed have been very great, when it was supposed possible for the mistress of a family, during the solemnity of a sacred festival, to be disguised with wine, in the face of the sun, in the court of God's house. But the bare possibility of such a case grievously enhances his guilt. He had not done his duty as the public guardian of morals and religion, else Hannah had not been suspected of intemperance, and the suspicion reflects the highest dishonour on both his understanding and his heart; his bitterest enemy could not have devised a severer censure upon his conduct, than that under the priesthood of Eli such enormities were committed, and were connived at.

Men in power are chargeable not only with the evil which they do, but also with the evil which they might have prevented, but did not. Power is delegated to them for this very end, that they may be "a terror to evil-doers," as well as "a praise to "such as do well." The same carelessness runs through the whole of his domestic and public administration; a disorderly family, a polluted church, a distracted, staggering state; no government, or what was worse than none. The best things are the most liable to abuse: and we shall give this faulty unhappy father all the credit we can

His errors had their origin perhaps in goodness. His natural disposition was mild and gentle; his parental affection was great; he was unwilling to render any one unhappy; he thought of prevailing by love. He began with overlooking trifling faults; he flattered himself that the reason and reflection of riper years would correct and cure the wildness and irregularity of boyish days; "Surely the young "men will by and by see their folly and grow "wiser." Who would not rather attempt to rule by love? But what is the proper conduct and expression of love? What saith the wisest of mankind? "He that spareth the rod *hateth* the child." What saith the great Father and Saviour of all men? "As many as I *love* I rebuke and chasten." There is no such thing as happiness but in habits of order, decency, and subjection. The man, or the child, who knows no law but that of appetite or caprice, must of necessity be miserable. It is cruelty, not kindness, to give a man up to himself: and to dream of changing habits of indolence, dissipation, and criminal indulgence by remonstrance and reason, is expecting that reason should survive itself, or that it should effect, when enfeebled, disordered, and corrupted, what it could not do when clear, and sound, and vigorous. But, "the grace of God is "almighty, and his mercies are very great." Nay, but who art thou, O man, who darest to expect or to ask a miracle of grace, with the consciousness of having neglected the means which, timely employed, might, through the Divine blessing, have proved

effectual without a miraculous interposition? The one talent is justly taken away from him who hid it in the earth, and it is given to increase the store of the diligent and faithful servant who, by wisdom and industry, had increased his five talents into ten.

The human mind put under early culture may be made to produce any thing. It possesses a happy pliancy which may be moulded into any form. But the same plant which, when young and tender, you could with a touch bend into what shape you pleased, when grown into a tree resists every effort of your strength. Cut it down you may, break it you may, cleave it asunder you may, but bend it you cannot. And, alas, how great a portion of human life is spent in useless, unavailing regret for opportunities lost, seasons mispent, mischief done, misery incurred! Yet men will not profit even by experience, that plainest, most faithful, and most powerful of all instructors. Who can view, without pitying him, that wretched old man deploring the guilt which he himself had occasioned, which he wants resolution to punish, and wisdom to cure; which is proceeding from evil to worse, filling the past with remorse, and overspreading the future with despair? Ah, how heavily he suffers in his age, because those profligate sons bore not the wholesome yoke of discipline and restraint in their youth! Who can conceive the anguish of Jacob's soul, as he was sinking into the grave under the loss of a gracious son by the stroke of Providence? But what is it compared to the more dreadful anguish of Eli, look-

ing forward in horror to the utter extinction of all his family, with the insupportable reflection that all, all was chargeable upon himself?

The character and behaviour of the unhappy young men is a melancholy and affecting representation of the progress of moral corruption. It begins in their making light of the ordinances of religion, which they were bound by their office to venerate themselves, and to recommend by their example to others. And you may be assured there is something essentially wrong about that man who expresses either real or affected contempt for the worship of God. It is a gross violation of the laws of decency and good breeding. For what title can you have to insult that sober-minded person, who has given you no provocation, by deriding or profaning what he holds sacred? It is a direct defiance to the laws of your country, which have adopted the institutions of religion, to assist at least in carrying on and supporting good government, which is so essential to public happiness. He that despises, therefore, the ordinances of God, is a friend to anarchy, is making a wicked attempt to dissolve the bands of society, and deserves to be treated as a public enemy. It is at the same time an argument of a light and silly mind, aiming to supply the want of consequence, by affected boldness, impiety, and singularity; and which, like every other species of affectation, generally misses its aim.

In the example before us, we find irreverence toward God speedily degenerating into violence and

injustice to men. And indeed what hold has society of that man who has shaken off the first and strongest obligations of his nature, who has professedly degraded himself, and is become less than a man, in making the silly attempt to be thought something more. He who begins with defrauding God of his due will not long be scrupulous about invading the rights of his fellow-creature. The same spirit which defers the sacrifice till an unruly appetite be first gratified, will by and by proceed to "take by force" the portion of another; and will lose all sense of the just claims and real wants of mankind in pride and selfishness.

The third stage of this humiliating progress discovers to us men wholly brutified, plunged into the lowest, grossest sensuality; sinking deeper and deeper in the mire, till nothing remains but the image of the most odious and abominable of animals. —Young man, look at the picture, consider it well. If you are so happy as to have preserved your virtue, if you have any savour of piety, you must regard it with a mixture of indignation and pity; if you are not lost to the feelings of humanity, it will fill you with loathing and disgust. The sequel will teach us many important lessons. For my own part, ever since I became a father, I have never been able to read this history without trembling; and my anxiety has not been diminished by reflecting that the children whom God has given me, neither in their bodies, their minds, nor their dispositions, are among the lowest of their species. I have an awful

conviction that if any of them should unhappily turn out ill, a great part of the blame will be imputable to myself. I am frequently tempted to rejoice that none of my grown children have made choice of my own profession, the most dangerous, the most responsible of all; and I am much more alarmed at the apprehension, that when they are become men and women, they may accuse me of over-indulgence than I am now of being thought harsh and unkind by children.

As the greatest and most respectable part of my audience are parents, I must of necessity apply the great and important subject of my discourse particularly to them. And, as I always flatter myself with the greater hope of success with female parents, I take the liberty of addressing myself first to mothers. Providence, my friends, as I have frequently repeated, has laid the earliest, the heaviest, and the most important part of education upon you; but it has also alleviated and sweetened the task by many peculiar affections and endearments.—Let me suppose you have done your duty, and carefully reared up infancy and childhood. The charge must then pass into other hands. But surely both your heart and conscience tell you that you have not yet done with them. Female children in particular are an anxious and a lasting burthen upon the mother. They love you, they look up to you, they *imitate* you. You must *be* therefore what you wish them to become.

Will a daughter learn to be industrious from an idle, indolent mother? Will she learn to be sober-minded by seeing you habitually carried away by

the pride of life? Will she catch the spirit of piety from one whose very sabbaths are devoted to dissipation and pleasure? I will not insult you by supposing that a positively bad example has been set, or that your darling charge may have grossly deviated from the paths of virtue; but let me suppose for a moment a case that may and does happen every day; that your daughter has grown up with a vain, light, worldly mind; that she has acquired a taste for dress and amusement; has become a perfect mistress of the usual accomplishments of the day and place in which we live; has become an object of attention and admiration. Let me suppose her attacked with disease, and that disease perhaps the effect of levity and dissipation. See, the roses are fading upon her cheek, her "beauty is wasting like a "moth;" all her vivacity is reduced to the sudden glow of the hectic, which is gone before it is well come; she feels the witness of death at her heart, she looks up to you with clouded, wistful eyes, and says, "Ah, my mother, you were too indulgent "to me. You assisted the tongue of the flatterer, "and taught me to forget myself. I was made to "believe myself an angel, and now feel that I am "a worm. Seeking to shine in the eyes of man, I "have neglected the means of finding favour in the "sight of God. I now wish I had frequented the "house of prayer more; I wish I had not frequented the company of the giddy, the thoughtless, "and the profane. I do not accuse my dear mother "of designedly misleading me; but would to God

" she had better understood her own duty and my " real interest. Life had been more respectable, " and death less frightful than I find it to be. O " my God, have mercy, have mercy upon me."

It had been easy to have added to the strength of this address; but even from this the maternal heart recoils, and deprecates with horror an hour so dreadful. Well, blessed be God, it is yet a great way off; and what is more, it is in your power to prevent it; I do not mean the stroke of death, but the arrow of death dipped in the poison of remorse. God grant that none here may ever feel it.

The criminality of Eli consisted, my brethren, in the neglect of his duty; and you have seen how fatal that neglect was to himself and to his family. Dare I suppose there is a father here who has been more than passive in the corruption of his own child; who has been the promoter and the pattern of wickedness; who has with his own hand scattered the seeds of death in that precious soil, and trained up an immortal being to destruction? Pause, and consider. Art thou prepared to meet the stings of an awakened conscience, accusing thee of murder, of foul murder, the murder of thy own son, whom thou lovedst? Art thou fortified against the cutting reproaches of that child, laying his eternal ruin to thy charge? Hast thou prepared thy defence against that awful day when a righteous God shall demand an account of the sacred trust committed to thee? If to contemplate his punishment at a distance be woe unutterable, what were it to be at once the

cause and the partaker of it? The terrified imagination flees from this hell of hells, and seeks refuge in prayer to a merciful God that he would graciously save thee from it.

Let young ones be persuaded to be patient of restraint, of correction, and of reproof. You are not grieved willingly, you are not afflicted unnecessarily, you are not chastised out of caprice. "My son, "hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake "not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an "ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains "about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, "consent thou not." Prov. i. 8—10. "A wise son "maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the "heaviness of his mother." Prov. x. 1. Venerate the name, the day, the house, the worship of God. Remember that want of decency is want of sense: that the immoderate indulgence of appetite is inimical to all true enjoyment: that what is renounced, from respect to reason and conscience, is enjoyed: that present comfort and future happiness are built on habits of order, self-government, justice, benevolence, and subjection to divine authority.

I make no apology for giving this discourse from the press, under a title that bears the name of *Hannah:* the contrast which it presents being her highest encomium, next to the account given of Samuel, in the following Lecture, which of course closes her history, and fulfils our design.

moment, O man, thy child begins to breathe, a progress commences which nothing can stop. Grow he will and must; cease from all solicitude on this score. These feeble limbs will gather strength; by stumbling and falling he will learn to walk and run; after stammering for a while he will come to speak plainly, and he who seems at present hardly to possess the faculty of sight, will soon distinguish object from object. Cease from the vain imagination of assisting or of improving Nature. Assist Nature! If you try to mend that shape, trust me, you will spoil it. Every violent attempt to quicken growth will but retard it, and an over-solicitude to preserve health will infallibly scatter the seeds of distemper. Toward the improvement of the bodily faculties, the most anxious and intelligent parent can do just nothing at all; "by taking thought he "cannot add one cubit to the stature;" it is by cultivating the mind only, that the features, shape, and person can be improved.

The reverse of this is the practice of the world. The whole attention is directed to personal accomplishment. Nature is cramped, stretched, distorted, to humour an absurd taste and an erroneous judgment, and she avenges herself for the unwise encroachment on her province, by encroaching, in her turn, on the province of reason and discretion; thus rendering all their late efforts useless and unprofitable; thus making education, which is clogged with so many difficulties already absolutely impracticable. What can the wisest master do, I

beseech you, with a temper soured by habits of unnatural restraint, with a mind rendered sickly by petty attentions to punctilio, with a spirit swallowed up in a sense of its own importance? And yet the master is blamed for the fault which parents themselves have committed. Guard your child as well as you can from accidents. See that his food be simple and wholesome, and be administered in due season; let his body be free and unfettered; his clothing light and easy; his exercises, both as to kind and duration, of his own choosing; and he will grow on and increase in stature, he will acquire vigour, will preserve sweetness of temper, will be happy in himself, and a source of happiness to all around him; he will pass with cheerfulness, like Samuel, into the hands of his instructor, without any prejudices, but such as are on the side of goodness, and through the blessing of Heaven he will day by day fulfil a parent's hope, and constitute a parent's joy.

There is a fruitless, perhaps a sinful, anxiety of another kind, which parents sometimes express, and which often becomes a source of distress to themselves, and of partiality and injustice to their children. I mean the sex of their offspring. The expectation of pride, avarice, ignorance, or caprice, presumes to usurp the prerogative of Omniscience, and in the event of disappointment, cruelty and injustice to an innocent babe are superadded to impiety toward a wise and righteous God. It is

dangerous as well as criminal to assume the incommunicable attributes of Deity. The man is equally unhappy in attaining or missing his object, if he pursue it neglecting, defying, or accusing the interposition of Providence. There is an instance of goodness in the divine administration, which is too generally overlooked, and too little prized and acknowledged, namely, the perfect and exact conformation of children, both in body and mind. Among the myriads which are daily born into the world, how rare are the exceptions from the general rule! Every one bears the marks of sovereign wisdom, is the production of Omnipotence, has the image of God impressed upon him. How few exceed or fall short of that just standard in respect of stature! How few are born deprived of the use of reason, how few deficient or redundant in their bodily organs! And may not even those few deviations from the general rule, those acts of divine sovereignty in the government of the world, serve, in a future economy, more gloriously to illustrate the perfections of Him who has formed all things to the honour of his own great name?

Is thy child, O man, born complete in all his members, is he endued with the ordinary intellectual powers, is he like the children of thy neighbour? How much art thou indebted to the goodness of Heaven? Are his faculties, corporeal or mental, as parental partiality is frequently disposed to believe, superior to those of others? Remember, it is a great addition to thy charge; see that thou mar

not the work of God, disfigure not that fair fabric, pervert not talents peculiarly precious and rare, let not thy glory be turned into shame. Has Providence, O woman, wounded thee where thy sensibility is greatest, in the fruit of thy womb? Be of good comfort, He in whom thou trustest, on whom thou hast believed, saith, "Behold I make all "things new." Then "the eye of the blind shall "be opened, and the ear of the deaf unstopped, "then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the "tongue of the dumb sing." "The vile body shall "be changed and fashioned like to Christ's glorious "body." Then the soul which scarcely awoke to reason shall discern judgment, and the wandering spirit shall be brought back to composure and tranquillity. Young man, young woman, hast thou received from the bountiful hand of Nature a sound mind in a sound and well-proportioned body? defile not, destroy not that fair temple; let it be "an "habitation of God through the Spirit;" let the image of the divine inhabitant shine serenely on that forehead, beam benevolence from that eye, distil in accents of kindness from those lips. Force not upon the eye of the beholder the humiliating contrast between a lovely form and a hateful disposition; be all of a piece.

Observe, secondly, the work of education, the influence of virtuous habits and example. Samuel not only grew *on*, but grew *gracious*, he grew in favour. There is naturally a prejudice, in the first

instance, in favour of youth and beauty, independent of other qualities; but that prejudice quickly dies away where personal comeliness is unsupported by corresponding goodness. But if it be found disfigured by vice, not only is the favourable impression effaced, but exchanged for a counter impression of detestation and contempt. As, on the contrary, the prejudice against ordinary looks is also momentary, when we find them allied to sense and talents, to piety and modesty; and our esteem and veneration of the character are highly increased from our expecting less.

Poor indeed is that virtue which lives only in the estimation of the world, which aims only at the approbation and praise of men; but on the other hand, true virtue will always be concerned to preserve reputation, will ever prefer a good name to great riches, and unaffectedly rejoice in the esteem of the wise and good as a part of its reward. What a motive was it to a youth like Samuel to persevere in well-doing, to grow in grace, to have his decency of behaviour, his filial affection, his docility, and submission to Eli, his unassuming piety, his growing wisdom, his expanding faculties, observed and commended by all who came to attend the service of the tabernacle? This is not pride, it is the honest consciousness of a worthy mind, loving and seeking what is good, not for the sake of fame, but for its own; yet rejoicing in fame as one of the fruits of goodness. That boy, that youth, that man, that woman is lost, who is, or who professes to be, indif-

ferent about the opinion of the world. The love of reputation is one of the trees of Nature's planting, and none of her plants are easily rooted up; it often survives the hope of life itself, and the man discovers an earnest concern about his memory, after he has resigned his head to the executioner, and his body to the grave.

I recommend not to you, my young friend, that servility of deportment, that fawningness of submission and compliance, which aims at the applause of every one alike, which is continually fearful of giving offence, which shrinks from doing good lest by some it might be misconstrued; but that steadiness and perseverance in rectitude which looks and goes straight on, which neither courts nor shuns the public eye, which can rejoice in the addition of the praise of men to the testimony of a good conscience, but trembles to think of purchasing the one with the loss of the other. It generally happens in this case as it did to Solomon in another. Young men who pursue virtue on its own account, and who ask wisdom of God in the first place, certainly obtain what they seek and pray for, and they also obtain what they neither asked nor sought, the love of their fellow creatures: the favour of man comes unsolicited to him, while he was pursuing a much higher object, peace with God, and peace with himself; while he who aimed at the inferior object alone misses even that little, and thus becomes poor indeed. The foundation of Samuel's future eminence and usefulness was thus laid in the early and tender

care of a wise and pious mother. The youth had never been respected in the temple, had never been the object of general favour abroad, had the child learned to be froward, petulant, or peevish in his father's house. O woman, would you have the world to think of your darling son as you do, put yourself betimes in the place of an unconcerned spectator, view him as an entire stranger would do, and let discretion regulate the overflowings of your heart. Ah, had Hannah favoured her child more, Israel had favoured him less! How ample and how sweet, even in this world, are the rewards of self-government, of self-denial, of moderation! Men literally, in many instances, enjoy what they reject, and lose what they gain. He who lendeth to the Lord lays out his property on the best security and to the greatest advantage. Samuel is infinitely more his mother's at Shiloh than at Ramah; his worth is multiplied in proportion as it is communicated, and it enriches the public fund without impoverishing the private stock. The eyes of a whole people are already to him, the expectation of man keeps pace with the destination of Providence; and the child ministering in a linen ephod becomes more gracious, from comparison with the polluted ministration of ungracious and ungodly men.

Observe, thirdly, Youth's highest praise, the most glorious reward of goodness, the happiest effect of good education, Samuel was "in favour with "God." To obtain this most honourable distinction much more was requisite than a regular and modest

deportment, much more than promising talents and childish innocence, and the other qualities which attract and captivate the eyes of men. The love of God has been betimes shed abroad in that heart. Hannah has been mindful of her vow, and has taught her son to remember his Creator in the days of his youth; and how grateful is early piety to him who saith, "My son, give me thine heart!" Lo, God has impressed his own image on that tender mind, and sees, and loves, and approves his own work. The great Jehovah has designed this wonderful child for high things from the very womb, has raised him up to be "the rising again of "many in Israel," to purify a polluted church, to save a sinking state, and is fitting him from the cradle for his high destination.

The eye of the Lord observes with delight the progress of this plant of renown. He is hastening his own work in righteousness. He is ready to perfect by heavenly visions the instructions of a pious mother. He is preparing to crown the gracious with more grace. The favour of man is frequently the child of ignorance or caprice. They love and hate they know not why. Sometimes they hate where they ought to love, and love where they ought to hate; but the favour of God is ever founded in knowledge, it is undirected by partial affection or personal regards; it is the result of reason, and the applause which perfect wisdom bestows on distinguished excellence. Samuel must have merited praise, else this praise had not been conferred on

him. And singular must that merit have been which could unite judgments so different, interests which so frequently clash. He who makes it his study to please man can hardly be the servant of God; and to aim at pleasing God is not always the road to the favour of men. Nothing but genuine, unaffected goodness could have procured this joint approbation of God and man; and there is a charm in true goodness which is irresistible. It may be overlooked for a season, it may be borne down, it may be obscured, it may be misrepresented, it may be hated and opposed; but it will prevail at length, will force itself into notice, will arise and shine, will command respect, will silence envy, will triumph over opposition; it will rejoice the wise and good, and keep the wicked in awe.

What mode of address shall I employ to engage, for a moment, the attentions of young ones; and to impress upon their hearts the importance of my subject? Would to God I could again become a little child that, with the lessons of experience, I might regulate my own future conduct, and be an useful monitor to the simple and inexperienced. I would in that case say, My little friend, God and Nature have made you lovely. The candour and frankness and benevolence of your heart shine upon your countenance. Every day discloses some new grace. You are increasing in stature; you are growing in favour with all who behold you. Every one thinks well, speaks well, hopes well of you. Grow on. Preserve that amiable simplicity. Let it be

charm of advancing years, of expanding faculties. Let that blooming face be still raised to Heaven with modest confidence; and let those gracious eyes still beam good-will to men. May I never see that open forehead clouded and contracted. What, shall the horrid traces of vice ever disfigure that form? Shall every one that passeth by be constrained to turn away with loathing and aversion? Shall the mother who bare thee have her face covered with a blush when thou art named? Must she be made to mourn the day which was once her joy? Angels will behold your progress with delight; they will rejoice in ministering unto you; they are ready to receive you into their number when your course is finished. God himself regards you with smiles of complacency; He is ever ready to assist, to counsel, to protect, to receive you. Let there be joy in heaven concerning you. Now, now is the season for laying the foundation of useful life, of respectable age, of comfortable death.

But what do I see? That youthful face already degraded by vice! So young, and so horrid! Unhappy youth, the depravity of thy heart is painted on thy forehead. The sight of thy countenance filleth thee with horror. Shame and remorse are preying on the marrow in thy bones. In the hours of solitude and retirement, stretched on thy bed to which sleep is a stranger, thou art constrained to reflect on the wretchedness of thy condition; thou feelest thyself unworthy of the praises bestowed upon thee by the partiality of those who know thee

not; thou blushest in secret, and art filled with indignation against thyself, on calling to remembrance the innocence and simplicity of happier days. Thou givest up thyself as lost. No, young man, do not abandon thyself to despair; add not this to thy other offences; there is help for thee, let it reanimate thy courage. Though "cast down," thou art "not destroyed." However debased that face, it is in thy power to amend, to ennoble it. Thou wert not destined always to remain an innocent child, nor couldest thou: by stumbling and falling thou wert to be instructed how to walk and to run. Wert thou wounded and bruised; wert thou plunged into the abyss, there is an arm nigh thee, which is able to raise thee up, to strengthen and to heal thee. Multitudes like thyself have been recovered, restored, established. "As a father pitieth "his children, so the Lord" will have mercy upon thee, and forgive and receive thee. The impure, the profane, the blasphemer, the chief of sinners, have repented, have returned, have found favour; and there is hope also concerning thee. Only, for the Lord's sake, and for thy soul's sake, proceed no farther, persevere no longer in an evil course. One step forward may be fatal; to-morrow may find thee in the place where there is no hope. "Behold *now* "is the accepted time, behold *now* is the day of "salvation." "Seek the Lord while he may be "found, call upon him while he is near." "The "wind is boisterous," the sea rages, thou art "beginning to sink"—thou art ready to perish; but

shalt not whilst thou art able to exclaim, "Lord, "save me:" for behold "a very present help in "trouble;" even that helping hand which snatched Peter from the roaring gulf:—"And immediately "Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, "and said unto him, O thou of little faith, where-"fore didst thou doubt?" Matt. xiv. 31.

I conclude with calling upon parents, and guardians, and instructors of youth, seriously to consider the importance of the trust committed unto them; and to discharge it under a sense of responsibility to God, to their pupils, to their country. The history under review presses one point upon you as of singular moment, and which is closely connected with every article of education and consequent improvement; I mean the study of the happy but difficult medium between excessive indulgence and oppressive severity. The steady firmness of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, furnishes an useful example. If ever there was a child in danger of being corrupted by indulgence, it was he. But no symptom of it appears. He is treated as a mere ordinary lad, and from his earliest years to old age evinces, by his conduct, the excellence of the precepts and the steadiness of the discipline which formed his character, and which laid the foundation of his eminence. He leaves home and parts with his parents, while yet a child, with manly fortitude. Already under habits of submission to parental authority, he cheerfully transfers that submission to a stranger, to Eli.

Untainted by imaginary terrors, the darkness of the night, the solemnity of the house of the Lord, silence and solitude, and sleep disturbed by extraordinary and unseasonable voices, excite in him no silly apprehension, draw from him no childish complaint, deter him from the performance of no duty. In all this we cannot but recognize the wisdom, the constancy, the fortitude of his excellent mother. Had she been foolishly fond, he had been peevish and petulant, timid and discontented. Take a lesson from her, ye mothers of young children. If you would have these children happy, they must betimes be inured to subjection, to privation, to restraint. To multiply their desires by unbounded gratification, is the sure way to multiply their future pains and mortifications. Reduce their wants and wishes to the standard of Nature, and you will proportionably enlarge their sphere of enjoyment. Let them contract no fear but that of offending God and of committing sin. Let them learn to consider all places, all seasons, all situations as equal, when duty calls. Impress on their opening minds the two great precepts on which "hang all the law and the prophets," to love the Lord their God, and their fellow-creatures. Lead their infant steps to the Friend of little children, to the Saviour of mankind; to the knowledge, the belief, the love, the hope, the consolations of the Gospel, and thereby preserve them "from paths wherein de-"stroyers go."

The profligate character and untimely end of

Eli's sons, on the other hand, afford a solemn admonition of the inevitably ruinous effects of unbounded indulgence to the passions and caprices of youth. Had they been early habituated to the wholesome restraints of piety, decency, and justice, they could not have become thus criminal, nor would have perished thus miserably. In the excesses which they committed we clearly see the relaxed government, the careless inspection, the unbounded licentiousness of their father's house. Neglect, in this case, occasioned the mischief. And the neglected field will soon be over-run with noxious weeds, though you sow designedly no poison in it. Fathers, see to it that your instructions be sound, that your deportment be regular, that your discipline be exact. Account nothing unimportant that affects the moral and religious character of your son. Precept will go so far, example will go farther, but authority must support and enforce both one and the other. You cannot indeed communicate the Spirit of grace, but you can certainly form youth to habits of decency and order: and habitual decency is nearly allied to virtue, and may imperceptibly improve into it. Do your part, and then you may with confidence "cast "all your care" on God.

May it not be necessary to throw in a short word of caution against the opposite extreme, that of excessive severity to offending youth? This indeed is not so common as corruptive indulgence; but this too exists. How many promising young men have

been forced into a continuance in an evil course, have been driven to desperation, have become "hard-"ened through the deceitfulness of sin," because the first deviation could find no mercy, because a father armed himself with inflexible, unrelenting sternness for a slighter offence? Alas, how many amiable, excellent, promising young women have been lost to God, to their families, to society; have been dragged into the jaws of prostitution, infamy, and disease, and died a premature death, because a father's door was shut, and a mother's heart hardened against the penitent; because her native refuge was no refuge to the miserable? She returned to her own, but her own received her not. Instances, however, might be produced of wiser conduct, and of happier consequences; of mercy extended and the wanderer reclaimed; of human parents working together with "the Father of mercies," and succeeding in rekindling the sacred flame of virtue, in restoring peace to the troubled breast, in recovering the fallen to reputation, to piety, to comfort, to usefulness. So long as God "waiteth to be gracious," surely it well becomes man to "put on bowels of mercies, kind-"ness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, for-"giveness, and charity, which is the bond of per-"fectness."

Thus have I finished what I proposed, in attempting to delineate the female character by instances taken from the Sacred Record. In these, and in the case of every virtuous woman, we see the great

Creator's design fully justified, in making for man "an help meet for him." That which is necessary cannot be despised; that which is useful ought to be valued; that which is excellent commands respect; that which is improveable calls for cultivation. Bad men only revile and undervalue the other sex: the weak and ignorant idolize and worship it. The man of sense and virtue considers woman as his equal, his companion, his friend, and treats her accordingly; for friendship excludes equally invective and flattery. In the education and treatment of females, too much attention has perhaps been paid to sex. Why should they be for ever reminded that they are females, while it is of so much more importance to impress upon their minds that they are *reasonable beings*, endowed with human faculties, faculties capable of perversion or of improvement, and that they are accountable to God for them? Wherefore obstruct to them one path to useful knowledge, one source of rational improvement or of harmless enjoyment? If they are despised they will become despicable. Treated either as slaves or as angels, they cease to be companions. Prize them, and they will become estimable; call forth their intellectual powers, and the empire of science will be extended and improved.

And let them learn wherein their real value, importance, and respectability consist. Not in receiving homage, but in meriting approbation; not in shining, but in useful employment; not in public

eminence, but in domestic dignity: in acquiring and maintaining influence, not by pretension, vehemence, or trick, which are easily seen through, and always fail, but by good temper, by perseverance in well-doing, and by the practice of unfeigned piety.

END OF VOL. IV.

C. Baldwin, Printer,
New Bridge-street, London.

Sacred Biography;

OR THE

HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS:

BEING

A COURSE OF LECTURES,

DELIVERED AT

THE SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY

HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

VOLUME V.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.
John viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. *Revelation* i. 8.

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him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

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Luke iv. 13—32.—And when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the syna-

gogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

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Luke iv. 20—32.—And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great

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Matt. iv. 12—22.—Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you

fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

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Luke x. 17—22.—And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

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riage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him.

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Luke iv. 38—44.—And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her. And immediately she arose, and ministered unto them. Now, when the sun

was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him: and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day he departed, and went into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

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John ii. 13—17.—And the Jews' passover was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting; and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables: and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

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John ii. 18—25.—Then answered the Jews, and

said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men: and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

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1 Cor. xv. 35—44.—But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body; and there is a spiritual body.

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John iv. 46—54.—So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole

house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

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Matt. viii. 5—12, and Luke vii. 1—10.—And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.—Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he

sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

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John vi. 1—14.—After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy

bread, that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

JOHN I. 1—14.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

THE idea of a beginning involves that of antecedent existence, from which that beginning originated. The beginning of a man's life implies

parentage; the being of a tower, of a city, necessarily supposes a pre-existent head to plan and a hand to execute. The vast frame of nature must have had its commencement from a preceding skill to contrive and a power to perform. The Mosaic account of the Creation is the only one that sound reason can admit. If GOD created the heavens and the earth, GOD was before the heavens and the earth. Moses the historian and John the evangelist carry us back to one and the same era, carry us up to one and the same all-wise, all-powerful Being. Nature and grace issue from the same source, and tend toward the same grand consummation. The prophet and the apostle employ the self-same terms to describe the same objects. "He "that built all things is God."

It has been remarked that the four Evangelists introduce their great subject in a retrogade series of representation. Matthew's Gospel opens with a display of the Saviour's humanity, and presents us with his descent as a man. Mark conveys us back to the age of prophecy, and "the beginning "of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God" is traced up to the predictions of Malachi and Isaiah. Luke the beloved physician refers us to the Levitical priesthood, to the altar of incense, and the services of an earthly sanctuary, "a shadow of "good things to come." But John soars above all height; he recurs to the birth of nature, and ascribes that birth to a pre-existent omnific WORD, which in "the fulness of time was made flesh, and

" dwelt among us." We have beheld his glory displayed in the ages before the flood, in the persons and predictions of patriarchs and prophets, by whom " God at sundry times and in divers " manners spake unto the fathers." But Moses and Elias have disappeared; the " voice crying in " the wilderness" is heard no more; it is lost in a " voice from heaven" saying, " This is my beloved " Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."

We are now therefore to contemplate " him, to " whom all the prophets gave witness," in his own person, doctrine, and mighty works; and, as the order of things prescribes, our contemplation must commence in what he was in the beginning, prior to the lapse of time, for " he is before all things, " and by him all things consist." John, " the dis- " ciple whom Jesus loved," long survived the rest of his fellow-disciples. He knew what some of them had written. He lived to see the progress of the truth as it is in Christ. He saw the divine origin of Christianity demonstrated by its success, and he became a joyful martyr to the truth which he published to the world. A " brother and com- " panion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and " patience of Jesus Christ," in common with other saints, he retired into exile in " the isle that is " called Patmos," a cheerful victim to " the word " of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." In that sacred retirement, more to be prized than all the blessings of society, he is visited with the vi-

sions of the Almighty, and becomes the highly honoured minister of unfolding the character, offices, and work of his divine and beloved Master, from the days of eternity to the final consummation, when He who sitteth upon the throne shall say, "Behold, I make all things new." The Gospel according to St. John and the Revelation of St. John may therefore be considered as together forming an abstract of the plan of Providence from the first dawning of light upon the world of nature to the perfect day of "the restitution of all things." And one and the same Agent is represented as the animating principle which is before all, and through all, and in all.

In the beginning. The mind, with all its powers, loses itself in surveying the works and the ways of God. I have a dark indistinct recollection of my first emersion into thought. I can remember some of the impressions made, of the sorrows and joys felt, when I was a little child. Soon after I began to exist, I began to perceive that I did exist, but for the knowledge of all that preceded I stand indebted to a father's intelligence, to a mother's tenderness. They were to me the beginning of days and the oracles of truth. Their own pittance of illumination flowed in the same channel. But there must have been a point when thought began. There must have been an intelligence which could communicate the power of comprehension; there must have been a spirit which could breathe into man's nostrils the breath of life; there must have

been one without a beginning to make a beginning. And who He was the Evangelist unfolds.

In the beginning *was the* WORD. Let us not contend about the import of a Greek term. If our evangelist has not an intention to mislead, but one idea can be affixed to that term. He is evidently describing God the creator, in the view of leading us to know and to acknowledge the Redeemer of mankind as one and the same with him. "Who "was made flesh and dwelt among us?" Who "came to his own and his own received him not?" Who "was despised and rejected of men?" The WORD that was in the beginning, and who has revealed himself by a display of so many glorious attributes. "Without controversy, great is the "mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the "flesh." Is this proposition to be rejected because it is mysterious? For the same reason the system of nature, in whole, and in all its parts, is to be rejected. All is mystery; and all is revelation and discovery, from the insect too small for sight swimming in a drop of water, up to yonder flaming orb which revolves at an immeasurable distance over our heads. Is not man a great mystery to himself? But is he to renounce his being because he is unable to explain it? Is he to call the union of matter with mind an absurdity because their mutual influence escapes his penetration? How many combinations actually exist of which we have no perception, and which we would pronounce to be impossible! In all the ways and works of the

Most High there is a wonderful mixture of luminousness and obscurity, of minuteness and magnitude, of complexness and simplicity. And Scripture exhibits the connexion of extremes similar to that which is apparent in the world of nature and in the ways of Providence. This is a presumption at least, if not a proof, that they have all one original; and who can that original be but the divine person emphatically called THE WORD, which existed in the plenitude of power, wisdom, and goodness "before the world was," but of whose pre-existent state very general ideas only are communicated. Indeed none other can be communicated, for when the mind launches into infinity it is overwhelmed and lost. If the wisdom which cries, and the understanding which puts forth her voice in the writings of Solomon, be the same with the WORD which was in the beginning, as a comparison of the two passages will render highly probable, we shall have a sublime and interesting idea of this pre-existent state. The evangelist says,

The WORD *was with* GOD, as the deliberative, active, determining principle of the Eternal Mind. The wise man expands the thought, and represents the plans of eternal Wisdom as digesting; the framing, arranging, supporting, governing, redeeming of a world as in contemplation. As if admitted into the counsels of peace, he thus unfolds the purpose of him who worketh all things after his own will, that all should be to the praise of his glory: "The Lord possessed me in the be-

"ginning of his way, before his works of old. I "was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, "or ever the earth was. When there were no "depths I was brought forth; when there were "no fountains abounding with water. Before the "mountains were settled; before the hills was I "brought forth: while as yet he had not made the "earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the "dust of the world. When he prepared the "heavens I was there; when he set a compass upon "the face of the depth; when he established the "clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains "of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, "that the waters should not pass his command-"ment; when he appointed the foundations of the "earth; then I was by him, as one brought up "with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing "always before him: rejoicing in the habitable part "of his earth; and my delights were with the "sons of men." Thus was the Word *with* God from eternity taking pleasure in the prospect of the fabric which He was about to rear; of the creature whom he was going to frame, and whose nature he was in due time to assume; that he might make the children of men "partakers of the divine "nature," an union as mysterious and incomprehensible as that of soul and body, as that of the persons in the Deity, and as evidently matter of truth and revelation as these are.

And the *Word was* God. Here "the disciple "whom Jesus loved" recognizes in his Master, on

whose bosom he leaned at supper, "all the fulness "of the godhead dwelling bodily." Lest the expression *the Word was* WITH *God* might be supposed to imply separation, difference, as a man who sojourns *with* his friend is nevertheless a different being from that friend, the evangelist speaks out fairly, fully, unequivocally, the truth which he himself believed, and which he was divinely inspired to deliver to mankind, that they also might believe. If St. John be not in these words delivering the doctrine of the real and proper Deity of Jesus Christ, he is either himself labouring under a delusion, or he intentionally means to deceive, or there is no meaning in language, and consequently no distinct and safe channel of communication between man and man.

The same was in the beginning with God. John speaks as a prophet as well as an evangelist. Foreseeing that "false teachers" should arise "even "denying the Lord that bought them," he employs a clearness, a copiousness, a force of expression on this momentous point, not to be misunderstood, not to be slighted, not to be explained away. When a master charges his servant with a message of peculiar importance, he repeats it again and again, he puts it into every different form, in order to avoid ambiguity and to prevent mistake. This is evidently the case here. It must not be made a question, "Of whom speaketh" the evangelist thus? "of "himself, or of some other man?" The identity of the person is ascertained beyond the reach of doubt.

He is *the same* before time began its race; *the same* who set time a flowing; *the same* through every period of duration; *the same* under every character and in every condition.

Where is the proof that the Word was God? *All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* Behold the execution of the eternal plan. The design is copied to an iota. It is the incommunicable prerogative of Deity to create. He who creates cannot be himself a creature. By *the* WORD were all things made, the WORD therefore could not have been made. What God did by the Word of his power he did by himself; and "through faith we understand "that the worlds were framed by the Word of "God." Mark the universality of this creative energy; *All things* were made by Him. The apostle makes a splendid enumeration of those *all things*, in his epistle to the Colossians, i. 16. "For "by him were all things created that are in heaven, "and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whe- "ther they be thrones, or dominions, or principa- "lities, or powers; all things were created by him "and for him." Wherever therefore there is created existence, there is omnipotent, omnipresent creating and sustaining virtue, and there can be but One Omnipotent, Omnipresent. "Angels" are said to "excel in strength," but that strength is imparted, and it is exerted or restrained by a will not their own; they "do His commandments, "hearkening unto the voice of his word." Man is

capable of doing great things but his power is limited to the modification of materials provided to his hand. Christians are indeed said to be "labourers together "with God," and "workers together with him;" it is the highest glory of human nature: but this labouring and working is not in aid to feebleness, it goes not to the production of what had no previous being; it simply implies the adoption of the same views with God, and the imitation of his works of goodness and mercy. The united powers of angels and men are unequal to the formation of a single atom, for, to the ascription of the creation of universal nature to the Word, John subjoins his exclusive title to the character of Creator; it is a glory which he will not give to any other; "without him was not any thing made that was made." "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and "it stood fast." "God said, Let there be light, "and there was light." And who but God could thus speak, thus produce?

In Him was life. In the vegetable world life is a state of expansion, a progress of fructification, a power of reproduction, but all issuing in the decay and dissolution of the parent germ. A grain of wheat in order to vitality must itself consume. "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except "it die." It has not therefore life in itself. It was the divine mandate which first generated, and which still supports the wonderful process. "God "said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb "yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit,

" whose seed was in itself, upon the earth, after his " kind: and it was so: and God saw that it was " good." From the same fountain of life proceeded animal nature: " All sheep and oxen, yea, and the " beasts of the field: the fowl of the air, and the " fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through " the paths of the seas." A higher species of life issues from the self same source. " The Lord God " formed man of the dust of the ground, and " breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and " man became a living soul." In all these gradations we behold a vital principle, but that principle derived, standing in need of continual supplies, and hastening to extinction. Here we are presented with life underived, needing no external support, inextinguishable. " In Him" supereminently " was " life;" a life of which man is in a peculiar sense partaker: *and the life was the light of men.*

" The light of the body is the eye;" and a precious gift it is. " Truly the light is sweet, and a " pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the " sun." But the faculty of vision, as well as some others, is bestowed in a higher degree of acuteness on certain of the animal creation, than upon man. He however possesses a light denied to the beasts that perish. " There is a spirit in man; and the " inspiration of the Almighty giveth them under- " standing." " The spirit of man is the candle of " the Lord," by which he is distinguished from and exalted far above the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven. And this " light of men" is the

gift of Him who "has life in himself." "He that "planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that "formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teach- "eth man knowledge, shall not he know?"

And the light shineth in darkness. Material light necessarily dispels darkness; when the sun rises the shadows flee away. But mental darkness resists the clearest light. The great source of intellectual day has shined through every age and upon every land; but every age and every land have exhibited men grovelling in the dark, wilfully shutting their eyes, and then denying the existence of light. The history of mankind is a melancholy demonstration of this, "and this is the condemnation, that light "is come into the world, and men loved darkness "rather than light, because their deeds were evil, "for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, "neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should "be reproved." It is a corrupted heart that disturbs and misleads the intellect. "If therefore," O man, "the light that is in thee be darkness, "how great is that darkness!" On whom does this censure fall? On the ruder nations, and the grosser periods of ignorance and barbarism? Yes, and likewise on periods of illumination and refinement, on nations who, in the pride of their heart, appropriated all wisdom to themselves, and stigmatized the rest of mankind with the name of *Barbarian;* it falls on the boasted ages of Alexander and of Augustus, on learned Athens and imperial Rome. Of them it is that the apostle Paul thus writes:

"When they knew God, they glorified him not "as God, neither were thankful, but became vain "in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was "darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they "became fools: and changed the glory of the un- "corruptible God into an image made like to cor- "ruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, "and creeping things. Who changed the truth of "God into a lie, and worshipped and served the "creature more than the Creator." This accounts for that earnestness of exhortation employed by the same apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians: "This "I say, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth "walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of "their mind, having the understanding darkened, "being alienated from the life of God, through the "ignorance that is in them, because of the blind- "ness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have "given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work "all uncleanness with greediness." Thus though *the Light of the world* shone, and still *shineth*, the *darkness comprehended it not*. On whom does the censure fall? On pagans of ages past and on pagans now "walking in darkness, and dwelling "in the land of the shadow of death;" on unbelieving Jews and the blinded posterity of Ishmael? Alas! "darkness still covers the earth" of lands denominated *Christian*, "and gross darkness the "people" who bear that venerable name. What grievous ignorance have we to declare! what impudent infidelity, what abounding iniquity, what

horrid profanation of the name, of the day, of the Book of God! "Sun of righteousness, arise" on these sinful lands "with healing in thy wings," "deliver us from the power of darkness," that we "may be light in the Lord."

The evangelist having displayed the glory of the WORD, as the source of all being, whether material, animal, or intelligent, adverts to the mission of John Baptist his immediate forerunner, "the voice crying "in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the "Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for "our God;" the finger pointing to "the Lamb of "God which taketh away the sin of the world." Paying all due honour to that "burning and shin-"ing light" which came in the spirit and power of Elias, he represents him as merely the harbinger of *the* LIGHT, the *true* Light, *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* John Baptist *came for a witness,* and he faithfully delivered his testimony: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for "he was before me—whose shoes' latchet I am not "worthy to unloose: He must increase but I must "decrease," as the morning star "hides his dimi-"nished head" when the great orb of day appears.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds "were framed by the Word of God," but "the "world by wisdom knew not God." *He was in the world* through the whole extent of its duration, as the all-upholding Word, the all-regulating power: but the men of the world, even "the wise and "prudent," discerned him not, acknowledged him

not, adored him not. "The fulness of time" at length came. The Scriptures were fulfilled; the day which "Abraham rejoiced to see" began to dawn; the "Star out of Jacob" arose. Surely man will fall down and worship him. They surely at least, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the "glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the "law, and the service of God, and the promises, "whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concern-"ing the flesh, Christ came," they surely will flock to "the brightness of his rising." This is a reasonable expectation, but it was not realized. The melancholy fact is, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*, and the prediction is verified by the event; "When we shall see him, there is "no beauty that we should desire him; He is "despised and rejected of men"—they "hid their "faces from him; he was despised, and they "esteemed him not."

This carries us forward with our evangelist, to the great, the eventful day when *the* WORD *was made flesh and dwelt among us*. The Scripture term, *flesh*, it is well known, means *man*, human nature, the human race. Thus in describing the universality of human degeneracy it is said, "All "*flesh* had corrupted their ways." Thus, in confidence of divine protection, the Psalmist exultingly exclaims, "I will not fear what *flesh* can do unto "me." And the Prophet, viewing the redemption of mankind as co-extensive with mortality, while he declares that "all *flesh* is grass," triumphs in

the thought that "all *flesh* should see the salvation "of God." To these, innumerable instances might be adduced to prove that the Evangelist when he says, "the WORD was made *flesh*" means to convey this idea, that the WORD, all-creating, all-vivifying, all-illuminating, assumed humanity "was "in the world," tabernacled among men, emitted a sensible glory, "as of the only begotten of the "Father, full of grace and truth." "Verily he "took not on him the nature of angels; but he took "on him the seed of Abraham:"—"as the children "are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself "likewise took part of the same:" —"in all things "it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren:" —"for which cause he is not ashamed to call them "brethren."

And thus, Men and Brethren, we perceive one and the same animating principle calling worlds into existence, peopling them with angels and men, communicating intelligence, exercising unbounded empire—and making himself of no reputation, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbling himself to a mean estate, to the suffering of reproach and contempt, becoming "obedient unto death, even "the death of the cross."

To what meanness of condition ought not we his disciples, therefore, cheerfully to submit? "For our "sakes he became poor," and shall we be ashamed of honest poverty? Did he go by the name of "the carpenter's son," and dare a Christian osten-

tatiously to display the heraldry of his ancestors, or to blush at what the world calls low birth? "He "hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of "the afflicted, nor hid his face from him when he "cried," and can one called by his name turn a deaf ear to the cry of distress, or hide his face from a poor brother? We cannot like him say, "Let "there be light"—"Lazarus come forth;" we cannot like him walk on water or silence the wind; we cannot like him give eyes to the blind, or speech to the dumb. But we may with him be "meek and "lowly in heart," merciful and compassionate, forbearing and forgiving: we can go about doing good, and ministering to the necessitous. We cannot attain to the height of his divine excellence and perfection, but we may with him descend to the lowliest offices of beneficence and condescension; we may learn of him to "overcome evil with good."

On the other hand, to what height of elevation may not the Christian aspire? Let not the idea of temporal elevation seduce you. Think not of "the "kingdoms of this world and the glory of them," which perish with the using. Christ's "kingdom "is not of this world." Let not the blind ambition of the sons of Zebedee suggest a dream of right and left hand places by the side of an earthly throne. Be it your study and ambition to "have this mind "in you which also was in Christ Jesus." Let the avarice of the worldly mind accumulate bag upon bag, add house to house, field to field, but let a

nobler avarice excite you, the disciples of the blessed Jesus, to "add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, "knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and "to temperance, patience; and to patience, godli-"ness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and "to brotherly kindness, charity." These are the titles, the stars and the ribbons in the kingdom of heaven, and "if these things be in you, and abound, "they make you that you shall neither be barren "nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus "Christ." Let the spirit of adventure and science discover unknown regions and nations on the globe, and new planets in the firmament of heaven; be it your concern, Christian, your study, your employment, to contemplate, through the glass of *promise*, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth "righteousness." Suffer the man of the world to enjoy his triumph; suffer him to outstrip his rival, to run down his enemy; be thine the more glorious triumph to promote a rival, to spare an adversary, as knowing that "He who is slow to anger is better "than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit "than he that taketh a city."

Such, disciple of Jesus, be thy holy aspirations, such thy pride and ambition; and may such be thy blessed attainments even in time: thought is lost in contemplating ".the glory that is to follow." The beloved disciple shall declare it, in the sublimity of his own conception and expression, or rather in the idea and diction with which the Holy Spirit supplied his pen: "Behold what manner of

" love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we
" should be called the sons of God! therefore the
" world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
" Beloved, 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 man that hath this hope in him purifieth
" himself, even as he is pure."

LECTURE II.

ISAIAH LIII. 8.

Who shall declare his generation?

THE history of countries generally commences with a geographical account of their situation and extent; of the climate and soil; of the names and the reason of imposing such names; of the era and the means of discovery; of the original inhabitants, and of other circumstances tending either to communicate useful information or to gratify curiosity. The biographer, in like manner, in delineating the life of his prince, statesman, hero, or philosopher, usually begins with tracing his pedigree and parentage, and enables the reader to form some acquaintance with his ancestors, in order to introduce the personage himself with greater advantage and effect. But both the general historian and the biographer quickly lose themselves in research. The origin of no nation or individual can be traced up to its source. The light becomes fainter and fainter as we proceed, the object is rendered more obscure and uncertain, till time at length spreads his sable mantle over it, and we behold it no more. Who then shall declare *his* generation, who "was in the beginning with "God, by whom all things were made, and with-"out whom was not any thing made that is made?"

We are advancing, men and brethren, upon holy ground; ground sacred as Eden's blissful plains, as the region which surrounded the bush that burned with fire, at Sinai's awful summit. Borne aloft on the pinions of the celestial dove, we are aiming a bold adventurous flight into the heaven of heavens, to expatiate through the boundless regions of eternity, to contemplate objects which "angels desire "to look into," to search into the great mystery of "godliness," to lose ourselves in seeking "to know "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

We are going to attempt a delineation of the Life and History of Jesus Christ the Saviour of Men. My heart fails at the thought of the task which I have undertaken; my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth. Spirit of Grace establish thou my heart—

—— "O thou my voice inspire,
"Who touch'd Isaiah's hallow'd lips with fire!"

The question of the prophet which has now been read, and which suggested the idea that we mean to pursue through this Lecture, is interwoven with a variety of pointed and striking predictions which, whether taken separately or in their combination, can apply only to one person; and who that person is, no doubt can possibly be entertained when we consider that this is the very passage of Scripture to which Philip the Evangelist was providentially directed, as a text for "preaching Jesus," to the Ethiopian Eunuch. I shall not employ any part of your time in detailing the various opinions which

have been entertained respecting the meaning of the passage in general, or the precise import of the term "generation" in particular. The question appears simply to be a bold defiance given to all created wisdom to investigate, to unfold the generation, the origin, the essence of that wonderful Person concerning whom such singular circumstances and events are predicted; it amounts to a strong and positive affirmation that it is impossible to declare Him as he is, to trace his existence through the successive periods of duration up to its commencement, as you may do that of a mere man from the moment of his birth, or through a series of ancestors. What, in this view, is the obvious doctrine of the text? That the generation of Him whom the Spirit of prophecy and the corresponding history represent as an innocent, patient, vicarious sufferer, extends beyond the sphere of created nature, eludes pursuit, spreads the glory of eternity around it, and conceals it from mortal eyes. It is worthy of remark, that the genealogy of our blessed Lord's humanity is more clear, and distinct, and extended than that of any other person. Two several Evangelists have declared it, pursuing it, through two different but parallel channels, up to Abraham, and from him up to the common Father of the human race. In this respect, therefore, "the Spirit him-"self helpeth our infirmity;" and he who by the mouth of Isaiah seems to forbid and defy all inquiry, by the pen of Matthew and Luke makes a clear and full discovery, and enables us to trace

the pedigree of Jesus Christ, like that of any other man. It is the peculiar privilege of the sacred volume to unfold the real history of human nature, of the globe, of the universe, to follow nature up to the hour of her birth, to declare "the generations "of the heavens and of the earth when they were "created; in the day that the Lord God made the "earth and the heavens;" to exhibit the first man Adam in the plastic hands of the Creator springing out of the dust of the ground, and, inspired with the breath of life, becoming "a living soul." The same inspired volume represents to our attention one person, and one event, as of peculiar importance; as pervading, influencing, and affecting the whole course of Nature and Providence; as contemporary with every generation of men; as looked unto and longed for by successive ages. In order that the truth of God might be fully justified and have its complete effect, the relation in which this illustrious person stood to those who had received the promises of his coming, is distinctly ascertained and minutely described; so that at every period of the world we can say, Lo, He is here, and lo, He is there. But the inspired volume likewise represents him as *before* all and *above* all. If therefore this book be a Revelation from heaven, it must contain real and important truth, and that truth clothed in plain, simple, and intelligible language; we must perceive of consequence, in the "man of "sorrows and acquainted with grief," a person whose generation no one is able to declare, who is

" before all and by whom all things do consist:" whom all the angels of God are commanded to worship, " the heir of all things," by whom the worlds were made and are upheld, whose " throne " is for ever and ever:" in one word Christ Jesus, " who is over all, God blessed for ever."

You are well aware that the doctrine which we wish to establish is in the present day violently opposed; and while it is maintained in this place, it may be perhaps in the next street the subject of profane mirth, or of serious argumentation. Thinking as we do, we will not enter the lists of controversy. We will not employ your time, nor endeavour to enlist your passions, by running down one name, party, or opinion, and exalting another; but will simply and humbly, though at the same time, firmly and unreservedly, propose for your instruction and improvement, what appears to be the meaning and object of Scripture; and, considering the divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the first leading object of all Revelation, we will uniformly bring it forward in every discourse. If therefore these exercises are at all frequented, or attended unto, it will be by such as expect, and are well pleased, to hear of the great Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, in his original, everlasting, unchanging glory, and in his humiliation, as the son of man, to the form of a servant, to the death of the cross, a propitiation for sin. To this, we trust, *not unknown* God, our altar is erected, and dedicated, and on it we would again

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in the matter of pedigree. There is in reality no such thing as mean and high birth: or if there be a distinction, to be born perfect in every limb and feature, with a sound and vigorous constitution, with a mind complete in all its faculties, this is to be nobly born; as, on the contrary, to come into the world diseased and debilitated, with a constitution undermined and destroyed by the vice of parents, is to have the disadvantage of being meanly born; a distinction which, if founded in reason, truth, and justice, leaves the great, in general, little to glory in, and the poor little at which to repine. Have we not all one father? What genealogy is pure from every stain of infirmity, folly, or vice? Is it any diminution of the Saviour's dignity, any impeachment of his perfect purity, or any imputation on his great public character, that in the roll of his ancestry after the flesh, we find the name of Rahab the harlot, and of her who had been the wife of Uriah, and that he was brought up under the roof, perhaps to the occupation, of an obscure craftsman? Virtue and vice are personal not hereditary, and nothing but vice is a just ground of shame. Shall I call myself a disciple of Jesus then, and think it a reproach to be called a carpenter's son, despised because I am a Galilean, lightly esteemed because my parents were poor and ignoble, because a paltry monosyllable introduces not my name? Real worth ennobles itself independent of the breath

of Kings, it draws obscure progenitors into light, and leaves a fair and honourable inheritance to posterity—in a bright example, and a respectable name.

Once more, whatever may be our pretensions, or our want of pretension, as citizens of this world, we have all equal right and encouragement to aspire after the title, and the spirit, and the privileges of the sons of God. He whose generation cannot be declared is not ashamed to call the humblest of you brethren. The end of his coming into the world, of his humbling himself to death, of shedding his blood, was to make you "kings "and priests unto God and his Father." What he is by eternal generation, that he is making you by redemption, by the spirit of adoption, by the hope of Glory to be revealed. Support the honour of your heavenly Father's name, prove your relation, preserve unclouded your prospects. You are now in a state of depression, "in heaviness through "manifold temptations," your title lies dormant, your possession is at a distance, but "your life is "hid with Christ in God, and when he shall ap- "pear, you shall appear with him in glory. Be- "loved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth "not yet appear what we shall be, but when He "shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall "see him as he is." "Fear not," then, "little "flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to "give you the kingdom." "Ye are a chosen gene-

"ration, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a "peculiar people; that ye should show forth the "praises of him who hath called you out of dark- "ness into his marvellous light."

LECTURE III.

HAGGAI, II. 6—9.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

THE great Lord of nature demonstrates his existence and divine perfection, in the original formation, and in the constant preservation, of all things. "He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast." He upholdeth all "by the word of his power." The continual support of the universe has accordingly, with the utmost propriety, been represented as creation every instant repeated. In a system which is all life and motion, power almighty, and attention unintermitting, must ever be exerted to maintain life, to carry on motion, to preserve harmony. Every being is subjected to the peculiar law of its own nature; and the great *whole* is governed by general laws. Unity, simplicity, multitude, va-

riety, strike the eye of every attentive beholder; every individual presents a little world apart, and the vast combination of individuals forms but one world, animated by one vital principle.

But Jehovah makes himself known to his intelligent creatures not only in the stated order and harmony of his works, but in the occasional and temporary interruption of that order, and in deviation from that harmony. The powers of earth and heaven are shaken; the sun is turned into darkness, and the stars withdraw their light; the barrier which restrained the ocean is removed, the windows of heaven are opened, and the earth is overflowed. The rain that falls on Sodom becomes a fiery tide; the flame of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace is rendered harmless air; the hungry lion licks the prophet's feet. The glaring eccentric comet, the wandering planet, and the fixed star, all, all refer us to one original, to one moving, restraining, directing, supporting cause.

Neither, however, the regular observance, nor the occasional suspension of the laws of nature are mere wanton displays of power, to amuse the curious, to alarm the fearful, or to confound the proud. Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and every act of omnipotence, have an important meaning and design. The end at which the Ruler of the world still aims is the manifestation of his own glory in promoting the wisdom and happiness of his creatures.

The Prophet, in the passage of the sacred volume

which has now been read, is evidently referring to some signal display of the divine glory. We behold universal commotion raised and settled by the same power; heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land, and all the kindreds of the nations shaken together. Universal attention is excited, universal expectation is raised, and that expectation is completely gratified, by the appearance of "the "Desire of all nations;" by the restoration of peace to a troubled world; by a lustre bestowed on the second temple which should eclipse the glory of the first. Now the expression, "the glory of this "latter house shall be greater than the former, "saith the Lord of hosts," enables us to fix the period, and to discover the person, here described. Haggai lived and prophesied after the Babylonish captivity, and the immediate object of his prophecy was to urge his restored countrymen to industry and perseverance, in the work of rebuilding the temple of the Lord. And as the most powerful and encouraging of all motives, he is commissioned to assure them, that the period fast approached when the fabric which they were then rearing should be invested with much greater honour, than that of Solomon and all his glory ever possessed. But if this were meant of temporal splendour merely, the fact contradicts it; for from Ezra we learn, that, in this respect, the former temple was far superior to the latter: "many of the priests "and Levites, and chief of the fathers who were

"ancient men that had seen the first house, when "the foundation of this house was laid before their "eyes, wept with a loud voice;" so mortifying was the comparison. Our Prophet himself holds the same language, ii. 3. "Who is left among you "that saw this house in her first glory? and how "do you see it now? is it not in your eyes in com-"parison of it as nothing?" We must look therefore for a different kind of glory, to explain and confirm the prediction; and it is impossible to be at a loss about an interpretation, when we consider wherein the real glory of the second temple consisted. Not in being filled, and overlaid with silver and gold, for these are spoken of as comparatively vile and contemptible. "The silver is "mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of "hosts," a claim exactly in the same spirit with that made in the fiftieth Psalm. "Hear, O my "people, and I will speak: O Israel, and I will "testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy "burnt offerings, to have been continually before "me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, "nor he-goats out of thy folds: for every beast of "the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand "hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; "and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I "were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the "world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I "eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows

"unto the most High." "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering." But when "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, when burnt-offering and sin-offering were not required, then said I, Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God." This, Christians, like the star which conducted the wise men of the east, leads us directly to the Saviour of the world. Would you behold the superior glory of the latter temple, look to Simeon visiting it, looking and longing for the consolation of Israel; behold him with the babe in his arms, exulting with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in having seen the salvation of God. Look to Jesus at the age of twelve years "sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," displaying at that tender age, a wisdom and dignity far superior to that of Solomon in his zenith. Look to that same Jesus, in his zeal for the honour of the sacred edifice, purging it of those impurities which a worldly spirit had introduced into it. Listen to the divine eloquence which there flowed from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake. Hear him predicting its destruction, and establishing the truth of his own mission in denouncing against it, and devoting it to, total and irrecoverable ruin. Behold Him on those ruins, rearing an everlasting and a spiritual building, on a rock against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; and in all this, behold as in a glass the glory here spoken of, the

advent of "the Desire of all nations," the "Star "of Jacob" arisen, *Shiloh* come, to whom the gathering of the nations shall be, "the Prince of "Peace," by whom peace is proclaimed, and through whom peace is given to "him that is afar "off and him that is nigh."

In order still farther to justify the application of this prophecy to the person and character of the Redeemer, we may inquire into the import of the other expressions here employed, to describe the appearances of nature and providence, which signalized the era of his manifestation in the flesh. "Yet once, it is a little while." The reign of prophecy was hastening to a conclusion. Haggai was one of the last on whom that Spirit rested; with Malachi, who lived probably somewhat later, it entirely ceased; and a dark period of five hundred years, without a vision, intervened, till it was revived in one who came in the spirit and power of Elias, the forerunner of the Messiah, "the voice "crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of "the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway "for our God," Isaiah xl. 3. and it shone in all its lustre in the Messiah himself, "the great pro-"phet that should come into the world." By Him it is here intimated that God should speak "once" for all; that he should be the full and final declarer of the will of God to mankind; "yet "once," but no more.

"It is a little while." With God what is purposed is begun to be executed, his agents are

already at work, time is lost with him who sees the end from the beginning. "The Lord is not slack "concerning his promise, as some men count "slackness." "Beloved, be not ignorant of this "one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a "thousand years, and a thousand years as one "day." The interval between the prediction and the accomplishment, though a period of five centuries, is, in the sight of God, "a little while;" and five centuries, when they are past, are but "a "little while" in the eyes of man also. But to what circumstances attending the coming of our Saviour refers the Prophet, when he represents the great God as "shaking the heavens and the earth, "and the sea, and the dry land, and all nations?" It is well known that the sacred writers frequently employ, by a bold figure, the appearances of the natural world to represent and explain moral objects. In the case before us, it will be found that both the literal and figurative sense of the words are strictly applicable to the subject. Every one who is at all acquainted with the history of mankind, knows that the whole course of things has been a constant and successive concussion and convulsion, a shaking of the nations, a struggle for dominion, the progress of empire from east to west; and an aspect of the heavenly bodies and influences analogous to the state of the moral world. The observer of nature endeavours to trace all these up to their native causes in the great system of the universe; the moralist looks for them, in the nature

and constitution of man, and the politician, in the combinations and exertions of passion and interest. The believer, the Christian, refers all to God, sees him in the cloud, in the sky; hears him in the wind, in the thunder, in the songster of the grove; and he sees the swelling tide of nature and providence labouring with one object of peculiar importance; all things are shaken and composed in subordination to the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Let me compress what I mean to say within a narrow compass; and I shall do it nearly in the words of an elegant preacher whom I have oftener than once had the honour to quote in this place. The eastern part of the world was, in the wisdom of Providence, first peopled, great and extensive empires were first formed there, and there learning and the arts were first brought to perfection. But while science and empire flourished in the east, a power was rising by degrees in the western world, which was one day to surpass all that had gone before it. Unknown to the proud empires of the eastern hemisphere, which vainly flattered themselves that they divided the world amongst them, this power was then silently advancing from conquest to conquest, and the Roman eagle was by degrees strengthening her wing, and preparing to take her flight round half the globe. The succession of those great monarchies, those shakings of the heavens and the earth, this shaking of all nations, led gradually and imperceptibly to that

happy conjuncture, that fulness of time, that maturity of divine counsel, which suited the introduction of Christianity. They arose one after another, they enlarged one upon another, till at length the genius of Rome, under the permission of Heaven, triumphed over and swallowed up all the others, and expanded, opened, united, consolidated, that wide-extended, well-informed, civilized empire, through which the gospel of Christ was destined to make a progress so rapid and so successful. To favour this great event, to procure attention to the Author and finisher of our faith, and to render the first appearance of our holy religion at once more august and more secure, the struggles of ambition which had so long shaken the world, those restless contests for superiority, subsided at last, suddenly and unexpectedly, into universal peace. That stormy ocean, which had been for ages and generations in continual agitation, now all at once sunk into a surprising calm; the bloody portal of Janus, which had so long emitted unrelenting destruction to mankind, was shut, and the globe was instantly overspread with tranquillity, relieved from the din of arms, from the confused noise of the warrior, and the horrid sight of garments rolled in blood, in order to receive the Prince of Peace.

The shaking of the nations, as paving the way for the Desire of all nations, is striking to the contemplative mind in another point of view. Philosophy rode triumphant, every question relating to physics, morals, politics, science, religion, was freely

canvassed; and the noise of the schools in many instances drowned that of the ensanguined plain. The introduction of Christianity was preceded by a remarkable diffusion of knowledge, and the radiance of science ushered in the Gospel day, as Aurora announces the approach of the sun, and prepares the world for it. Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, poured from their separate urns those distinct rills of science, which, meeting in one great channel, became a mighty flood, and overspread the vast Roman empire. And thus was revelation enabled to give a most illustrious proof of its coming down from above, by diffusing over the world, all at once, a light superior to all collected human wisdom in its brightest glory. And need we ask who it was that thus shook and settled the sea and the dry land, who regulated the vast engine, who conducted all these great events, and brought them to one issue, concurrence, and conclusion? At the same period of time, the promised Messiah came: the greatest empire that ever existed was at the height of its glory: learning flourished beyond what it had done in any former age: and the world was blessed with universal peace. A coincidence of facts, every one of which is in itself so extraordinary, that it cannot be paralleled by any other times, clearly points out the hand of supreme over-ruling power, who from eternity beheld the great plan of his providence through its whole extent, who alone "can "declare the end from the beginning, and from "ancient times the things which are not yet done,"

saying, "*My* counsel shall stand, and I will do all "my pleasure."

To put this beyond all doubt, let it be observed, that these events took their rise in remotest ages, and were prepared in times and countries far distant from and unknown to each other. Empire which sprang up amidst the seven hills of Rome; Science nursed in the academic groves of Greece; and religion from the obscure vales of Judea, all met at one grand crisis. To one another unknown, they must have been conducted by the hand of Providence. But meet they did, and peace from heaven crowned them with her olive. And thus were the nations shaken to prepare the way of the Lord; thus "the valleys were exalted, and the mountains "and hills laid low, the crooked made straight, "and the rough places plain," and the high and aspiring thoughts of men were brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

But the heavens and the earth were literally shaken, at the coming of "the Desire of all nations." Witness that new created star which conducted the eastern Magi to the place where the Saviour was born; witness the descent of Gabriel and a multitude of the heavenly host, to announce his arrival; and witness the other appearances of celestial spirits to minister to the Lord of Glory in his temptation and agony, at his resurrection and ascension into heaven; witness the descent of Moses and Elias to the mount of transfiguration; witness too the eclipse of the sun beyond the course of nature, which

marked the hour of his death, the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the rising of the dead: witness the voice from heaven which, like thunder, oftener than once shook the echoing air, while God himself declared his well-beloved Son, and demanded attention for him. All these confirm the testimony of the Prophet, they point it to the Lord Jesus, and inspire joy unspeakable and full of glory on discovering the perfect coincidence between prediction and event. To this auspicious, this all-important era we are now brought; and the next Lecture, with the divine permission, will detail the remarkable circumstances which immediately preceded, or which accompanied, the birth of Christ.

And was all this mighty preparation made to introduce a mere man of like passions with ourselves? Were the heavens from above and the earth beneath stirred to meet him at his coming? Did flaming ministers descend singly and in bands, did departed prophets revisit the earth, and the dead bodies of saints arise to do homage to a creature their equal, their fellow? It is not to be believed. But surely this is the Son of God; and to receive him, coming for our salvation, what solemnity of preparation was too great, what homage of angels and men too submissive, what testimony of created nature too ample? "Hosanna to the Son of David, "blessed is he who cometh in the name of the "Lord, Hosanna in the highest."

Is his name and description "the Desire of all "nations?" how fitly applied! Is light desirable to

the benighted, bewildered traveller in a land of snares and of the shadow of death? Is pardon desirable to a wretch condemned? Is the cooling stream desirable to the parched pilgrim, and bread to the hungry perishing wretch? Is the friendly haven desirable to the tempest-tossed mariner, and liberty to the languishing captive? What then to an ignorant, guilty, perishing world must that wonderful man be whom Providence has raised up to be "a hiding-"place from the wind, and a covert from the tem-"pest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

But what if when he shall appear, desirable as he is, a blind world shall see "no form or comeli-"ness in him, no beauty why he should be desired?" Afflicting thought! "He was despised and rejected "of men?" "He came to his own, and his own "received him not." They "denied the holy one, "and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted "unto them." The cry was, "Away with him, "crucify him; his blood be upon us and upon our "children!" O Lord, remove the film from the eyes of those prejudiced Jews; dispose them to receive "the Prince of Peace," let him be all their salvation and all their desire. Lord, remove the film from my eyes, that I may see in him whom God the Father hath sent and sealed, one "fairer than "the children of men: into whose lips grace is "poured:" that though he may be "unto the Jews "a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolish-"ness, He may be unto us who believe, Christ the "power of God, and the wisdom of God." Amen.

LECTURE IV.

LUKE I. 11—20.

And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard: and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

"THE prophecy came not in old time by the "will of man: but holy men of God spake as they "were moved by the Holy Ghost." Being determined through the course of these exercises to avoid every thing that has the appearance of controversy, I take it for granted that you believe and receive

the history of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as delivered in the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as of divine inspiration and authority. Of the four Evangelists two were of the number of the twelve whom Christ called to the office of apostleship, and who recorded events of which they were witnesses and partakers, and transcribed discourses which they heard and well remembered. The other two derived their information immediately from those "who from "the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers "of the word." Their harmony, in every particular of any importance, is a proof of the truth and certainty of each individually, and of the whole. John, as one borne aloft on the wings of an eagle, ascends into the heaven of heavens, and begins his account of his beloved Master with a sublime and interesting representation of his divine nature; for which we refer you to Lecture I. Mark introduces "the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son "of God," with the voice of a lion "crying in the "wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make "his paths straight." Luke ushers in the great Prophet, "the Desire of all nations," with an account of the conception and birth of his forerunner John the Baptist, and is of course led to extract the commencement of the evangelical, out of the legal dispensation; and he sets out with exhibiting Zacharias in the exercise of the priest's office. Matthew commences at once with the history of Christ's humanity, as the son of David, the son of Abra-

ham. For these reasons, the four sacred historians of the New Testament dispensation have been distinguished by corresponding symbolical representations, analogous to the vision of the prophet Ezekiel, Matthew by the face of a man, Mark by that of a lion, Luke by that of an ox, and John by that of an eagle.

St. Luke was by profession a physician; he became early a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and he is generally supposed to have been one of Christ's first disciples, and of the number of the seventy whom "he sent out two and two into every city "and place, whither he himself would come." After he had concluded the history of our Lord himself, at the period of his ascension into heaven, he undertook that of the Acts of the Apostles, and he addresses both his books to a person of amiable character and exalted rank, named Theophilus, and in him to every lover of God, in every age of the Church, who is desirous to know "the certainty "of the things wherein he has been instructed." On the conversion of St. Paul to the Christian faith, he seems to have attached himself with much zeal and affection to that great Apostle of the Gentiles; he became voluntarily the companion of his travels and afflictions, and brought down his history to his arrival at Rome as a prisoner, on an appeal to the emperor Nero. His Gospel and history of the Acts were probably submitted to the inspection of his illustrious fellow-traveller, and received the seal of his approbation. In the preface to the Gos-

pel inscribed with his name; he modestly, yet with firmness, lays claim to the great, the essential qualification of an historian, namely, accurate and complete information respecting his subject, "having," says he, "had perfect understanding of all "things, from the very first:" and the professed end which he had in view is no less worthy of a great and enlightened mind, that a respected friend might be established in the knowledge, faith, and hope of the Gospel. The tongue of prophecy had now been silent for more than four hundred years. The last word which it had spoken announced the sending of Elijah the prophet, to precede the great and notable day of the Lord, to work a remarkable change in the temper and character of mankind, to prevent the earth from being "smitten with a "curse."

A period of darkness and disorder succeeded. The land which had been for ages so renowned in history seems as if blotted out of the globe; the people which had been hung up as a sign before the eyes of so many successive generations, seems to be extinguished and lost; the predictions and promises which conferred upon them such high importance, and duration so extended, seem to have been defeated and rendered of no effect. The throne of David, whose permanency was so often and so solemnly declared, has sunk into the earth and disappeared. The representative of the royal line of Judah is sunk into an humble carpenter; and all

hope of revival is at an end. But the Lord hath spoken, and shall he not do it? he hath promised, and shall he not bring it to pass? Yes, but not at the season, nor in the way which human wisdom would have prescribed, nor by means which human wisdom would have employed. Behold light once more, and suddenly, shines out of darkness; the land of Israel rises once more into importance; Jerusalem rears her head among the nations, the star of Jacob arises, "a rod springs out of the stem "of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots;" and the glory of the latter temple eclipses that of the former.

The Evangelist informs us that at this eventful period Herod was king of Judea. Princes are often among the inferior actors in the great drama of Providence. Their will shakes the nations of the earth, but the hearts and arms of Kings themselves are in the hands of the Lord, to be by him turned which way soever he will. This man has by some been dignified with the addition of "the great:" an appellation more frequently bestowed as a reward to splendid vice, than as a tribute to modest merit. Herod the great! and yet a paltry substitute of a Roman emperor, an habitual slave to the vilest of human passions, envy, lust, jealousy, cruelty, revenge. The inspired penman gives him no names, either good or bad, but simply tells his story as far as it is connected with that of Him by whom "Kings reign and Princes decree judgment." The reign of Herod to us serves merely as a prologue to introduce the more important name and history of

an ancient, obscure priest called Zacharias, and our attention is instantly called away from the splendour, noise, and intrigue of a busy, vain-glorious, debauched court, to contemplate the humble concerns of a private family, and the noiseless performance of a religious service.

How different are the ideas affixed to the terms great and little by sober reason and popular opinion, by the wisdom of God and the folly of man! Weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, Herod fawning on Augustus, or on one of his favourites, dissolved in luxury, stained with blood, inflamed with resentment, is little and contemptible; while the aged priest, reconciled to the will of God, who had written him childless, pursuing the calm tenour of his way, fulfilling the unostentatious duties of his place and station, "righteous before God, walk-"ing in all the commandments and ordinances of "the Lord, blameless," commands affection, esteem, and respect. This venerable pair, Zacharias and Elizabeth, were both of the tribe of Levi, on which the office of priesthood was entailed. Both nature and religion taught them to consider the gift of children as a blessing; but the hope of that blessing they seem now calmly to have resigned, and they are quietly sinking into the decline of life, if not with the consolation of leaving their name and office to their children, possessing nevertheless that of mutual affection, of a devout spirit, and a conscience void of offence. The midnight of nature is the

dawning of the day of grace: and he who in wisdom and justice brings to nought the wisdom of the worldly prudent, "raiseth up the poor out of "the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dung-"hill, that he may set him with princes, even with "the princes of his people. He maketh the barren "woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother "of children."

The Prince of Peace is ready to make his public entrance on the grand theatre, and it is time for his harbinger to prepare the way, and for the herald to announce his approach. And where shall we look for him? Turn your eyes to Judea, to Jerusalem, to the temple. See, the lot is prepared, to determine whose turn it should be to burn incense before the Lord in the holy place. Providence presides over it, and Zacharias is taken. Behold him, with joy accepting the sacred task of paying a grateful tribute of praise to God, and of assisting the prayers of the people without, with the commanded perfume of the altar of incense. Behold him entering within the veil, under the mixed emotions of godly fear, and exalted delight, to worship that God who once resided there in sensible glory, but from which the glory had long departed. All is solitude and silence; the unextinguished light that burned continually before Jehovah lends its flame to set on fire the incense, when lo, the lustre of material fire is lost in the brighter glory of the great archangel, and the solemn silence is broken by the melodious accents of a celestial voice. Gabriel who, five hun-

dred and forty years before, announced to the prophet Daniel the commencement of the determined weeks which should precede the Messiah's day, now announces to Zacharias their consummation. He opens the sealed book of prophecy, and to his astonishment informs him that the promised coming of Elias, with which the ancient canon closed, was near at hand; that this great prophet should appear in the person of a son of his own, whom God by a special dispensation of his providence was raising up to fulfil the Scriptures, to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, "to "go before the Saviour in the spirit and power of "Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the "children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of "the just, to make ready a people prepared for the "Lord." How is the pride of kings levelled to the dust before an appearance like this! How many princes and potentates have arisen, and fallen, and sunk into oblivion since Gabriel last visited the earth! How have the kingdoms of this world been shaken during the course of five centuries! How often has the seat of empire changed, and the globe changed its inhabitants! but the heavenly messenger enjoys unfading lustre and undiminished strength. The purpose of the Eternal has been proceeding all the while, and the convulsions and contention of the nations have been working the righteousness of God, and preparing the way for the kingdom of peace and love.

The appearance of an angel, however, though

sent on an errand of mercy, though delivering a message of grace from on high, is an object of terror to frail mortality. "When Zacharias saw "him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him;" and if the upright and blameless man tremble at the presence of an angel, "where shall the un- "godly and the sinner appear," when "the Lord "himself shall be revealed from heaven in flaming "fire, taking vengeance on all them that know "not God and obey not the Gospel!" The triumph of goodness is the glory of a really superior being. The Angel that "stands in the presence of God," exults not in the confusion of a frail mortal, but said to him, "Fear not, Zacharias." The insolence of superiority, and the delight of outshining, of dazzling, of distressing an inferior, are the characteristics of a little soul, of some angels falsely so called; those who are truly such condescendingly sink to the level of those who are beneath them, or affectionately raise the humble up to their own. In the presence of God all distinctions vanish; Gabriel and Zacharias are fellow creatures, fellow servants, fellow dependants; the inferior being makes himself known by his timidity, the superior by his benevolence and love: this marks the difference, the affecting difference which purity and guilt have made.

The flaming minister addresses the attendant on the earthly sanctuary, with all the familiarity and ease of ancient friendship; the desires of his heart, the subject of his prayers, are well known to him;

he has all along been the sympathizing, though unseen, unknown witness of his anxieties and distresses, and he esteems it an honour and a happiness to be employed as the messenger of glad tidings to a pious, suffering human being. Zacharias had long ago ceased from expecting, had ceased from praying for the building up of his own house, but he waited for the consolation of Israel, he continued instant in prayer for the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David which was fallen down, and lo, God at length bestows, as he did upon Solomon, not only the blessing which he asked, but that also which he asked not; namely, a son to support the honour of his own name, and the promise of the Son that should be born, the Child that should be given, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. The injunctions of the law respecting Nazarites are repeated and applied to the present case, and the future greatness and importance of this miraculous child, in the scale of Providence, are foretold; and Zacharias has the satisfaction of hearing that he was to be the father of him who should be the accomplishment of ancient prophecies, "The voice crying in "the wilderness," the finger to point out to mankind "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the "sin of the world."

Terror gives way by degrees to feelings of a different kind, and, with the glory of the heavenly vision before his eyes, with the faith of father Abraham, in similar circumstances, as an encou-

ragement to his own, and with the manifold instances which the history of his own country afforded of similar interposition, he converses with flesh and blood, he staggers at the promise through unbelief, and for a moment forgets that with God all things are possible. The angel vouchsafes to explain himself to the unbeliever; his incredulity shall not frustrate the purpose of Heaven, nor even divert into a different channel the mercy which he doubted; but his frailty shall not go wholly unpunished, he shall be wounded in those faculties which he had so ill employed as the avenues to his mind, the tongue which dared to express the language of doubt and suspicion must undergo a temporary silence, the ear which would not admit the communications of an Archangel, shall be shut for a season against the delights of social intercourse, and the sign which he unwisely demanded shall bear upon it a mark of displeasure. Striking mixture of goodness and severity, of goodness unbounded, and severity restrained! Striking view of the supreme power possessed and exercised by the great Lord of Nature, over all our powers and possessions. He who bestowed the gift of speech on man can withdraw it in a moment; or confound it so as to be no longer a medium of communication between mankind: He can confer it on the dumb ass to reprove "the madness of the prophet;" or instantaneously communicate it, in all its different forms, to the ignorant and illiterate, for the instruction and salvation of the various nations of

the earth. Let a gift so precious never be vilely profaned as an organ of falsehood, pride, lust, or profanity.

The words of the angel shall meet their accomplishment in their season. The pretended oracles of paganism were constrained to veil their prophetic enunciations in terms of mystery and obscurity; they spake with timidity and caution; they clothed their responses and mandates in general and ambiguous expressions, which superstition might interpret what way soever it would; and which any event might be wrested to justify and support; but the lively oracles of God are minute, distinct, intelligible, and pointed; he who runs may read them; they clothe predictions with such an exactness of circumstance; they appeal to events so near at hand, so obvious to investigation, that it is impossible to mistake one thing for another, to confound one with another. Zacharias's dumbness, the season of his being attacked with it, the unexpected, miraculous pregnancy of Elizabeth, the birth of the child according to the time of life, the sudden restoration of the father's hearing and speech, at the very moment predicted, were all matters of public notoriety; every one singular in itself, the whole taken in connexion so singular, as to mark the interest which eternal Providence took in an event, at first sight, of no great general importance, but in its effects and consequences involving the fate of nations, the everlasting destination of worlds.

What! all this state and magnificence; the trumpet of prophecy resounding, the prince of angels descending, to proclaim the advent of merely a man with raiment of camels' hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins! The Ruler of the Universe, be assured, is not so lavish of extraordinary displays of his power and wisdom. If the true God appear, it is on an occasion worthy of a God. And if this be the preparation made for the appearance of the servant, what state shall precede the entrance of the Sovereign? Gabriel, I foresee, has another message to bring, a multitude of the heavenly host is on the wing, to announce a greater than John Baptist, even Him of whom John Baptist himself says, "There "standeth one among you, whom ye know not; "He it is who coming after me is preferred before "me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to un-"loose." This solemn preparation for the manifestation of God in the flesh, if God permit, will be the subject of the next Lecture. I now conclude with the following reflection:

1. Angels, we perceive, take a lively, an affectionate, and a compassionate interest in the affairs of men. "Are they not all ministering spirits, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs "of salvation?" The "little ones" of Christ's family, the little in age and stature, the little in condition, must not be despised; "for I say unto you," are his emphatic words, "that in heaven their angels do "always behold the face of my Father which is in "heaven:" and "there is joy in the presence of

" the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." What condescension on the part of beings so highly exalted! What a protection provided for the feeble! What encouragement proposed to the penitent! " The angel of the Lord encampeth round about " them that fear him, and delivereth them." Pleasing, awful thought! The host of heaven guards my path and my bed, watches over my lying down and rising up; but their eyes are continually upon me, I am " compassed about with a great cloud of " witnesses," they bear testimony to what I am, whither I go, how I am employed. Is the eye of a child a guard to virtue? What holy circumspection and watchfulness then, what earnestness and perseverance in well doing, what abhorrence of that which is evil, ought the inspection of an angel, ought the all-seeing eye of God to produce? " He " shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep " thee in all thy ways;" " keep," therefore, " thy " heart with all diligence? for out of it are the " issues of life."

2. From a preparation thus solemn and magnificent what are we not to expect? Four thousand years have been employed in making it; a procession of patriarchs, of prophets, of sages, of priests, of potentates, has passed on before in uninterrupted succession; angels have descended from heaven: Surely He who thus cometh is the Son of God. " When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the " world, He saith, And let all the angels of God " worship Him:" And " unto the Son He saith,

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a "sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy "kingdom:" for "Thou, Lord, in the beginning "hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the "heavens are the works of thine hands." "His "name shall endure for ever. His name shall be "continued as long as the sun; and men shall be "blessed in Him: all nations shall call him blessed. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who "only doeth wondrous things: and blessed be His "glorious name for ever and ever; and let the "whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and "amen."

3. Though predicted events are strictly conformable to the word of prophecy, they nevertheless, in many cases, contradict, disappoint, and far exceed human expectation. The prophets themselves had not always a distinct and complete perception of the object which they were commissioned to hold up to the eyes of the world. Those "holy men of God "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The agents employed in the accomplishment of promise and prediction little understood the part which they acted. They thought of nothing less; they intended nothing less. They were unconscious instruments in the hand of God to execute a purpose, which had they known they would have striven to defeat. "The heathen rage, and the people imagine "a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against "the Lord, and against his anointed—He that sit-

" teth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall " have them in derision." Were " Herod and " Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people " of Israel, gathered together" to promote the cause of Christianity? No, they meant to destroy it. But " of a truth," Lord, they were constrained to do " whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined " before to be done." Happy are they who, with Gabriel and the other flaming ministers who stand before God, are the conscious, the voluntary, the joyful agents under, and together with God, in promoting the great work of salvation.

4. Let not man, then, presume to make his own understanding the measure of revealed truth, or of divine conduct. " Who hath directed the Spirit of " the Lord, or who being his counsellor hath taught " him?" It ill becomes a creature conscious to himself of so much weakness, of so much ignorance, of such liableness to error, to erect himself into an infallible judge. " Search the Scriptures," but with reverence, with humility, with a desire to be instructed, not censoriously, self-sufficiently, not to wrest Scripture in favour of a preconceived opinion, or long-established dogma. Study the ways of Providence; but dare not to interpret them according as passion or prejudice may dictate. " Thy way," O God, " is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, " and thy footsteps are not known." Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, and Providence of Providence; and " if any man will do his will, he " shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Practical conformity to the divine will is preferable to the highest attainments in knowledge, and it is the most direct road to farther discovery.

5. Superior beings are now an object of terror, and it is conscious guilt in man which clothes them with that terror. They are our friends, they take delight in ministering to our necessities, they cherish the gracious affections of elder to younger brethren, yet the apparition is formidable even to a Zacharias. But "there is no fear in love; for perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." To that glorious perfection the Christian is encouraged to aspire. We shrink from the idea of a visit from a departed friend arising out of the grave, but we look with hope and desire to the day when we shall be added "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven—and to the spirits of just men made perfect." The vision of one angel, in our present state of depression, strikes the mind with awe; but we hope to come "to an innumerable company of angels;" nay "to God the judge of all," for we come through "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

LECTURE V.

LUKE, I. 26—38.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

EVERY thing in nature, we have observed, is revelation and discovery, and yet all is mystery inexplicable. Every flower of the field, every pebble in the brook, every leaf on the tree, every grain of sand on the sea shore, is a world in miniature, possessed of qualities which a little child is capable of observing and of comprehending; yet at the same time containing hidden treasures which no Solomon can find out unto perfection. One object overwhelms us with its magnitude, the minuteness of another mocks our research. The Creator here, in-

volving himself in clouds and darkness, eludes our pursuit; there arrayed in "light inaccessible and "full of glory," He forbids our approach. In all the ways and works of God there is a simplicity level to the meanest understanding, and a complexness which confounds the most acute and enlarged. If all nature and Providence present this strange mixture, is it any wonder if we find it in the work of redemption? That grand æra, called in Scripture "the fulness of time," was now come; even the time for accomplishing ancient predictions and promises; for displaying and fulfilling the purpose of the Eternal in the salvation of mankind, by him to whom all the prophets give witness, and in whom all the promises are yea and amen.

In order to introduce him with more than royal state, God shook the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land; the gentiles pressed toward the appearing of this great light of the world, and kings to the brightness of his rising. To prepare the way of the Lord, throne was shaken after throne, empire swallowed up empire. Alexander carried his all-conquering arms into the remotest regions of the east; Cæsar extended his conquests as far as to France and Britain in the west; and Augustus gave peace to a troubled world. We are now led to attend to the minuter circumstances of this all-important event.

We perceive from the beginning what we are never permitted to lose sight of to the end, a magnificence that dazzles, connected with a plainness

and simplicity which interest and attract the heart: declaring at once the Son of God, and the Son of man; Him whom angels worship, and whom the poorest of mankind consider as one of their kinsmen. Observe the exactness of arrangement in every part of the plan of Providence. Time is settled to a moment, place to a point. No design of Heaven can be accelerated or retarded, changed or frustrated. God said unto the serpent, in the day that man by transgression fell, "I will put "enmity between thee and the woman, and be- "tween thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy "head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;" and it is not an unmeaning lifeless sentence, filling up space in the sacred page. Lo, it awakens into animation and energy, not one tittle of it shall fail.

To accomplish it behold Gabriel is again on the wing; but not armed with a flaming sword to guard the way of the tree of life, but bearing the olive branch, and the message of peace, announcing a new and living way into the holiest of all, into the paradise of God. If there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what was the joy of heaven on that day when the great archangel received his commission to revisit the earth, to convey the glad tidings of great joy. The celestial bands adoring prostrate themselves before the eternal throne; contemplating this new creation of God, the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. These things they have for ages and gene-

rations been looking into, the great mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh: they enjoy the exalted delight of beholding it unfolded, and the time, the set time, to favour a perishing world arrived. Gabriel has received his instructions; he flies with transport, such as angels feel, to execute the will supreme; the flaming portal flies open; myriads of pure spirits celebrate his descent with songs of praise. And whither does he bend his flight? To learned Athens or imperial Rome? To give understanding to the prudent, or to hold the balance of power? No: but to bring to nought the understanding of the prudent, to humble the mighty and confound the proud. He is sent to a country favoured indeed of nature and renowned in story, but sunk in the scale of nations, the skeleton of ancient grandeur, and to a district of that despised country proverbially contemptible, and to one of the least of the cities of that region, and to one of the poorest and meanest of the inhabitants of that city—to a virgin indeed of royal extraction but fallen into indigence, betrothed to an obscure mechanic, a stranger in a strange place. It is thus that God chooseth "the "foolish things of the world to confound the wise, "and the weak things of the world to confound the "things which are mighty, and base things of the "world, and things which are despised, yea and "things which are not, to bring to nought things "which are."

The destinations of the Almighty stamp a dignity and importance on persons, places, and things, which

they possessed not before; to be employed of him is the highest dignity which the creature can acquire: to minister to him, in ministering to the objects of his compassion or of his love, is the glory and joy of angels and archangels. Galilee and Nazareth now possess an eminence unknown to the most illustrious kingdoms and the proudest capitals. He maketh his angels *spirits*, but we discern, and reason, and converse through the medium of sense. Men cannot rise to the level of angels, but angels are permitted, for wise and gracious purposes, to descend to the level of men, to assume an organized body, to convey their ideas in the accents of the human voice. But can this be a degradation of their superior nature? No: it is its glory and perfection. To descend to those who are below us, to aspire after greater resemblance to those who are above us, in this consists the real excellency of a created being. We cannot imitate angels in their intelligence and elevation, but in their condescension and humility we may, and we ought.

What a contrast have we here, between the rank of the messenger and of the person to whom the message is addressed! But the presence and purpose of God level all distinctions. Mary, the mother of our Lord, rises, and Gabriel sinks, for the Son of God himself, the Lord of angels, is about to "take "upon him the form of a servant." The evangelists are minutely particular in detailing the circumstances which concurred to impress the characters of truth

and importance on this event. The spirit of prophecy had lately and unexpectedly been revived in the persons of Simeon and of Anna, and of others who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. The extraordinary case of Zacharias and Elizabeth, which was well known to all who attended the worship of the temple, must have excited the public attention and expectation. This is followed, six months after, by a case still more extraordinary, more out of the course of nature, and of still higher moment, and of equal notoriety. Opportunity was thereby afforded to the suspicious and incredulous to inquire and examine; that inquiry must lead to the discovery of a cloud of witnesses, lying dormant in books universally held sacred, but neglected, misunderstood, and misapplied; life and substance, meaning and lustre, are in a moment given to them by well-known and undeniable facts. No appearance of art or industry is discernible, but a simple, easy, natural transition from one thing to another. The appearances, indeed, are out of the ordinary course of nature; but they are narrated as mere ordinary things, and the descent of an archangel, and his speech and demeanour are described with no more parade of words, no more labour of thought, than the springing of an ear of corn, or the fall of a sparrow to the ground.

This majestic dignified case marks the presence of a God, with whom nothing can be extraordinary or miraculous; who exhibits persons and events as they really are, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The angel represents none but

objects of the highest interest and importance. He announces the approach of a great prince, who should ascend the throne of David, who was to exercise unbounded authority, and enjoy everlasting dominion; who should be distinguished by the state and title of the Son of the Highest; and that this extraordinary personage should be introduced upon the grand theatre by the Almighty's creating a new thing upon the earth, "The Holy Ghost shall come "upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall "overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing "which shall be born of thee shall be called the "Son of God." The singularity of this wonderful conception and birth was greatly heightened by having been prefigured and foretold at sundry times, and in divers manners; such as the preternatural birth of Isaac, of Jacob, of Samson, of John Baptist, and the express and pointed prediction of Isaiah, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold a "virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall "call his name Emanuel," God with us. All these hold up to us, through a succession of ages, the substance of the first threatening to the serpent, which was at the same time the first promise of grace to mankind, that He, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and who should bruise the serpent's head, should be in a proper and peculiar sense the seed of the woman. Astonishing and instructive view of the undeviating steadiness of the divine counsels! He willeth, and none can let it; heaven and earth may pass away, but his word shall

not pass away, but every one come to pass in his season.

Mary having been referred to her cousin Elizabeth, whose advanced state of pregnancy was to be an additional confirmation of her own faith in the promises of God, as soon as the angel departed from her, retired from Nazareth into the hill country of Judea to salute her kinswoman, and to confer with her on the several manifestations of divine favour to them. This interview produced another declaration of the interest that Providence took in the event which was pressing to its accomplishment; Elizabeth is not only destined to be a mother in Israel, a mother of John the Baptist, but she becomes already a prophetess; she has a sign given her in her own person, equivalent to the declaration of the archangel. "And it came to pass, that, when "Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe "leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled "with the Holy Ghost; and she spake out with a "loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among wo-"men, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And "whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord "should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice "of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe "leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she "that believed: for there shall be a performance of "those things which were told her from the Lord." This fills the virgin's mouth with a song of praise dictated by faith, piety, humility, and gratitude; and these are the rapturous strains which flow from

her lips, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my "spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he "hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: "for behold, from henceforth all generations shall "call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done "to me great things; and holy is his name. And "his mercy is on them that fear him, from genera-"tion to generation. He hath showed strength with "his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the ima-"gination of their hearts. He hath put down the "mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low "degree. He hath filled the hungry with good "things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remem-"brance of his mercy. As he spake to our fathers, "to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

The course of nature now takes place, and he who made man, the first man Adam, perfect at once, from dust of the ground, and who is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham, raises up first John and then Jesus in a way at once miraculous, and natural, according to the way of sovereign, irresistible power, and according to the time of life. Glorious in establishing and supporting the laws of nature, glorious in suspending and dispensing with them, we behold thee, O God, subduing all things to the counsel of thy will, that all should be to the praise of thy glory. At the end of three months more, Elizabeth, as it was predicted of the angel, is delivered of a son; the name of John, as the heavenly messenger directed, was imposed on

him, the father's speech was suddenly restored, and the first use which he makes of it is to celebrate the high praises of that God, who had made him such an illustrious example of both mercy and judgment. He "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophe-"sied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; "for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and "hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the "house of his servant David: as he spake by the "mouth of his holy prophets which have been "since the world began; that we should be saved "from our enemies, and from the hand of all that "hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our "fathers, and remember his holy covenant; the "oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that "he would grant unto us that we, being delivered "out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him "without fear in holiness and righteousness before "him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, "shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest: for "thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare "his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his "people by the remission of their sins, through "the tender mercy of our God: whereby the day-"spring from on high hath visited us, to give light "to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of "death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

And now the way is prepared, the voice is heard crying in the wilderness, the forerunner of the Lord has begun his course, the Saviour comes. But other messengers, of whom we have not yet heard, pre-

cede him. Behold yonder comet glare in the eastern sky, it performs a track untrodden before, the wise men of distant lands are summoned to meet him at his coming, to lay their gifts at his feet; Augustus Cæsar, the sole regent of half the globe, is pressed into the ministering train, an unconscious, unintentional servant to the Prince of the kings of the earth.

But here we must once more pause and inquire, Is this a cunningly devised fable, or a real history? Is it a fanciful representation, or the simple truth? If it be a fine tissue woven by a luxuriant imagination, say so at once, unbeliever, and renounce the fiction in whole, as a rule of faith, or as a ground of hope. Say unreservedly that the mission and message of the angel is merely a bold eastern metaphor; and the whole mere ordinary facts, related with somewhat more than the usual pomp of diction, but to set forth only a man of like passions with ourselves, whom the credulous, prejudiced, and illiterate, are disposed to receive as a superior being—In a word, give up the evangelists as plain men conveying, to plain men like themselves, simple matters of fact, and recur at once to unmixed, undisguised deism. But are these things indeed so? Were angels sent from God to declare the approach of what prophets had of old predicted? Did the Son of the Highest vouchsafe to be born of a woman, and thereby become a partaker of flesh and blood, David's son, yet David's Lord, then let earth prepare to receive its king. Lo, the angels of God worship him. He is

the son of God, he is our Lord, and let us worship him.

This history assists us in correcting the false scale of human greatness. Here we behold the princes and the potentates of this world sinking to their proper level; Herod, Augustus Cæsar, and persons of their character and station, are thrown into the back ground of the piece, while Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Mary, are brought forward with honour, and to fill a higher destination than that of kings. Respect, by all means, the powers that are, as the ordinances of God, but respect with higher, with supreme veneration, Him who ordained them, to carry on the purposes of his wisdom and his love.

Learn, Christian, to make a just estimate of thy own importance in the scale of being. Thou art a creature of God, formed after his image, a partaker of immortality, destined to glory and honour. An origin so dignified confers true nobility; faculties so superior, prospects so extended, denote a being of high estimation in the sight of God, and who ought to be of high estimation in his own eyes. Defile not that fair temple, discredit not that illustrious descent, dishonour not a father's name. But well does it become a creature so dependant, so frail, so fallen, so lost, to be clothed with humility. O man, thou standest in need of every thing; what possessest thou that thou didst not first receive? Thou hast been forgiven all; by the grace of God thou art what thou art. The religion of Jesus

Christ alone effectually teaches a man to descend without degradation, and to rise without pride; reduces him to the level of his natural guilt and misery, and exalts him to the glorious liberty, and the heavenly inheritance, of the sons of God.

We have here a preternatural, a miraculous conception. It reminds us of our common origin, of our common feebleness, of our mutual connexion and dependance. God "hath made of one blood "all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of "the earth." Every man therefore is a brother, and bound to entertain the affections, and to perform the part of a near kinsman to every man. This consideration I press upon you in the words and the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For I say, "through the grace given unto me, to every man "that is among you, not to think of himself more "highly than he ought to think; but to think "soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man "the measure of faith. For, as we are many members, in one body, and all members have not the "same office; so we being many are one body "in Christ, and every one members one of another. "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace "that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us pro-"phesy according to the proportion of faith; or "ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he "that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, "on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with "simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he "that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love

" be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is " evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly " affectioned one to another with brotherly love; " in honour preferring one another."—" Rejoice " with them that do rejoice, and weep with them " that weep. Be of the same mind one towards " another. Mind not high things, but condescend " to men of low estate."—" If it be possible, as " much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all " men."—" Be not overcome of evil, but overcome " evil with good."

The subject of the next Lecture will be the history of the nativity of our blessed Lord, and of the more remarkable circumstances which accompanied that all-important event. May what has been spoken become " profitable for doctrine, for " reproof, for correction, and for instruction in " righteousness." Amen.

LECTURE VI.

LUKE II. 1—14.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and lineage of David: to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abidding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

FROM the first instant of time until now, every instant has been displaying some new wonder, unfolding some new design of the Eternal mind. God

gives the word. Light arises, the earth emerges out of ocean, the firmament is expanded, sun, moon and stars appear, nature teems with life, man starts up out of the dust, rears his erect form to heaven, shines in his Maker's likeness; the Creator contemplates the progressive glories of his power, and pronounces every thing good. The Lord gives the word, and ocean again covers the earth, chaos and ancient night resume their empire, the breath of every living thing expires. Again he sends forth his word, the windows of heaven are stopped, the seas retire to their appointed bed, the dry land appears, the bow is seen in the cloud, the sign of God's covenant of peace. The period of every event is settled to a moment, the instruments provided, the hand is prepared. But of all the events which have taken place since the beginning of the world, the most illustrious and important surely is that recorded in the words now read. The moment of every child's birth is highly interesting at least to the mother. The birth of an heir to a title, to an estate, to a crown, is felt by thousands, by regions, by empires.

Here we have the birth of the "first-born among "many brethren," of "the heir of all things," of the "Prince of the kings of the earth." Toward this eventful hour, time, from the first dawn of light, began to flow in one rising, swelling tide; here it came to its fulness, and hence it began to bend its awful course to lose itself in eternity again. Toward this, as to their common central point, all the powers

of nature are attracted; from this, as from the sun, the central light of the universe, glory is in all directions diffused. In the birth of this wonderful child, all the children of men who lived before, or who arose after it, have a serious, an everlasting concern. Is it any wonder, then, that by so many signs in heaven and signs in earth, that by the tongues of prophets, the decrees of princes, the revolution of empires, the descent of angels, the finger of God should have pointed it out to mankind?

The Evangelist, at the beginning of the chapter, conveys us to Rome the proud and puissant mistress of the world; the enslaver of the nations, sinking, sunk herself into slavery. From what particular motive we are not informed, nor is it of much importance to determine, Augustus Cæsar thought proper to issue a decree for making an exact enrolment of all the subjects of his vast empire. A vainglorious monarch, who could exultingly call a subjugated hemisphere his own, might be prompted by pride to ascertain the number of slaves destined to obey him. As it was the boast of this magnificent prince that he had found Rome a city of bricks, and was leaving it a city of marble, the splendour of the capital was no doubt extracted out of the ruins of the provinces, and enrolment probably was intended to precede taxation. However it was, and on whomsoever beside the decree of the emperor fell, it affected one little, poor family in circumstances of singular delicacy, and fell upon it with uncommon severity. Behold the messenger of

Cæsar at the door of an obscure carpenter at Nazareth of Galilee, summoning him with all his family to repair to his native city, to be enrolled in their proper district; and as the commandments of kings require haste, and do not always stoop to consult the feelings of the humble and the miserable, he must depart on a moment's warning, with his tender companion, now in the last week of pregnancy, poor and unprovided, to a home from which he had been long exiled, and to visit kinsmen to whom he was become a stranger.

But this removal was wholly ordered by the supreme will of Heaven. The Son of David, who was to re-establish his throne, could be born no where but in Bethlehem the city of David. Thus the great Ruler of the world had willed, and thus prophecy had declared. And thus Cæsar was merely the unconscious, unintentional minister of the Son of Mary; furnishing a link to the chain of evidence respecting the truth and divine original of Christianity, and exhibiting an illustrious instance of the sovereign control which the great Jehovah possesses and exercises over the counsels of princes, the convulsion of nations, the fate of worlds.

We hasten from proud Rome to humble Nazareth, from a haughty despot to uncomplaining sufferers, from unfeeling power to patient submission. Behold that delicate woman, in the most delicate and interesting of all female situations, forced from home, constrained to undertake a painful and anxious journey in a condition which rendered ease, and atten-

tion, and tenderness, and the accommodations of pathy peculiarly desirable. See her advancing by slow and distressing stages towards the residence of her forefathers, once illustrious, but now falling into decay; to the city of her ancestors, but not to receive the attendance of royal state, not to usher into the world the heir of David's throne, amidst the prayers, and expectations, and kind wishes of the myriads of Israel: no, not so much as to enjoy the consolation and support which even the poor enjoy in such a case, to deposit the solicitude of approaching child-birth in the bosom of a fond mother, or sympathizing friend; alas, not even to partake of the ordinary conveniences which a traveller has reason to expect, the general hospitality, and mercenary comforts of an inn:—but to know the heart of a stranger, to swallow down the bitterness of neglect, to feel the insult of the proud, and the merciless pity of the mean. "There was no room "for *them* in the inn." Bethlehem was crowded with guests, but lo, the lineal heirs of the royal house of Judah, in the city of David, are so unconnected, so forlorn, so friendless, that not a door will open to let them in, not a tongue say, "God "relieve you, as they pass by; and so poor that an apartment in the stable is all the accommodation which by entreaty, or promise, or by presenting the face of misery, they are able to purchase.

The inevitable hour, to which nature at once looks with hope and shrinks from with horror, overtakes

her; and unsupported, unassisted, as it should seem, she brings forth her first-born son; and is able at once to perform the earliest duties of a mother, "she wrapped him in swaddling clothes," and with the humility and resignation becoming her destitute condition, "laid him in the manger," leaving it to Providence to unveil its own secret counsels and accomplish its own gracious purposes. And thus the Saviour of the world entered upon that state of depression, poverty, and suffering, which terminated only with his life.

But the affectingly humiliating scene in the stable at Bethlehem of Judah is relieved by the glory of the Lord shining round about it. That Babe neglected, unknown, despised, outcast of men, is declared, by the concurring testimony of patriarchs and prophets, of angels and men, by the shaking of the heavens and the earth, of the sea and the dry land, to be "the Son of the Highest." His parentage, his name, the time and place of his birth, the condition of his infant hours, have all the seal of heaven upon them. For what end did Isaiah prophesy, Alexander conquer, and Augustus give laws, but to point out to the world the instant, the spot, the descent, the estate in which the Son of God assumed our nature, in order to enter on the work of our redemption.

Preparation is making in another quarter of the globe, to bring a tribute of praise to the Redeemer of mankind. The East is ready to contribute its gifts, is preparing its gold and frankincense and

myrrh to lay them at his feet. The wise men of distant nations, occupied in the study of nature, and attentive to the signs of the times, are awaked to inquiry by a silent but shining monitor. The appearance of the starry heavens was well known to them, they can calculate the distances and revolutions of each little star that sparkles in the expanse of heaven; but in a moment all their science is confounded, all their experience is overthrown, by the appearance of a new created light, in motion and at rest by a law peculiar to itself, to fulfil a transitory indeed, but a most important purpose, and which having pointed to "the place where the young child lay," is blotted out of nature, and disappears for ever.

Now none of "these things were done in a "corner." Christianity did not steal in upon the world, without warning; all characters and descriptions of men were called in to give testimony to it, and without acquaintance, concurrence, or cooperation they establish the same truth. The eastern Magi on their arrival at Jerusalem, and on explaining the reason of their journey thither, are not treated as visionaries, who dreamed of things that never existed, but are listened to and respected as reasonable men inquiring after important truth. The attention of Herod, and of all Jerusalem with him, is roused; that jealous and sanguinary tyrant takes every precaution, sets on foot every inquiry that his reigning passions could suggest, to elucidate the case; to secure possession to himself, and

to crush every rival. He summons the chief priests and scribes of the people; consults them respecting the determinations of prophecy, as to the birth place of the expected King of the Jews, he compares their opinion with the report of the wise men, and acts upon the result of that comparison. A coincidence of persons and circumstances so striking, and all relating to one person and one point, must lead to the acknowledgment and adoration of that God, in whose hand are the hearts of princes, the deliberations of councils, the number and motions of all the host of heaven. "He telleth the number of the "stars; he calleth them all by their names; great "is our Lord and of great power; his understand-"ing is infinite." Augustus Cæsar, Herod, the Magi, the Jewish Sanhedrim, the inhabitants of Bethlehem, of Jerusalem, all concur to give witness to yonder babe laid in a manger, and they involuntarily assist in demonstrating the certainty of those things wherein ye have been instructed: that ye might have strong consolation in having fled for refuge to the hope set before you.

But higher testimony still than that of the potentates of the earth is given to the Lord of glory. Angels descend with songs to meet him at his coming; the gloom of night is dispelled by celestial radiance; Silence, well-pleased, hears the sweet melody of angelic notes chanting the glad tidings of great joy, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." The harmony of a thousand heavenly voices in chorus join,

to celebrate the advent of the Prince of Peace; to announce to a slumbering world Him in whose light they shine, by whose power they are supported, in whose praise they unite, to whose will they are devoted. What a wonderful contrast! A deserted, friendless mother, a helpless infant, a stable, a manger! What humiliation like this humiliation! A throne above the heavens, the homage of princes, the effulgence of a star to mark the way to his cradle, the adoration of the glorious host of heaven, the arm of the Lord revealed! What design but the salvation of a lost world, what event but the birth of a Saviour, what person but the son of God, could warrant all this display of majesty and might? Christian, keep these astonishing extremes continually in sight. This is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; "as children are partakers of flesh and blood "he likewise himself also took part of the same; "verily he took not on him the nature of angels, "but the seed of Abraham. In all things it behoved "him to be made like unto his brethren, that he "might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in "things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation "for the sins of the people; for in that he himself "hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour "them that are tempted." The subject teaches us,

1. How incompetent judges we are of the ways and works of God. Few events, if any, correspond to our preconceived opinions of them. From the glimmering that we have, without any light at all save the sparks of our own kindling, we take upon

us to arrange and decide, and to limit the Holy One of Israel. Like Naaman the Syrian, we have settled the mode of cure in our own mind, dressed it in proper parade and ceremony, and fall out with the prophet because the simplicity of the process confounds the airy vision with which our imagination had amused itself. Not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God, the carnal Jews had dressed out, for Messiah the prince, a throne like Solomon's, of ivory overlaid with gold, had placed him at the head of armies, had surrounded him with guards, had crowned him with laurels. When the event belied their groundless expectations, with Naaman they turned away in a rage, saying, "Are not Abana "and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all "the waters of Israel?" "Away with this man, cru- "cify him; not this man but Barabbas."

2. Observe here in how many instances God writeth vanity on all the glory of man. In the pride of their hearts, the princes and potentates here mentioned vainly imagined a prostrate world to be all their own. Every will must bend to theirs: to their pleasure every power and possession must minister; all the while they are the mere attendants on the royal state of the real Prince. Their names are indeed some of them still had in remembrance, but their power is annihilated, their consequence is swallowed up, or if any remain, it is derived from the relation which it bears to the superior, the commanding, the undiminished importance of Him to whom they gave witness, and whose state, in spite of them-

selves, they continue to support. The empire of Augustus speedily fell under its own weight, and the downfall of Rome quickly followed that of Jerusalem, and both approved the truth, and power, and justice of God; while that child born, that Saviour given, holds undivided empire, and exercises unbounded sway. Eighteen centuries have confirmed, not shaken his authority, and time has discovered another hemisphere, far more extensive than the former, and added it to his dominion. Let us again sing, "His "name shall endure for ever. His name shall be con- "tinued as long as the sun: and men shall be bless- "ed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who "only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his "glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be "filled with his glory." Amen, and amen.

Augustus, in the pride of his heart, and an abject world in flattery to him, prefixed his name to the age in which he lived—and let this piece of vanity have its scope. With the classical, philosophic scholar, let the Augustan age boast of a Cicero, a Virgil, a Livy, a Mæcenas; the humble Christian will rather glory in its having produced light from heaven, which eclipsed all human eloquence and wisdom in their highest splendour, and, resigning to the schools their favourite historians, orators, and poets, will rejoice in revolving in their place the hallowed page of Luke, the beloved physician, and in listening to the fervid, native, inartificial eloquence of Paul of Tarsus, and above all in attending to the dignified wisdom

which flowed from the lips of him who "spake as "never man spake."

3. Finally, this wonderful child born teaches us the value and importance of little children. What human sagacity could penetrate the thick cloud which shrouded his nativity? What but the spirit of prophecy could draw aside the veil which concealed his future eminence? Who but a Simeon could discern in him the salvation of God, and foretell that "this "child was set for the fall and rising again of many "in Israel; and for a sign which should be spoken "against?" And who but he who "declareth the "end from the beginning, and from ancient times "the things that are not yet done, saying, *My "counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure;*" who but He knows what the infant, now drawing its first breath, is one day to become? What dormant powers may there lie hid! What a germ of wisdom ready to expand! What godlike faculties, which are at length to astonish, to delight, to bless mankind! Watch over the expansion. The precious seed is sown by the hand of the Creator. Mark its springing; mark its progress. God has done his part, parent, master, minister, see that thou doest thine. "It is not the will of your Father which is "in heaven, that one of these little ones should "perish."

The next Lecture will have for its subject the history of the infancy and childhood of Jesus Christ. May he who condescended to become a little child for our sakes; who, as He "went about doing good,"

encouraged the approach of little children, saying, "Suffer them and forbid them not to come unto me; "for of such is the kingdom of God:" may he bless us with the Spirit of adoption, and endow us with the lovely simplicity, the docility, the submissiveness of little children, that we may enter into the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

LECTURE VII.

LUKE II. 40.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

OF all the wonders presented to us in the world of nature, man is the greatest wonder to himself. His body dust of the ground, and mouldering back to dust; reduced to the level of the beasts of the field; but that dust animated with the breath of life, a living soul, exalted to the rank of angels, an emanation from God himself. In him are blended, in a most wonderful manner, three distinct kinds of life, forming one glorious individual formed "after the image of Him who created him." As the tree in the forest imperceptibly rises, increases from lowness and feebleness to stateliness and strength, and having attained full maturity imperceptibly decays, so the feeble infant gradually increases in stature, changes the grovelling into the erect form, rears his head to the vault of heaven, exulting in the greatness of his strength; he begins to verge towards decay, he bends to the ground from whence he was taken, and at length sinks into it again. But he is not like the plant rivetted to one spot, unconscious of existence, incapable of self-motion. With the other animals around him, he

feels himself among his fellows, he rejoices in society, he possesses consciousness, he is directed by motives, he aims at a determinate end. But he is not, like the beasts that perish, impelled by instinct merely, the slave of appetite and sense. To the animal, the goodness of the Creator has superadded the rational life, the faculty of contemplating that great universe of which he constitutes a part so essential, the capacity of rising from the effect to the cause, from the work to the Author: Man enjoys the gift of speech, whereby he is rendered capable of communicating his reflections and reasonings, of forming combinations of power which awe, control, and direct the subject world.

To mark the progress of a human being is an interesting and delightful employment—to observe how the limbs acquire firmness and strength, how the mental powers unfold themselves, and all the passions of the man, in succession, stand confessed. See the fond mother bending with delight over her infant, at first a little pliant lump of animated clay, every power lying dormant save one, that of drawing its nourishment from her breast. By and by the eye begins to feel and follow the light, the slender neck strengthens and sustains the reclining head; the babe smiles, and the parent's heart is overwhelmed with joy. Now he can distinguish the face of her that suckles him from that of a stranger, at least she flatters herself he can, while the soft murmur of infantine satisfaction expresses his gratitude. The figure by degrees becomes erect, every

limb is in motion, the uncertain tongue attempts to imitate the sounds which strike the opening ear, and the feet press downward to the supporting earth; tremblingly he totters into walking, and stammers into speech. The powers of recollection and of comparing appear, the symptoms of passion become visible, love and aversion, desire and gratitude. The moral sense at length begins to dawn, and the man in miniature finds himself a limited, dependent, subject, accountable being; hence hope and fear, self-complacency and remorse.

We are this evening to contemplate infancy and childhood in their loveliest and most attractive form, and in their most interesting and affecting circumstances. Look yet again to Bethlehem of Judea, and behold the nothingness of human greatness; the offspring of kings a stranger in his paternal city, the heir of David without a place where to lay his head, a Sovereign destitute of all things. When God, at the fulness of time, sent forth his own Son, as he was made of a woman, so was he "made under "the law," subjected to all its rites and restraints however painful and humiliating, and the Saviour of mankind, that he might fulfil all righteousness, and become a perfect pattern of obedience, first passively submitted to every ordinance of religion, and then by an active and exact conformity, magnified the law and made it honourable.

The minuter circumstances of this period of our blessed Lord's life are not left on record: those excepted which relate to his public character and

divine mission, for as to these Scripture is most exact and particular. Of the progress of his infant mind no traces remain; not a word is said even of the beauty of his person; though the general terms which the Evangelists employ warrant us in thinking, that never in child born of a woman did such early dawnings of superior wisdom appear, that never was human form so perfect. The modest reserve of the historians of Jesus Christ, in this respect, seems to minister a severe reproof of the ridiculous details to be found, in modern biography, of infantine actions and sayings, the supposed prognostics of future eminence and distinction. We can forgive a fond mother, nay love her the more for the amiable weakness, when we hear her repeat the pretty sayings, interpret the significant looks, and describe the wonderful deeds of her soul's darling; but it excites pity, if not an ungentler feeling, to be told gravely, from the press, of the insipid nothings which a great man said and did, when he was an ignorant and silly, perhaps a pert and petulant boy, who probably merited correction where he obtained praise.

Of our divine Master we are told what was done to him, not what he did; what was said by others concerning him, not what he said concerning either himself or others. And thus was he early an instructor of parents to abstain from partial and excessive admiration of their children; and to little children to cultivate that modesty, docility, and humbleness of mind, which are the real ornament

and honour of their tender age. Behold in him then, parents, children, a helpless infant at the disposal of others. It is of importance to the world to know that, at the appointed period, the terms of the Abrahamic covenant were complied with; that the name of JESUS was given him, according to the direction of the angel; that as the first-born of his mother, being sacred to God, he was solemnly presented to the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem; for these things admonish us of the divine truth and faithfulness in keeping covenant and promise with his people, and of the right which he has to expect and require faithfulness and obedience on their part; of the character and offices annexed to that sacred, precious, and venerable name, and of the self-dedication which not the first-born only, but even all owe unto God. On the eighth day, then, he was circumcised, and named, according to the commandment, and on the fortieth day he was presented with the accustomed offering in the temple.

Providence lays hold of this latter occasion to procure a noble testimony to the high rank and character of the Son God. The spirit of prophecy had lately revived, and many in Jerusalem were "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and considered it as near at hand. Of this number was a just and devout man named Simeon, to whom it was communicated by a special revelation, that, old as he was, his eyes should not be closed in death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ. Heaven-directe he

goes up to the temple, probably to entreat the speedy accomplishment of this gracious promise, at the very instant when the ceremony of the law was performing, and the Spirit that was upon him instantly points to Jesus as the fulfilling of the word in which God had caused him to hope. Filled with holy joy he takes the expected child into his arms, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, blesses God, saying, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in "peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes "have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared "before the face of all people; a light to lighten "the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." He then points him out to the by-standers as the person spoken of by ancient prophecy, "who "should be set for the fall and rising again of many "in Israel, and for a sign which should be spoken "against:" a prediction descriptive of the reception the Messiah should meet with from that world which he came to redeem. The same important truth is immediately confirmed by an ancient prophetess, who, coming in the instant Simeon had done speaking, gave public thanks likewise unto the Lord, and "spake of him to all them that looked for "redemption in Jerusalem."

Thus He, whose birth-place was determined many ages before, by prophetic illumination, whose natal hour was announced by one angel, and celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host; to whose feet a company of shepherds is led, with their simple offering, by a voice from heaven, and to whom eastern

sages are conducted by an extraordinary star, is in the most public place of resort in the Jewish metropolis, declared aloud, a few weeks after his birth, at a public religious service, by testimony on testimony, the accomplishment of God's great purpose of mercy to mankind.

While so many illustrious personages were producing their concurring evidence to the truth as it is in Jesus, exalting him to endless honours and universal dominion, one is cruelly plotting his destruction. Agitated by jealousy as groundless as it was barbarously pursued, Herod determines to crush at once this pretender to a throne whom so many signal and splendid appearances in heaven and earth were striving to display in superior glory. To make sure of his blow, his dark remorseless mind enlarges the circle of suspicion from a few days to two years, and from a single feared, hated individual, to all the male children of a great city. Humanity sickens at the thought of the dreadful tragedy of that city, when "in Rama a voice was heard, lamentation, and "weeping, and great mourning, Rachael weeping "for her children, and refusing to be comforted, "because they are not." By aiming at too much, the tyrant misses his aim altogether. The vigour of his pursuit exerted in one direction, confined to one object, might have overtaken it; but extending the sphere, dividing the pursuit, "the captive of the "mighty is taken away, and the prey of the terri- "ble is delivered, for thus saith the Lord, I will "contend with him that contendeth with thee."

And how was this deliverance effected? Providence employs not extraordinary means, to fulfil its designs, wantonly and unnecessarily, but makes ordinary instruments to produce mighty events. The bloody intention of Herod is hardly conceived in the gloomy hell of his own breast, than it is seen of that eye which nothing can escape, and no sooner is it seen than prevented. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Joseph is admonished of the danger which threatened the child's life, and warned to shun it, by fleeing into Egypt. Thus at every stage of his life was the Saviour of mankind hated and persecuted of men; thus the all-wise Ruler of the Universe knows how to deliver, and finds a way to escape; thus He "confounds the wisdom of the wise, and brings to "nought the understanding of the prudent."

By a strange, perhaps unaccountable direction of the supreme will, the land of Egypt frequently serves as an asylum to persecuted goodness, protects and cherishes the precious seed of the church. Thither Abraham flees from the pressure of famine, and is thence dismissed with riches and honour. Here Joseph finds refuge from the malice of jealous and cruel brothers; from hence Jacob and his starving family are repeatedly fed. Here sprung up Moses, in times of extreme danger and distress; here he was miraculously preserved, and reared to unexampled eminence and usefulness. Here Israel miraculously increases into a great nation, and from

hence triumphantly departs; and here finally, He whom all the rest prefigured, and in whom their several glory united as in their centre, sought and found protection from the rage of an incensed king. This too was ordered of Him who seeth the end from the beginning. He went down into Egypt, that in his return the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise "thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt re-"strain."

A veil is drawn over the sojourn in Egypt, and it were presumption to attempt to draw it aside: neither is it possible exactly to ascertain its duration. The infamous Herod meanwhile paid the debt of nature, leaving behind him a name loaded with the execrations of the age in which he lived, and with the detestation of every future generation to which the history of his enormities shall descend. His death was the signal of return to the land of Israel; but prudence suggested the retirement of the poor and despised town of Nazareth, as a residence more suitable to the circumstances of the times, than the noise and hurry of a metropolis, the seat of faction and intrigue, or the suspiciously observed city of David, to which the jealous eyes of successive tyrants had been attracted by well known prophecies and by recent portents.

As the place of Christ's birth, so that of his upbringing was prophetically marked, not indeed by any particular text that appears in the sacred code,

but by its whole spirit and tenour, which represent him as voluntarily submitting to every species of reproach and indignity; the carpenter's son, a Galilean, a Nazarene, can any good come out of Nazareth! It was in this obscure village of a region of a conquered country, proverbially contemptible, that the childhood of Christ passed unseen, unnoticed of the great world; but carefully observed of an attentive mother, who to the tender solicitudes of that relation, was inspired with hopes, and animated with prospects, and torn with anxieties, which no mother before or since ever could know; there this wonderful "child grew and waxed strong in spirit, "filled with wisdom," exhibiting unequivocal signs of a superior nature, without courting the public notice, or attracting premature homage; and thus humility, from the beginning and throughout, marked the character of the condescending friend of mankind, who became of no reputation, sought not glory of man, took on him the form of a servant, he "strives not, nor cries, neither doth he lift up his "voice in the streets;" and from the return out of Egypt, which was probably not beyond his second year, up to the twelfth, history is entirely silent as to the particulars—but O how much is conveyed in the strong general terms employed by inspiration to impress on our hearts the discovery and progress of these veiled ten years. May not the history of them be one of the precious arcana which "the "Father hath kept in his own power," and reserved

for the information, wonder, and joy of an improved state of existence, when things hard to be understood shall be fully explained; and things known in part shall be unfolded in all their connexions and dependencies; and infinite intelligence shall supply all the deficiencies of human understanding.

It was in that fameless village, and in those trackless years; that the foundation was laid of a greatness which should eclipse all created glory; of a kingdom that should swallow up every other; of an enterprise which should extend its influence to the remotest ages of eternity.

The next Lecture will, if God permit, take up the next recorded period of our Saviour's history, his assuming for a moment a public character at the age of twelve years, and his sliding away from it again into silence and retirement, till his thirtieth year, the time of his final manifestation unto Israel, as the great "Prophet that should come unto the "world."

Shall I degrade my subject, by saying it suggests to parents many useful hints respecting the early treatment of their children? Be as tender and attentive as you will; listen to the voice of nature and learn your duty: but dream not of making a stranger bend the knee to your idol, perhaps he has an idol of his own, weak, silly, and ridiculous as yours; perhaps he see nothing but impertinence and imperfection, where you behold only grace and loveliness, and the more you force your Dagon upon his attention, the more hideousness and deformity he will

discover in it. Be not eager to bring forward the accomplishments of your child. If they are worthy being seen, your reserve and the child's modesty will give a glow to the colouring which will strike every eye, and please every heart. If they be trivial, why will you force a good-natured looker-on, to flatter your vanity at the expense of his own judgment; or provoke a stern and severe one, to approve his sincerity and truth at the expense of your feeling and of your idol's fancied importance? In private let the person most dear to you be most dear you; in society, the darling object, the first in consideration and affection, ought to be the last in respect of attention.

Be not over-anxious about an early crop from your offspring. You may have the fruit, it is true, by means of vehement cultivation, a little earlier in the season, but it savours of the artificial heat that hurried it forward; the tree is wasted and fades before the time; and at the proper season when nature is clothing the vigorous plant with its golden harvest, the languid child of art stands lifeless and leafless, expiring before its time. There is always danger from a premature spring, though it be in the course of nature. Happy is the man who can hit the temperate mean betwixt indecent haste and indolent delay. I would address a few words, to the same effect, to advanced childhood and early youth. But childhood and youth are not disposed to attend serious Lectures, or do not understand, or disbelieve, and therefore do not attend to them.

They must be left to the forcible, the irresistible lessons of experience. I earnestly recommend them to the teaching of God's good Spirit. May the Son of God, who vouchsafed for our sake to pass through infancy and childhood poor, neglected, unknown, guard our helpless infants, direct our thoughtless, wayward children, counsel and instruct manly, matured reason, and smile with complacency on the hoary head and make it a crown of righteousness. And to God in Christ be ascribed immortal praise. Amen.

LECTURE VIII.

LUKE II. 41—52.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him they were amazed. And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

UNIVERSAL nature is progress, succession and change. We observe it in every thing around us, we feel it in every particle of our own frame. But obvious as this progression is, in its larger portions

the minuter details defy the closest attention of the acutest eye. Darkness has evidently given place to light; but what vigilance of inspection could ascertain the precise instant when night ceased and light began to dawn? That plant is palpably increased in strength and size, but let me hang over it the live-long day, with the unremitting penetration of an eagle's eye, and I am incapable of catching a single step of the progress. Shade melts imperceptibly into shade; the transition is made, but we were not aware of it; whether we be asleep or awake, careless or attentive, the great, complex machine keeps in motion, performs its revolution, produces its effect. The progress of man, the most perfect of all creatures that we are acquainted with, is the most interesting of all objects to man. If it be delightful to behold the trees of the forest burst into verdure, and those of the garden putting on their beautiful garments, and changing that beauty into fruitfulness; if it be pleasant to behold the springing corn multiply thirty, sixty, a hundred fold; to behold the flocks and herds increase—what must it be to behold the image of God multiplied on the earth, the human form divine rear itself toward heaven, the powers of thought and reason expand.

> ——————By degrees,
> The human blossom blows; and every day,
> Soft as it rolls along, shows some new charm.
> Thus infant reason grows apace, and calls
> For the kind hand of an assiduous care.

Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,
To breathe th' enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.
THOMSON'S SPRING, l. 1146.

But this, like every other human delight, is blended with pain. Even the partiality of parental affection is constrained to observe rank and noisome weeds springing up with the delicate seeds of goodness; the dawning of reason is obscured by the clouds of folly and vice, and the promise of a golden harvest is blighted in early spring, by late frost or premature heat. Before we are well awake to the joy of some newly discovered excellency, we are overwhelmed with the distress of perceiving some glaring imperfection, or ungracious propensity; and where we love and rejoice, there also we find cause to lament and condemn. The Spirit of God has seen meet to present the world with one perfect model, for the instruction of every age of human life. We have held it up in a state of infantine beauty, simplicity, and gentleness, a passive example of subjection to poverty, and danger, and persecution; but we have seen the meanness and obscurity of that state relieved by the decided attention of eternal Providence, and by the voluntary homage of angels and men.

On returning from Egypt, Jesus was carried to the obscure village of Nazareth, and the veil is drawn over him till his twelfth year, when he was

pleased to clothe himself for a little while with majesty, and then disappeared, till the time of his final manifestation to the world, as the Saviour of it. The law obliged every male of Israel to appear before the Lord in the place which he had chosen to put his name there, three times every year, at the three great feasts of passover, pentecost, and tabernacles. This was evidently intended to maintain a good correspondence between all the members of the commonwealth, by the social intercourse, the innocent festivity, and the devotional exercises which these solemnities promoted.

Joseph and the mother of Jesus, though the injunction extended not to females, were in the habit of regularly attending the service of the temple on those occasions; and Jesus, another "Nazarite to "God from his mother's womb," accompanied them to the holy place. Self-evident marks of the favour of Heaven were already upon him. "He "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with "wisdom." Expressions importing uncommon comeliness of person and superior powers of understanding: but in Him, as in other children, we behold a gradual progression from knowledge to knowledge, as from stature to stature. For as nature conceals from us at what moment she unites the immortal mind to the mortal frame, so the Holy Spirit has thought proper to conceal at what season, and in what measure, Deity was pleased to unite himself to the human nature of the Redeemer; and let us not over-curiously seek "to

"know the times and the seasons which the Father "hath put in his own power." Neither the lovely form, nor the attractive goodness, nor the excellent wisdom, however, of this wonderful child, seem to have roused much attention or commanded uncommon respect. The world is captivated not by real and solid worth, but by the gaudy outside of showy superfical qualities. Rank and riches spread a glare over the person of their possessor that makes it known and remembered; they add weight to his most ordinary sayings, which gives them currency and importance; while poverty, like a bushel put over a candle, prevents it, however clear it may be, from giving its light. What carnal mind can reconcile the idea of great and distinguished qualities with that of the carpenter's son? No, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when "we shall see him, there is no beauty that we "should desire him."

In those stated journeys to Jerusalem, it was customary for many families of the same neighbourhood, or of the same kindred, to travel in company. The road was sweetened and shortened by friendly communication, and religion strengthened the bands of friendship and the ties of blood. Were there no other reason but this to press upon the heart the importance of attendance on the ordinances of God's house, that it serves to strengthen the bond of nature between husband and wife, parent and child, one neighbour and another, it were enough to recommend it to every

one who prizes the comfort of the life that now is; how much more, when there are involved in it all the infinitely more important interests of that which is to come! Happy are those societies in which the powers of a world to come are so felt, as to shed a sweetening, cheering, enlivening influence over present connexions, enjoyments, and pursuits. The solemnities of the feast being ended, all prepare to return to their respective homes and their usual employments. Thus wisely and mercifully, He who knows what is in man makes devotion, labour, and rest, alternately to recommend, to relieve, and to support each other. A perpetual sabbath would soon prove the death of religion; under uninterrupted labour the man would quickly sink; rest protracted beyond a certain bound would prove destructive of all repose. But to the heart in which the love of God is shed abroad, the painful toil of the week is mitigated and diminished by the prospect of the day of sacred intermission, of heavenly communication; and the calm, satisfying delights of the Lord's day, bestowing ease on the body, and composure on the mind, serve as a restorative toward undertaking and undergoing the fatigues of another week.

The numerousness of the company which travelled back to Nazareth prevented its being observed that one was wanting, and a complete day's journey is performed, before the eager, attentive eye of even a mother misses its darling object. How is this to be accounted for? The whole train

was a band of brothers, of one heart and of one soul; in whatever part of it the child was, behind or before, he was encompassed with friends: other children of twelve years old need attention, protection, and support, but he has given many unequivocal proofs of a wisdom capable of conducting himself. The time is now come that his mother herself must learn with whom she had to do, and to revere in her own son the Son of the Highest. All was of God, who thus prepared the way for another public declaration of the great Prophet who should come into the world, and that not by the tongue of an archangel, nor by a multitude of the heavenly host, but by the mouth of Jesus himself; into whose lips grace was poured and praise perfected. It is easier to conceive than to describe the sorrow and anxiety occasioned by the discovery that Jesus was not in the train. The shades of night spread over the soul of a mother, the terror of evil beasts, of evil men; of hunger and cold, of missing the road, and of all the nameless apprehensions which solicitous parents feel for unprotected youth and innocence. Nothing remains but to tread back their weary anxious steps, and the close of the second day sees them enter Jerusalem, with the mixed emotions of hope and despondency; and another sleepless night succeeds the painful day. The third day, well knowing the zeal which he had for God's house, they repair betimes to the temple; they find him, think, O mothers, with what astonishment and delight, in health, safety,

and composure, and, gracious Heaven! how employed? "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both "hearing them and asking them questions." Painters and commentators seem to have entirely mistaken this passage of our Saviour's history. They place him in the centre, in the chief seat, assuming authority, instructing grey hairs. The Evangelist places him in the modest seat of a pupil, a pattern to children of twelve, of docility, of humility, of meekness; carefully listening to the questions proposed to him by the public teachers, and answering with deference and submission, though with intelligence and decision; and proposing, in his turn, questions that led to important truth and really useful knowledge, not such as displayed the acuteness of him who interrogated, or that aimed at exposing him of whom the answer was demanded. In truth, ever since I could read and understand the words of the historian, I have considered this little anecdote of our blessed Lord, as of singular importance in his character, as the great teacher of mankind. The age of twelve is an interesting crisis in human life. The rational soul is then shaking off the child, and emerging into the man. There is about that period, knowledge enough to minister fuel to vanity and self-conceit, but not enough to discern ignorance and folly; there is learning sufficient to tease and perplex, but not to attract and conciliate affection. And did it please thee, meek and condescending Jesus, to instruct that wayward season of exist-

ence, when youth begins to feel the force of example, to blush at petulance, to be influenced by honest shame and honest praise, that season when the heart is awake, alive all over to the bitterness of censure, or to the sweets of approbation? Yes, and we see in thee with wonder and joy the happy medium between the firmness of conscious wisdom, and the forwardness of assumed superiority: between the meekness and gentleness which are the inseparable concomitants of real ability, and the self-sufficiency which betrays want of talents, supporting itself by extravagance of claim. That this is the just view of our blessed Lord's conduct is evident from the effect which it produced. You need not to be told of the jealousy of aged and professional men. Not a doctor in the temple but would have felt and resented the mortifying superiority of a child, had that superiority been ostentatiously displayed; but his whole deportment excited only admiration and love; his understanding was equalled only by his affability and condescension; he at once instructs his teachers and gains their good will; "all that heard him were asto-"nished at his understanding and answers."

If strangers were thus moved by a mild display of early unaffected wisdom, what must a parent have felt, whose heart but a moment before was throbbing with anguish unutterable? How happy is she to acknowledge such a son, the delight of every eye, the theme of every tongue. But even Mary, the mother of Jesus, is weak and imperfect;

she speaks unadvisedly with her lips, she presumes to mingle upbraiding and reproach with expressions of endearment and exultation: she has forgotten from whence she received him, the character given him of the angel before he was conceived in the womb, the sacred names which he bore, the testimony which God had so repeatedly given to his beloved Son; she addresses him, all-wonderful as he was, as if he had been merely an ordinary child, who had thoughtlessly and wantonly rambled away from his parents, and had given them unnecessary trouble and pain, He whose every word, every action had an important meaning and design. "Son," says she, "why hast thou thus dealt with "us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee "sorrowing." And now the answer of Christ to this question unfolds the great end which he had in view, through the whole transaction. It was time for him to assert his divine original; and the meekest and most submissive of all children stands invested with divine majesty, "How is it that ye "sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about "my Father's business?" or, as it might perhaps with greater propriety have been rendered, "in "my Father's house."

What a lesson is conveyed to the world in this reply? Sacred is the authority of a mother over a son of twelve years of age, but there is an authority still more sacred, of which a child even of that age may be sensible. When the honour of God is concerned, the voice of nature must be

suppressed. When the voice of Heaven calls, the decencies and civilities of life must give place, and all secondary obligations and considerations must be swallowed up of the first. He silently endured the reproach of being called the carpenter's son, by strangers, but his own mother must denominate him what he is, and what she knew him to be. But reproof of a parent must be insinuated, not brought directly forward; and here again the pattern is perfect; delicacy and firmness unite to spare the mother, yet reprove the offence; and whatever were the other questions and answers of this celebrated conference, those which are on record will remain an everlasting monument of the perfect union of wisdom and harmlessness, which distinguished the Son of God from every other.

The Sun having shone forth in this temporary effulgence again hid its face in clouds, and submitted to an eclipse of eighteen years longer; He divested himself of all authority; He sought not glory from man; He became of no reputation; He took on him the form of a servant. "He "went down with them, and came to Nazareth, "and was subject unto them;" and by this voluntary humiliation of himself, by this retreat into the shade, more than by ten thousand precepts and arguments, He has inculcated the practice of humility on his disciples. A few short words contain the history of many years, even so, holy Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight; "Jesus in-

"creased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with "God and man." Let us not presume to draw aside the veil which infinite wisdom has spread, nor seek to be wise above what is written: these things the angels desire to look into, and some of these things, though now they are hidden from us, we may be permitted to know hereafter.

About the period of this passover, when Christ was showing himself in the temple, after this extraordinary manner, as the Son of God, Augustus Cæsar, the emperor of Rome, dies, and is succeeded in the throne by Tiberius. About six years after, Josephus, called Caiaphas, was made high priest of the Jews, through the partial favour of Valerius Gratus, the Roman governor. Towards the end of the twelfth year from that period, Pontius Pilate was sent into Palestine as Procurator of Judea, in the room of Valerius Gratus, and John Baptist entered on the exercise of his public ministry. Those names are now stript of all their glory; those stations are now fallen into disuse; those events are now stripped of all their importance, save what they derive from the relation which they bear to yonder babe in the stable, that child in the midst of the doctors, that gentle, obscure, unassuming youth of Nazareth of Galilee. So differently do objects weigh when examined by the scale of the world, and tried by the balance of the sanctuary. In the next Lecture we will proceed, if God permit, to the history of Christ's baptism, and of the illustrious testimony then given from the most ex-

cellent glory to Jesus Christ, as God's well-beloved Son.

"Let us with Mary keep all these sayings in "our heart." Let us, from the example of this pious pair, regularly attend the worship of God's house, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, "as the manner of some is:" and thus shall we "go from strength to strength" till we appear before God in Zion. Let us carefully attend to the proper mode of treatment of children, suited to age, to capacity, to temper, and disposition. The discipline adapted to childhood is by no means suited to a more advanced state; and when the youth has become a man, and "put away childish "things," he must be treated as a man. It is of importance to know when the stimulus, when the bridle is to be employed. What would overwhelm the timid may prove hardly a curb to the headstrong; the slow of speech and understanding must not be urged into the speed of the acute and impetuous. Parents rejoice in a forward display of faculties in their children; they encourage it, and they not seldom repent it. The opposite error is not common, and is therefore less an object of caution. The difficulties which daily present themselves, in managing the progress of the human mind, are frequently insurmountable by the ordinary powers of man, which therefore stand in need of the illumination of "wisdom from above;" "if any of you," then, "lack wisdom, let him

" ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and " upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Let the young be instructed how to rise into eminence and distinction. Covet not, pursue not premature honour and applause. Extorted praise is gratifying neither to the giver nor to the receiver; a free-will offering of approbation is " twice blessed; " it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." Meditate on the familiar image which, no doubt, has frequently been suggested to you: honour, like the shadow, pursues the flyer, and flies from the pursuer. Demand less than your due, and men will be disposed to give you the more. My young friends, " be not children in understand- " ing: howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in " understanding be men."

LECTURE IX.

LUKE III. 21—23.

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.

THE declared purpose of our Evangelist, in undertaking to write this history, is that his most excellent friend Theophilus, and with him every lover of God and truth, "might know the *certainty* of "those things wherein he had been instructed." This "certainty" is demonstrable from the spirit which Christianity breathes, and from the external evidence by which its divine original was confirmed. The religion of Jesus Christ proves that it came down from heaven, from the Father of lights, by the character of the great Author and Finisher of our Faith, by the example of all righteousness which he set, by the purity and heavenly-mindedness which he displayed and recommended, by the labours of mercy and love which he performed, by the sufferings which he patiently underwent, and by "the glory that followed." To these Providence

was pleased to superadd proofs that reach the understanding through the medium of sense; namely, signal, supernatural, and frequently-repeated testimonies, exhibited in the presence of a cloud of witnesses, who produced a clear, concurring, consistent mass of evidence, respecting facts which fell under the personal observation of their own eyes and ears, and which were never contradicted nor even called in question.

At this distance of time and place, the last mentioned species of evidence, that of external circumstances, must of necessity be transmitted to us through the channel of history, and its validity must rest on the veracity of the historian. The other sort of evidence is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. This counsel approves itself to be of God, to the conviction of every one who seriously examines it, at whatever distance of time and place, from its indelible characters, from the universality of the field which it embraces, and from the glorious and godlike end at which it aims; in a word, from its congeniality to the feelings, to the wishes, and to the wants of human nature. Had no prediction taught the world to expect a Deliverer; had no miracle declared Him the great Lord of the Universe; had no voice from Heaven proclaimed Him the beloved Son of God, He must have stood confessed the predicted Emanuel, God with us, in his compassion to the miserable, in his patience with the froward, in his forbearance toward the evil and unthankful, in his clemency to the

guilty. The Gospel breathes "peace on earth and "good will to men;" its unbounded liberality diffuses its influence over the whole world of mankind; its professed aim and end are to confer all possibly attainable happiness on every human being, in the life which now is, and perfect and everlasting felicity in that which is to come. The object which Christianity proposes to itself is to reform, to purify, to exalt our fallen nature, by making us partakers of a divine nature; it is to rear the fabric of present and everlasting blessedness on the solid foundation of wisdom, truth, and virtue. It penetrates and pervades every principle of our nature, and enters completely into the detail of human life and conduct; it informs the understanding, melts the heart, overawes the conscience, and brings the trembling, guilty, helpless, desponding creature unto God. If these are not the characters of a Revelation from the God and Father of all men, what characters are sufficient to produce belief? If the spirit and tendency of the Gospel work not conviction, the descent of an angel from heaven, or the return of one from the regions of the dead, would be equally inefficacious.

In this "doctrine according to godliness," Men and Brethren, we behold genuine philosophy, not carelessly slumbering over fancied plans of improvement, not coldly suggesting ideas of reform, not bewildering herself in the peradventures of doubtful disputation, but philosophy alive, awake, and in action; philosophy doing good and diffusing happi-

ness; the divine philosophy which brings God down to dwell with men upon earth, and which raises men from earth to heaven. In its great Author we behold not the sullen, supercilious recluse, looking with affected contempt on the weakness and ignorance of mankind, talking and arguing sagely, and effecting nothing, but the beneficent friend of man, mixing with society, looking with complacency on harmless enjoyment, stretching forth the hand to relieve distress, with patience and condescension instructing the ignorant, outrunning the expectations and even the desires of the humble, and overcoming evil with good. At every period, and in every condition of life, we behold Him a perfect pattern of every possible excellence.

We have already contemplated the blessed Jesus in his original glory, before the world was, and in all the wonders of his humiliation to the level of humanity: we have beheld him in all the affecting interest of infancy and childhood, born in a stable, laid in a manger, aimed at by the dagger of a ruffian, driven into exile, meekly retiring into obscurity, silently increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. From the age of twelve to thirty years, that is, for more than half the period which He tabernacled among men, Providence has seen meet to withhold all traces of his history. Within the short space of about three years is comprised the detail of all the things which Jesus did, and taught, and suffered as the Saviour of mankind. To this eventful era we are now brought forward, and

we enter on the contemplation of it with mixed emotions of wonder, reverence, and joy.

Stand by, ye princes and potentates of the earth; the King of kings is about to make his public entry. What is the consecration of a prelate, the coronation of an emperor, the voice of a trumpet, the anointing with oil, compared to the majesty, solemnity, and importance of the scene displayed on the banks of the Jordan! Bend your heads and cover your faces, "ye angels that excel in strength," He whom you are all commanded to worship is here. Behold, he cometh from Nazareth of Galilee, to the baptism of John; the greater to be baptized by the less. Eighteen years hast thou now passed, Jesus of Nazareth! unseen, unknown, unregarded; under the humble appellation of the carpenter's son, partaking perhaps of the labours of his occupation, faring simply, submitting to authority, unmortified by subjection to poverty, neglect, and reproach; and thus hast thou become a gentle and silent, but a severe reprover of the restlessness of ambition, of the thirst of distinction, of the impetuosity of appetite, of impatience of restraint. The Saviour of the world, my friends, was pleased to pass through the successive stages of human life that he might sanctify and instruct every age of man. He became an infant of days, that He might sanctify infancy, and stamp importance and respect upon it; he showed himself in the temple at the age of twelve, that he might sanctify and instruct that more advanced period of life in the duty of frequenting the house

of God, and of resorting to age, office, and experience for the lessons of wisdom. He advanced to maturity to sanctify and instruct grown men to practise self-denial, self-government, to be content with their lot, to repress inordinate desire, to aim at eminence by learning to become useful. "He "that believeth shall not make haste." He remained thus long in the shade, that He might teach his disciples to bear obscurity and retirement, and to cease from premature aspiring. He emerges at length into the light, the season of open and beneficial exertion being come, that he might correct a spirit of indolence, irresolution, and affected humility; and to tell every man, that he is sent into the world to act an important part, that he is intrusted with talents for the employment of which he is accountable, that God and his fellow-creatures have claims upon him, which he must satisfy at his peril.

The approach of Jesus to Jordan is perceived and announced by the Baptist. The Spirit which enabled Simeon to discern the Saviour in the person of a little child, when presented in the temple, now discloses to the eye of the Prophet, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, the same divine Person on the eve of entering upon his public ministry. He suspends for a moment the employment of teaching and baptizing the multitude, in which he was engaged, to point out to them "the Lamb of "God which taketh away the sin of the world." "As the people were in expectation, and all men "mused in their hearts of John, whether he were

" the Christ or not; John answered, saying unto " them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but " one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose " shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall bap- " tize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

John, at first, modestly declines the exercise of his office in a case so very extraordinary. Hitherto he had taught only the ignorant and vicious, and baptized only the impure, in the view of preparing them to receive the blessings of the approaching kingdom of heaven; self-righteous Pharisees, unbelieving profligate Sadducees, rapacious publicans, seditious, violent, and discontented soldiers, such were the men who came to his baptism. But here the application is made by Him " who is holy, " harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners: who " did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." This, prophet as he was, confounds all the Baptist's ideas of propriety, and he exclaims: " I have need " to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" The reply of Christ unfolds his spirit, and conveys to us many a useful lesson: " Suffer it to be so " now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all right- " eousness." Perfect purity can suffer no contamination from intercourse with the unclean; the impure pollute each other, and the contagion spreads. Conformity in things innocent and lawful is a duty imposed by decency, kindness, and regard to peace; dissent merely for the sake of dissent is a mixture of pride and bigotry. That may be admitted under peculiar circumstances, which is not to be drawn

into a precedent, nor established as a general rule. A public character is concerned to study his own dignity, and the propriety and consistency of his conduct. The question is not what he *may* do, but what it *becomes* him to do. "Things lovely and of "good report" must be thought of together with things that are "true, honest, just, and pure." It *became* Him to give public testimony to the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance, because it led directly to his own mission, and to the kingdom which He was about to establish in the world. It *became* him to put respect on every institution, ceremonial as well as moral, that had the sanction of divine authority, of general use, or of obvious utility. The ceremonial law required "divers "washings," and the immersion of the body in water was by no means a novel practice introduced by John, but transmitted through the succeeding ages of the legal dispensation, and compliance with it our Lord considers as part of "the fulfilling of "*all* righteousness," and therefore as incumbent on himself, being the great pattern of propriety. We find him, on another occasion, submitting to an arbitrary imposition, that he might not seem to give offence, in the matter of the tribute money, and performing a miracle rather than show disrespect to government. "Lest we should offend them," says he to Peter, "go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, "and take up the fish that first cometh up; and "when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find "a piece of money: that take, and give unto them

" for me and thee." Thus he not only " fulfilled, to an iota, " all righteousness," prescribed by the law, but submitted himself to the " ordinance of " man, for the Lord's sake."

But there was a farther view in this solemn transaction. The Messiah must be publicly set apart to the execution of his high prophetic office, and He prefers the baptism of John as the mode of performing that august ceremony. He passes through the water into the reign of Grace; the kingdom of heaven was now come, and such was his humble entry into it. But this voluntary descent is to be immediately followed by a rise into glory which eclipses all the glory of this world. Samuel anointed Saul with a vial, and afterwards David with a horn, of material oil; the Prince " upon the throne of " David, of the increase of whose government and " peace there should be no end," is anointed with the Holy Spirit. The numerous and sounding titles of earthly potentates are, at their inauguration, proclaimed by sound of trumpet; the simple title of the King of kings and Lord of lords is proclaimed by a voice from heaven. The eyes and ears of the spectators at once bear witness to the declaration of the Son of God. " It came to pass, that Jesus " also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was " opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily " shape, like a dove, upon him, and a voice came " from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved " Son; in thee I am well pleased." Painters have presumed to represent this descent of the Holy

Ghost, under the form of a material dove. The descending, hovering motion, not the bodily shape of that bird, is surely all that the expression in the Evangelists conveys to the mind. As well might art attempt to paint the dazzling lustre of flaming fire, or the sound of the voice that spake, or the motion of the splendid appearance which then filled the sky, as pretend to give precise and permanent form to an apparition of Deity, which, having fulfilled its purpose, passed away.

Thus, Christians, was consecrated to the noblest work ever undertaken, the great "Prophet that "should come into the world,"—"The Prince of "the kings of the earth"—"The Apostle and High "Priest of our profession," God "also bearing wit- "ness, both with signs and wonders, and with "divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, "according to his own will." And thus was fulfilled the Scripture which saith, "There shall come "forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch "shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the "Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom "and understanding, the spirit of counsel and "might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear "of the Lord; and shall make him of quick under- "standing in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not "judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove "after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness "shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity "for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the "earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the

" breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And " righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and " faithfulness the girdle of his reins." And thus is the church of Christ founded upon a rock, " and the " gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Is it unworthy of remark, that this testimony to the Son of God, from " the excellent glory," was given while he was *praying?* " As He prayed" also, on the mount of transfiguration, a similar testimony was exhibited, " There came a cloud, and " overshadowed them: and there came a voice out " of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son; " hear Him." Again, while Jesus *prayed,* " Father, " glorify thy name;" the testimony from on high was repeated. " Then came there a voice from " heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will " glorify it again." Such is the promptitude of intercommunication between earth and heaven. So rapidly ascend the breathings of a devout spirit to the throne of God; so swiftly descend the tokens of " good-will to men." " The effectual fervent " prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And if the earnest prayer of an Elias had power to bind up the clouds of heaven for years together, and to smite a guilty land with thirst and famine; how much more powerful must be the prayer of the Great Intercessor, That " in the wilderness waters may " break out, and streams in the desert;" that " the " parched ground may become a pool, and the " thirsty land springs of water!" Therefore also " men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Here are the "Three that bear record in heaven, "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and "these three are one." "Who can by searching "find out God: who can find out the Almighty "unto perfection?" "Who is able to comprehend "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and "height; and to know the love of Christ which "passeth knowledge?"

We have made no remark on the mode of baptism which John employed, because it might lead to controversy, which is unprofitable, to the neglect of practical "goodness," which "is profitable unto "all things." "Let every man be fully persuaded "in his own mind." "Why dost thou judge thy "brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy "brother?" "Who art thou that judgest another "man's servant? to his own master he standeth or "falleth." Let the spirit of the ordinance be chiefly attended to: wise and good men may very innocently differ about the form. "It is the spirit that "quickeneth," the outward form is of secondary importance.

Parents, have ye devoted your infant offspring to God, by the sprinkling with water? Remember the solemn engagements which you then voluntarily undertook to bring them up in the fear, "nurture, "and admonition of the Lord." Meditate frequently and seriously on the responsibility under which you are laid, to God, to your children, to the world. Your fellow worshippers will witness against you, if you trifle with, if you neglect, if you corrupt

your sacred charge. These young ones look up to you for protection, for instruction, for an example; they call upon you to fulfil your promise in their behalf. They ask bread of you, will you give them a stone? They ask a fish, will you give them a serpent? They look to you for the portion of goods that falleth to their share; not only "the meat "which perisheth, but that meat which endureth "unto everlasting life." If you are unfaithful, they are undone. On the other hand, "great is "your reward on earth," and still greater "your "reward in heaven," if you are honoured to become their spiritual parents, as you are parents after the flesh; if, after having introduced them into this world of nature, you are made the happy instruments of introducing them into the kingdom of God; if you and they together are at length added "to the general assembly and church of the first-"born, which are written in heaven, and to the "spirits of just men made perfect," through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and the "blood "of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than "that of Abel."

Young man, thou wert in early infancy, by the piety of affectionate parents, baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The birth of nature bestowed on thee the name of thy father after the flesh; when thou wert sprinkled with water, another name was prefixed to it, which continues to be thy distinctive appellation.

Both were indeed imposed without thy consciousness or consent, but in both thou hast cheerfully acquiesced, perhaps they are a source of pride to thee. Even the acquisition of an estate will hardly induce a man of spirit to forego his parental designation, but the Christian name is indelible. Every time thou writest it then, every time thou hearest it addressed to thee, thou art admonished of thy dedication to God. Baptismal engagements rise into view. "I am not my own, for I am bought "with a price. What, deny my name! What, sell "it for a painted bauble! No, I glory in it; I will "not permit it to be dishonoured. What my "parents did in my behalf when I was a little "child, I now openly avow. They have done their "part, through the help of God I will do mine. "The name of Christ shall not be blasphemed "through my unworthiness. My brothers bare "with me the common name of our ancestors, but "I will render my own distinguished among my "brethren. I will never blush at being called a "Christian."

My friend, thou hast passed through the water at the age of puberty. Baptism was thy own act and deed. Thou hast entered into the kingdom of God, consciously, deliberately. The vows of God are upon thee. That young person, made a Christian by the act of parents, when come to years may disallow that act, may renounce the name, but thou hast subscribed with thy hand unto the Lord.

Thou hast put the yoke of Christ upon thy own

neck, and hast assumed his brethren. Thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and must not look, must not go back. Thou standest pledged to God and to the world to support the honour of the Christian name, "to adorn the doctrine of God our "Saviour in all things." You feel and acknowledge the obligation; no temptation, no compulsion, can induce thee to retract it. Next sacramental solemnity the vow shall be renewed, repeated. The language of thy heart is: "I am not ashamed of the "Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto "salvation, to every one that believeth:" "God "forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of "our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is "crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

If the spirit and power of the institution, we repeat it, are thus understood and felt, let a man pass through water into the pale of the church of Christ, or procure that privilege for his child, by the rite of aspersion as conscience may prescribe, and let us "be kindly affectioned one to another, "with brotherly love; in honour preferring one "another."

The Evangelist, at this interval, presents us with the genealogical table of Christ's descent from Adam downward. It brings us all to the common level of brethren. Through endless and intricate ramifications every man finds himself derived from one and the same root, "the son of Adam, the son of God." And the Christian is "born again," he is "a new

" creature," being " begotten again unto a lively " hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from " the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, unde- " filed, and that fadeth not away." The law of nature binds us to each other as men, the law of the Gospel doubles and strengthens the cord of love. This is Christ's " new commandment," the badge of discipleship, " the fulfilling of the law," " the " bond of perfectness." " A new commandment," says our blessed Lord, " I give unto you, That ye " love one another; as I have loved you, that ye " also love one another. By this shall all men " know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love " one to another."

Has God vouchsafed to give such testimony to the Son of his love? Receive it, rest upon it, improve it as a rule of life, as a source of consolation. Ye " have not followed cunningly-devised fables, " when we made known unto you the power and " coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" for though you were not " eye-witnesses of his majesty," you have " a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto " ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that " shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and " the day-star arise in your hearts."

Ye call Christ " Master and Lord:" and ye say well, for so He is. " It became Him to fulfil all " righteousness;" He put respect on the ordinances, on the house, on the word of God: " leaving us an " example, that ye should follow his steps." Let the name, the day, the temple, the word of the

Lord be hallowed in your eyes. "Know ye not, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus "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."

"The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape "like a dove upon Him:" when He was leaving the world, and going unto the Father, he promised his disciples to "give them another Comforter, to "abide with them for ever; even the Spirit of "Truth." That Comforter was to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance. "He showed himself" to them "alive after his "passion, by many infallible proofs:" He repeated his promise; "He commanded them that they "should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for "the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye "have heard of me. For John truly baptized with "water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy "Ghost, not many days hence." It was accordingly fulfilled: "When the day of Pentecost was "fully come, they were all with one accord in one "place. And suddenly there came a sound from "heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled "all the house where they were sitting. And there "appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of "fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began

" to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave " them utterance." Thus were they comforted for their Master's departure; thus they received " an " unction from the Holy One," whereby they were set apart unto, and fitted for, their great work; thus were they strengthened to begin and pursue a career which will be felt till time expire. The same Spirit is promised, and is given to us to " help our " infirmities," to " guide us into all truth," to take what is Christ's, and show it unto us, to " comfort " us in all our tribulation," to show us things to come. We look not for a miraculous effusion, to enable us to speak with tongues, to prophesy, to work miracles; but we have good ground to ask, and to hope that God will give us, " the spirit of " power, and of love, and of a sound mind." " O " send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead " me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to " thy tabernacles; then will I go unto the altar of " God, unto God my exceeding joy."

Our blessed Lord entered on his public ministry at the age of thirty, and it was accomplished within the space of little more than three years. Think how much was done in that short space. Were the things which Jesus did, as they stand on this record, and the " many other things" not recorded therein, to be " written every one," such would be their number and their lustre, that they would to the world appear to be absolutely incredible, and therefore the world would not be disposed to receive

them. Here we have an illustrious pattern of the employment, of the improvement of time. "I must "work," says he, "the works of Him that sent "me, while it is day;" the duty of the season in its season. How ought we to blush at our laborious idleness, at our pompous nothings! What have we to show for our thirty, forty, fifty, threescore years? Hardly enough to furnish a decent inscription for a tomb-stone. Were the history of the most industrious and useful life to be fairly delineated, the world would have cause to wonder at the frequent and hideous chasms, the wild confusion, the indecent rapidity, the causeless delay, which the detail would present. What a picture then must the life of the professedly idle and dissipated, of the profligate and vicious, exhibit! All enters into the book of God's remembrance, and all must come into judgment. What precious time, what invaluable opportunities of doing and of receiving good, have been shamefully neglected, have been vilely cast away!

> What moment granted man without account?
> What years are squander'd, Wisdom's debt unpaid!
>
> NIGHT THOUGHTS, II. 30.

Much is irretrievably lost. Who knows how little may remain? "Now it is high time to awake out "of sleep: the night is far spent, the day is at "hand: let us therefore cast off the works of dark-"ness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let "us walk honestly as in the day," and "put ye

"on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Awake thou that "sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall "give thee light. See that ye walk circumspectly, "not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, "because the days are evil."

LECTURE X.

MATT. IV. 1—11.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

WONDERFUL is the influence which external objects possess over the mind of man: wonderful it is to reflect how body and spirit act upon each other. On a simple determination of the will, every limb is in motion, every nerve is exerted;

and the man is burning under the line, or freezing at the pole. Let the blood be transmitted with a little more than usual rapidity, or move a little more sluggishly, and all the mental faculties are deranged, a new world arises, every former idea is blotted out. The glance of that eye, at one time, chills me with terror, and at another it melts me into love. This note rouses me to the battle; and that soothes me into melancholy. Internal serenity and depression are produced by a clearer or grosser state of the air. And if we are thus liable to be affected by objects merely material, what must be the influence of mind upon mind! How powerful must be the sympathy, how prompt the communication of kindred spirits, intuitively perceiving and interchanging mutual sentiments of kindness, gratitude, or esteem! Who can conceive or explain the influence which beings wholly spiritual may exercise over the human species, creatures composed of matter and spirit, whose senses, whose imagination, whose memory, whose understanding, all are so easily impressible?

Of all the faculties which spiritual beings possess, that of rendering themselves the objects of sense most of all exceeds our comprehension. They present a form, they utter, and receive, and return articulate sounds, and anon they are "vanished "into air, thin air." The appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary, and of the multitude of the heavenly host to the shepherds, is a striking demonstration of it. We have before us another

instance of this astonishing faculty, in a spirit of a very different character, and for a very different purpose.—Satan, the destroyer, "foe to God and "man," tempting Christ in the wilderness.

The two Evangelists who have given us the history of this temptation in detail differ only in respect of the order of the facts related, that which is placed second in St. Matthew's Gospel is the third in Luke's, and that which is the second in Luke is the third in Matthew. We have chosen to follow the latter, because, as he was shortly after called to the office of apostleship, he probably received the history from Christ's own mouth; and because the words which He addresses to the wicked one, in the close of the third temptation, according to Matthew's statement of it, "Get "thee behind me, Satan," seem to have concluded the scene. This slight difference, however, serves only to confirm the authenticity of both historians, as it is a proof that the one did not copy from the other. We now proceed to the temptation itself.

"And when the tempter came to him he said, If "thou be the Son of God, command that these "stones be made bread." Attend to the season which he laid hold of. It was at the moment that he saw Jesus ready to faint with hunger. Attend to the place; it was in the wilderness, which produced nothing fit for food. Attend to the suggestion; it presents nothing apparently offensive. He only wishes a little seasonable relief to one under the pressure of the greatest distress, and that relief

procured by means at once simple and innocent. The law had relaxed somewhat of its severity in favour of cases like the present, by exempting from the punishment of theft, the person who had committed it only to satisfy his hunger. But here there was not the shadow of a crime; He had but to employ the power which he certainly possessed, and which he lawfully might exercise. It would be a demonstration of his immediate reliance on his heavenly Father; it would remove all doubt respecting the divinity of his mission. Who could refuse to acknowledge Him who was thus declared to be the Son of God? He himself wants only this proof, to induce him, like another Herod, to fall down and worship him.

It is clear that the tempter, when he used the expression, "the Son of God," did not fully apprehend the import of what he said, that he did not mean by it to acknowledge the divinity of the Saviour. Had he known with whom he had to do, durst he have undertaken to tempt and seduce him? By "the Son of God," therefore, he understands only a prophet of distinguished rank, superior to all others, of pre-eminent virtue and merit, endowed with higher gifts and powers, chosen and commissioned of Providence for the conversion and salvation of the world, and of consequence infinitely dear to God. In this persuasion his object is an attempt to defeat the plan of Providence, to counteract the measures of Heaven, and as he had succeeded in the seduction of the representative

head of the human race, he entertained the infernal hope of prevailing also over its Restorer and Redeemer. He would dive, therefore, to the bottom of the character of Him, for whose appearance in the world such mighty preparation had been made, and whom a series of circumstances the most extraordinary had pointed out as the peculiar care of Heaven. The operation of a miracle will one way or another serve to clear this up. The conversion of stones into bread appearing to him an impossibility, if Christ refuses to perform it, an imputation lies against his power; if he undertake without effecting it, his divine mission is rendered questionable. Can he be God's beloved Son, if he withhold the concurrence of omnipotence in a situation where it is of such high importance to determine what he in truth is? And again, on the other hand, if Jesus pay any attention whatever to the suggestions of Satan, he cannot be the Son of God, for that were to betray ignorance of the person who accosts him, and of the design which he entertained.

Mark still farther "the depths of Satan." He too, unhappily, knows what is in man: and he well knew what a stimulus it is to a mind ever so slightly tinctured with pride or vain-glory, when placed especially in eminence of station, to have the power and authority of that station called in question. The temptation has, in this view, the air of a challenge to Christ, to support his high pretensions by corresponding actions, and thus he

would draw him into a rash, imprudent, vainglorious display of his power, without a reason and without an end. Miracles are intended, and performed, for the conversion of the incredulous, at least for their conviction, and to render them inexcusable. Unless this be in view, power ceases to be under the direction of wisdom. Accordingly we find that whenever haughty, determined unbelievers expected or demanded a sign, it was constantly denied them. What, has the Father intrusted him with his authority, to satisfy a malignant curiosity: and shall that power be lavished away, in humouring the obstinate and incorrigible, which is designed for the instruction and confirmation of such as love and seek the truth? How, Satan call on Christ to work a miracle? and for what end? that he might believe in him? Was the object of his mission to restore "angels who had "left their first estate?" Had Christ, then, at the requisition of Satan, performed a miracle, he could have nothing in view but an ostentatious exhibition of the gifts committed to him, which was all that the tempter wanted.

This leads to a general observation on the wisdom and moderation which ever governed our Lord's conduct, in this respect. As he never employed his power for the purposes of his own glory, because he sought only that of his heavenly Father, so he never exercised it to promote his own advantage; Charity, not self-love, dictated all his words, all his actions. He withdraws, he retires

when he meant to provide for his own safety; and He remains upon the cross when infidelity defied him to come down. An amiable view of the Son of God! In him all power appears enthroned, with wisdom standing on the right hand, and charity on the left; and it is acting continually in conformity to their advice. How then does he escape the snare laid for him by the devil with such dexterity and artifice? By an answer artlessly simple, but at the same time exactly pointed, and directly to the purpose. The Israelites, when pressed by famine, bread failing them in the wilderness, were sustained for forty years by manna falling day by day from heaven; God substituting in place of bread, the common aliment of man, a celestial food, denominated in Scripture "angels' bread," probably because it was prepared and dispensed by the ministration of angels. This gives occasion to Moses to observe, in recapitulating the conduct of Providence toward that people, "The Lord thy God "led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to "humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what "was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep "his commandments or no. And he humbled "thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee "with manna, which thou knewest not, neither "did thy fathers know, that he might make thee "know that man doth not live by bread only, but "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth "of the Lord doth man live."

Jesus was now in a situation exactly similar to

that of the Israelites, in the barren wilderness, conducted thither by the Spirit of God, following the destination of divine Providence; hunger presses, and the demon urges him to find a supply by converting stones into bread. "There is no occasion "to have recourse to this, or to any other extra- "ordinary, uncommanded means," is the Saviour's reply; "the unlimited power of my Father in "heaven is not subjected to the necessity of sup- "porting those who are following the leadings of "his Spirit and Providence, by bread alone; it has "an infinity of other methods to supply their "wants, to provide for their subsistence. Knowest "thou not what he did to the fathers in the desert, "as I now am, and what the Scripture saith upon "the subject, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the "mouth of God,' that is, through any other me- "dium, and by any other substance, which he shall "please to appoint, and to which he shall affix his "blessing." It is thus that Jesus instructs his disciples to wield "the sword of the spirit, which is "the word of God;" thus he confounds the tempter, and, without calling himself the Son of God, or proving that he was so by working a miracle, he satisfies himself with making the adversary feel it by the wisdom of his answer, by his confidence in God, and by a patient and profound submission to his will.

How mortifying is the contrast between the perseverance of wickedness in the worst of causes,

and the faintness and languor of human virtue in pursuing the best! We are easily discouraged, we are soon weary of well-doing, but the enemy of our salvation is indefatigable, he goeth about continually, he returns still to the charge. He has failed in his first attempt, but he is determined to make another. He goes on a principle but too strongly verified by melancholy experience, that every man, and in Christ he sees nothing yet but a man, that every man has his weak side, some sin that doth more easily beset him, some leading propensity that rules him at pleasure, and which makes interest, and reason, and conscience, and every thing, bend to it. Let the tempter but find this out, and the whole man is his own. He finds Jesus invulnerable on the side of sense and vainglory; he has escaped the snare by the wise and seasonable application of Scripture; but may not a net be woven to entangle him, whose cords shall be drawn from Scripture itself? Here, in my apprehension, lies the force of the second temptation. It is of a piece with the temptation which prevailed over "the man of God" who exclaimed against the altar which Jeroboam had erected, "I am a "Prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto "me by the *word* of the Lord," and the tempter flattered himself it would be as readily believed, and therein the deceiver deceived himself.

"Then the devil taketh him," says the Evangelist, "up into the holy city, that is, Jerusalem,

"and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple," probably the summit of one of the porticos, which terminated in a platform, and were surrounded by a battlement, for the pinnacle of the temple properly so called, was inaccessible, being finished in form of a dome, stuck full of sharp points gilded over to prevent the birds from perching upon it. Josephus represents these porticos, especially that on the south, as of a height so prodigious, from the depth of the valley below, that no head could look downward without becoming giddy. It was to this awful eminence that Satan was permitted to transport from the wilderness the Son of God, and there to propose to him to make experiment of the power, truth, and faithfulness of God, saying, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; "for it is written, He shall give his angels charge "concerning thee; and in their hands they shall "bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy "foot against a stone." The proposal was wild and extravagant in the extreme: but not less artful than extravagant. The import of it is plainly this, if Jesus Christ be the Son of God, must he not repose confidence in the promises which He has made, and rest assured of his constant care and protection? If he does not, it must be from a secret distrust of his power and goodness, from a disbelief of Scripture promises, which were in effect to renounce his character as the Son of God. The design of the tempter is apparent: he means to destroy, if he can, the object of his fear and

envy. Persuaded that a fall from such a height must prove fatal, and feeling his power limited to art and insinuation, he tries to inspire a presumptuous confidence in Heaven, and thus to bring to an open test what he really was, the beloved of God, concerning whom he had given his angels charge, and thereby terminate his own hopes, or ruin a rash and fallible man, like every other whom he had so successfully tried, and thus complete his triumph over frail humanity.

How plausible! No miracle is so likely to make an impression in his favour on the multitude below; and what security is equal to the promise of that God who cannot lie? Who can sufficiently admire the calmness and wisdom with which the insinuation is repelled? the promise is admitted, the security which it bestows is acknowledged, and the authority of Scripture is established. But Scripture is not inconsistent with itself, otherwise it were not the word of God; spiritual things must therefore be compared with spiritual, and it is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy "God." A man is said to *tempt* God, when he calls for extraordinary and unnecessary proofs of his providential care, through diffidence, or to satisfy curiosity.

Thus Israel is said to have *tempted* the Lord, when pressed by the want of water in Rephidim; the supply was granted, but the place was marked by a name which expressed displeasure: "he called

" the name of the place *Meribah, strife,* because of " the chiding of the children of Israel, and because " they *tempted* the Lord, saying, Is the Lord " among us, or not?" The same offence was again committed in the wilderness of Sin, under the pressure of hunger: " Can God furnish a table in " the wilderness? can he give bread also? can he " provide flesh for his people?" The miracle of relief was again interposed. " He commanded the " clouds from above, and opened the doors of " heaven—he rained down manna upon them to " eat, and gave them of the corn of heaven. Man " did eat angels' food. He rained flesh also upon " them as dust, and feathered fowls as the sand of " the sea." But it is dangerous to put the goodness and power of God to trial, and by impatience and importunity to extort the indulgence of a man's " own desire." God often withholds in love, and grants from just disapprobation. " They " were not estranged from their lusts: but while " their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of " God came upon them."—And for all this they sinned still.

We have another noted instance of a man's *tempting* his Maker, in the case of Gideon, the son of Joash the Abi-ezrite. He had been called from the threshing-floor to fight the battles of his country; " the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this " thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the " hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?" Gideon hesitates, argues, excuses himself. " And

" the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with " thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one " man." This does not yet overcome his diffidence; he must have a *sign* to cure his unbelief. " And " he said unto him, If now I have found grace in " thy sight, then show me a sign, that thou talkest " with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until " I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, " and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry " until thou come again." The sign is granted. The offering is presented upon the rock; " then the " angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff " that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and " the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out " of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the un- " leavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord " departed out of his sight." Gideon perceives that he has presumed too far, and begins to tremble for his life, but is instantly relieved from that terror: " And the Lord said unto him, Peace be " unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die." Who would not have deemed this proof satisfactory? Is not incredulity now completely disarmed? The champion of Israel must have sign upon sign. " And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save " Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold I " will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the " dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon " all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou " wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. " And it was so: for he rose up early on the

to remark the lovely mixture of wisdom and innocence; here we have an equally interesting union of wisdom and zeal: of wisdom, in wielding "the "sword of the spirit, which is the word of God;" of zeal, in repressing with holy indignation the insolent assumption of the empire of the world, and the no less insolent demand of the homage and worship which are due to Deity alone. There is a point beyond which patience ceases to be a virtue, and degenerates into weakness. It is particularly so, when the name, the day, the house, the word, the worship of the great Jehovah are impiously invaded and profaned. The cloven foot is then so apparently uncovered, that nothing is left but an instantaneous and abhorrent dissent, "Get "thee hence, Satan." Thus when "the prince of "this world" came, he found nothing in Christ; no weak part, no unguarded moment, no subjection to the frailties of that nature which he had assumed. The demon hears his own name, Satan, the adversary, pronounced by the lips of truth, and feels himself detected:

> Abash'd the devil stood,
> And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
> Virtue in her shape how lovely: saw, and pin'd
> His loss.
>
> PARAD. LOST, IV. 846.

Thus our Lord's public ministry commenced in unparalleled trials. Thus "the Captain of our "Salvation" began his glorious career, and was at

length made "perfect through suffering." But these things were spoken, and done, and suffered for our sakes. "Christ suffered for us, leaving us "an example that we should follow his steps." —"Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the "flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." —"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the "fiery trial which is try you, as though some strange "thing happened unto you: but rejoice in as much "as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, "when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad "also with exceeding joy." Draw your supplies, in "the evil day," from the same sacred treasury. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his "might. Put on the whole armour of God, that "ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the "devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, "but against principalities, against powers, against "the rulers of the darkness of this world, against "spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and "having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having "your loins girt about with truth, and having on "the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; "above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith "ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of "the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, "and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of "God: praying always with all prayer and suppli-

" to the charge of God's elect? It is God that jus-
" tifieth; who is he that condemneth? 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. Who shall separate us from
" the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,
" or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,
" or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more
" than conquerors, through him that loved us. For
" I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor
" angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things
" present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth,
" nor any other creature, shall be able to separate
" us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus
" our Lord."

LECTURE XI.

LUKE IV. 13—32.

And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto

none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synanogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.

WHEN the Son of God came for the salvation of a lost world, "verily he took not on him the nature "of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abra-"ham;" he assumed not royal state, but "the "form of a servant;" his progress was marked, not by the blood of those who opposed themselves, but by the benefits which he conferred on the evil and unthankful. Subject himself to the sinless infirmities of human nature, he was experimentally taught to sympathize with the weak; "in that he himself "hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour "them that are tempted."

The wilderness exhibited a wonderful display of the divine nature united to humanity, of the humiliation of the "man of sorrows and acquainted with "grief," and of the majesty of the mighty God, who has all creatures at his disposal, and under his control. The man "was an hungered," and exposed to temptation, and arbitrarily disposed of by an insolent foe: He was humbled to the bearing of

blasphemous suggestions, and the bearing of cruel and unmerited insults. The Divinity miraculously sustained the infirmity of nature, quenched the fiery darts of the devil, put Satan to flight, received the homage and service of angels. In all he presented an object of admiration and love, and in every display of human excellence, he exhibited a pattern for imitation.

Jesus had now attained his thirtieth year. The Spirit of God and of glory rested on him; and a voice from heaven had declared his generation. In the solemnity and solitude of a forty days' retirement from all human converse, the order of his future procedure is settled, according to the plan of the Eternal Mind. Behold him then, in the power of the Spirit, in the greatness of his strength, in the travail of his soul, returning from the desert into Galilee, to enter on his arduous and important undertaking. The public attention was fixed, and expectation excited by the singular circumstances attending his birth and baptism. The discerning eye of the Baptist saw in him "the great prophet "who should come into the world," and with the finger he pointed him out as "the Lamb of God "which taketh away the sin of the world." His sudden disappearance after his baptism, and after the testimony then borne to him from above, must have been an occasion of some wonder, and a subject of much conversation; for on his return, at the end of the forty days, we find his fame already spread abroad, and a general disposition to receive and

to hear him manifested. And where does he begin his great career, and what character does he assume, and what arms does he employ? At Rome, the seat of empire, in the triumphant state of a conqueror, with his sword died in the bloodof his enemies. No, in Galilee, the proverbially reproachful residence of almost his whole life, in the humble character of a teacher of religion, and employing only the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. In this we behold him teaching us a generous superiority to the little invidious distinctions of country and kindred, a noble contempt of the glory of this world, an ardent zeal for the glory of God, a benevolent concern for the happiness of men, and a just discernment of the means best adapted to the attainment of these ends.

What a silent instructor had his childhood and youth been, of subjection to parental authority, of contentment with a poor and mean condition, of holiness in all manner of conversation? What an interesting object was presented to the eye in a form so fair, animated by a mind so pure and exalted! With what delight must the ear have hung upon those lips which wisdom inspired, and into which grace was poured! How commanding, how attractive that goodness which was incessantly aiming at communicating good to others! Is it any wonder that when He became the public and active instructor of his countrymen, he should be "glorified of "all." It was probably about this period, that "the beginning of his miracles" he performed at

Cana of Galilee, "and manifested forth his glory," by turning water into wine, at the marriage solemnity of one of his relations or friends. By this he approved himself the affectionate, condescending brother of mankind, and, at the same time, the great Lord of nature, to whom all elements are subject; and whereby he reproves the unbending pride of affected wisdom, the uncomplying preciseness which refuses to partake of the harmless intercourse and enjoyments of human life, and the coldness and indifference with which selfishness endeavours to stifle the voice of blood, of friendship, and of natural affection. How greatly must his public ministrations have been enhanced and endeared by the meekness and gentleness of his private deportment! What force must divine truth, delivered in the synagogue, have derived from the utterance of that tongue which in domestic and social communication was governed by "the law of kindness!"

In the mere human teacher, the professional appearance must frequently be at variance with the personal; a heart torn with a thousand anxieties must try to conceal its bitterness under a serene forehead, and calmness of speech; and the unhappy man may be administering to others that consolation to which he himself is a stranger, or, what is infinitely worse, may be called by public duty to declare that truth which is his secret reproach and condemnation. But O how delightful the entertainment, when the hand which dispenses to others can with

holy confidence take its own appropriated share! How dignified is the character which, in the closet, in the parlour, in the market-place, in the synagogue, in the pulpit, presents but one and the same person, the servant of God, the friend of man; the respectable and amiable member of society, the kind relation, the agreeable neighbour, the gentle master, the patriotic citizen, the faithful pastor! What a model, in all these respects, is presented to the Christian minister, in the person, the character and the conduct of his divine Master! What must have been the ineffable charm of that divine eloquence which captivated every ear, every heart; which commanded universal admiration and applause; and which alas, such is the enmity of the carnal mind, so soon roused the vilest and worst of human passions in the breast of his neighbours and acquaintance, envy, and jealousy, and malice, and hatred! O how pleasant it is to accompany, in thought, the blessed Jesus from house to house; from devotional retirement, to useful and necessary employment; from honourable employment, to social endearment; from the pure and innocent delights of virtuous friendship, to the solemn and sublime exercises of public worship, and to observe in all the changing scenes, the same lovely simplicity, the same unassuming dignity, the same unvarying charity and good-will!

But the Evangelist leads us from general to particular ideas; and gives vivacity and effect to our meditations, by bringing them to one point of time, of place, and of expression. Behold him then at

Nazareth, where he had been brought up, in the synagogue, on the sabbath day, according to his usual custom, standing up to read, unfolding the prophecy, the prophecy of Isaiah, a remarkable prediction, and himself the subject of it; then closing the book, delivering it again to the minister, sitting down to explain and apply what he had read; and how pleasant it is to mark the emotion which every word, every action, produced in an astonished and delighted audience! Every one of these circumstances seem to merit a few moments' meditation.

He came to Nazareth. Having visited other parts of Galilee, and taught in their synagogues, and received the cheerful homage which heartfelt gratitude pays to real worth; having performed the duties of a benevolent neighbour and kind relation at Cana, rejoicing with them that rejoiced, and putting respect on the ordinance of God, the idea of home suggests itself, the kind affections become concentrated, the calls of nature are felt and obeyed. At Nazareth his mother dwelt; he was well aware of her maternal tenderness and solicitude; his forty days' absence about his "Father's business" must have filled her with pain inexpressible; her soul was about to be pierced through with many a sword, whose keen point could not be averted; but filial affection will not suffer her to feel the stroke before the time; and what moments of ecstasy to a mother those must have been which passed at Nazareth, in the house, and in the synagogue, during this blessed interval! And

what delight must it have been to that Son to minister to the consolation of his mother!

He came to Nazareth, *where he had been brought up*. The scenes in which early life was passed are painted in lively colours on the imagination. Memory frequently recalls, and the heart fondly cherishes them. They are blended with the ideas of gaiety, and want of care, and innocence. I think with rapture on the tree from which my childish hand plucked the golden fruit; on the cooling stream which refreshed the tongue, parched with juvenile exercise; on the flower-enamelled turf whereon I cast my weary limbs; on the ascent to the house of God along which my yet unconfirmed footsteps accompanied my venerable grandsire at the hour of prayer; the note of the summoning bell is even now in mine ears. The feeling is natural; it is harmless; perhaps it may be virtuous. And is it a degradation of our subject to say that we see in the history before us, the ingenuous, generous Nazarene, thinking with complacency on the particular spots consecrated by the recollections of early piety, of friendship, and of enjoyment; thinking with affection, such as only the Son of God could feel, on the associates of tender years; on the relations which the hand of nature, on those which the wisdom of Providence had formed; striving in the maturity of thirty, to communicate to grown men that wisdom and happiness, which the unsuspecting, unenvious generosity of twelve delights to convey to its equal. The Saviour of the world is here held up in the ho-

nourable, engaging, and attractive character of a liberal and generous townsman; rejoicing in the exertion of his ripened talents, his improved powers, his enlarged abilities, for the information, improvement, and comfort of the friends of his youth.

Attend to the *place* which he chose for this purpose—the place of public assembly, devoted to the service of God, to the conveyance of useful knowledge, and to the devout association of kindred spirits, *the synagogue*. There is indeed no real difference of place, in respect of sanctity. Wherever God is worshipped "in spirit and in truth," there is holy ground. But man, swallowed up as he is of sense, must have the devout affections raised by an appeal to the lower faculties of his nature; and the form and situation of the spot where he worships must be called in to assist the mind, to promote the love of his fellow worshippers, to give energy to kind affections, and to elevate the soul to the Creator, on the wings of love to the creature, whom he has formed after his own image. To thee, blessed Jesus! the city and the wilderness, the mountain and the sea-shore, the temple and the upper chamber, were one and the same thing; but it pleased thee to be a pattern of "decency and order," to exemplify submission to the ordinance of God, to walk before thy kindred and acquaintance, in "things "which are lovely and of good report."

The service of the synagogue was not at that time perfectly pure; many corruptions both in doctrine and practice had been introduced, but still God

was worshipped there, and Scripture still flowed pure and uncontaminated; and he will not seem to pour contempt on what savoured of human imperfection, lest that which was genuine and divine should fall into disrepute. A virtuous state of Society, and a pure Church, are highly desirable; but in order to enjoy such a happy order of things, a man "must needs go out of the world." All that wisdom and piety united can achieve, is gradually and temperately to ameliorate the public morals, and to rectify disorders which may have crept into the Church. No vigilance nor sagacity can prevent the enemy from sowing tares among the wheat; but though they may be ever so distinguishable, they are not rudely and prematurely to be rooted up, "lest, "while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the "wheat with them." They "must both grow "together until the harvest." The holy Jesus derived no taint from a disorderly synagogue, and a profaned temple; but he restored the order of the synagogue, and the sanctity of the temple. He could contract no impurity by sitting down to meat with publicans and sinners; and learn no hypocrisy by communication with Pharisees; but by the wisdom and purity of his conversation publicans and sinners were reproved, instructed, and reformed, and hypocrisy stood detected. There is a mean, dishonourable, and criminal "becoming all things to "all men," for the sordid purposes of self-interest, or the gratification of a vain-glorious spirit; but there is likewise an honourable, manly, and praise-

worthy accommodation to the wants and wishes of our fellow-creatures, which disinterestedly aims at their good. This lesson "Paul, the servant of "Jesus Christ," and the most independent in spirit of all mankind, had been taught in the school of his divine master. "For though," says he, "I be free "from all men, yet have I made myself servant "unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto "the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain "the Jews; to them that are under the law, as "under law, that I might gain them that are under "the law; to them that are without law as without "law, (being not without law to God, but under "the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are "without law. To the weak became I as weak, that "I might gain the weak: I am made all things to "all men, that I might by all means save some. "And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I might "be partaker thereof with you."

Time permits not at present to proceed on the consideration of the other particular circumstances attending this sacred Lecture of the great Teacher; such as the time when it was delivered—*the sabbath-day;* the uniformity and constancy of the practice, *as his custom was;* the attitude and exercise, *he stood up for to read;* the subject, a prediction concerning himself from *the book of the prophet Esaias;* his commentary upon it, *this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears;* and finally, the effect produced on his audience, *the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him;*

and all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. These particulars, therefore, will constitute the subject of our next exercise of this kind. We conclude the present with a few practical reflections.

1. Meditate on the venerability of the sabbath, the day of sacred rest. It is the ordinance of God himself, who is represented in Scripture, not only as the Author of the institution, but as setting the example of its devout observance. "On the seventh "day God ended his work which he had made: "and he rested on the seventh day from all his work "which he had made." He made it a season of solemn contemplation; "God saw every thing that "he had made, and behold it was very good." He pronounced a benediction upon it, and set it apart to holy purposes: "And God blessed the seventh "day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had "rested from all his work which God created and "made." It is one of the natural measurements of time, though modern infidelity has made an attempt to efface it. It wears a benevolent and merciful aspect toward man and beast. It is intimately and indissolubly connected with religion. The violation of the sabbath was considered, under the Mosaic dispensation, as a flagrant contempt of the divine authority, and subjected the offender to the punishment of death. To the regular and spiritual observance of it, on the other hand, were annexed many and gracious promises. I quote only the following; "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from

"doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the "sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honour- "able; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own "ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speak- "ing thine own words: then shalt thou delight thy- "self in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon "the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the "heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the "Lord hath spoken it." The substitution of the first, in place of the seventh day of the week, under the evangelical dispensation, binds more closely, not relaxes the obligation; and the honour which God has been pleased to put upon it is a sufficient recommendation, independent of the authority of human laws. As, on the contrary, the character of the persons who live in the open and habitual neglect or profanation of it, is the reverse of a recommendation to every man of sense, decency, and virtue. But,

2. Take care not to sink the spirit in the letter of the ordinance. It is a day of *rest*, but idleness and rest are very different things. The mental composure and repose of the man infinitely transcend the listless inaction of the brute. The body of the man indeed rests from the painful toil of the week, and his mind from its perplexing cares. But this is perfectly consistent with vigorous bodily exertion, and with intenseness of mental application. The feet, the hands, the eye, the tongue, may all be actively employed in rendering unto God a "reason- "able service." The superior powers of the soul may be in an ascending motion, up to "the Father

" of lights;" and in a progressive motion, toward the " rest which remaineth to the people of God." The lips of the wise and good may be devoted to the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the ear of the willing and obedient may drink in the doctrines of truth, and the obligations of duty. This mutual interchange of kind offices will produce an interchange of kind affections. Good-will *among* men will be preserved and promoted. The bands of Nature will be strengthened by those of religion. To worship in one temple will become a bond of union among brethren, and will extinguish the coal of animosity; and thus "godliness will be found pro- " fitable unto all things," and will exert a happy influence over " the life which now is," while it embraces the promise of that which is to come."

3. Conformity in things of inferior, or of no moment, is a duty which we owe both to ourselves, and to others: to ourselves, because it is the mark of a gracious and condescending character; to others, because every man has a title to deference and respect, in matters where another man's conscience is not concerned. Sourness and incompliance are no part of the Spirit of Christ. Nevertheless many who bear that name discover a tenaciousness of trifles, a bigotry to self-opinion, inconsistent not only with the Christian temper, but with good sense and good manners. This moroseness of disposition levels all distinctions, and affixes the same idea of criminality to an enormous offence and adherence to a harmless form or ceremony. With a man of this description,

"He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man: he "that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's "neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offer-"ed swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if "he blessed an idol." Difference of opinion among men is part of the plan of a wise Providence. It affords exercise to the human faculties; it expands a field for the display of mutual forbearance; it is a striking manifestation of the variety of the works of God. He who will yield no point, however insignificant, has no reason to expect that his punctilio should be regarded. Were the whole world of this ungainly, untractable, uncomplying nature, society would present a perpetual and universal strife of contradictory feelings, humours, and interests. The rule of the Gospel is in this case, as in every other, absolute: "All things whatsoever ye would that "men should do to you, do ye even so to them: "for this is the law and the prophets." Indeed the "great Prophet carries the spirit of his religion much farther: "I say unto you, that ye resist not "evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy cheek, "turn to him the other also. And if any man will "sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him "have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel "thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him "that asketh thee; and from him that would bor-"row of thee turn not thou away."

4. Watch and seize every promising opportunity of doing good; and such occur every day that we live. Have we not the poor always with us? Might

not the crumbs which fall from that table be given to feed many starving mouths? Do we not live in contact with ignorance and vice, with misery and disease? And is it in our power to grant no relief, not so much as "a cup of cold water?" It is truly humbling to reflect how means and occasions of being useful to the bodies and to the souls of men, and of promoting our own highest interests, have been carelessly neglected, or deliberately abused. Judgment to come, however, sets the matter in a very serious light: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me "no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, "and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and "ye visited me not." "Verily I say unto you, in as "much as ye did it not to one of the least of these "ye did it not to me."

But this direction too must be accompanied with a caution. "Let not your good be evil spoken of." "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither "cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample "them under their feet, and turn again and rend "you." There is an officiousness of perhaps well-meaning goodness, which sometimes disdains to weigh the circumstances of times, places, and persons: which will introduce certain topics out of, as well as in season, to the grief of the more prudently serious, the disgust of the lukewarm, and the mirth of the profane. "A word spoken in due season, "how good is it?" "A word fitly spoken is like "apples of gold in pictures of silver. As an ear-ring

" of gold and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise " reprover upon an obedient ear." Finally,

5. Bring forth " things new and old," from the inexhaustible stores of Scripture. From this sacred repository our blessed Lord derived arguments to silence and confound the adversary, and a subject of instruction for the men of Nazareth. From the same precious treasury, from those " wells of salva- " tion," the faithful of every age have drawn the waters of consolation, to support and refresh them under every pressure of distress, to counteract the bitterness of death, and to enjoy a foretaste of the " pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the " throne of God, and of the Lamb." " Jesus an- " swered and said," to the woman of Samaria, at Jacob's well, " Whosoever drinketh of this water " shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the " water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but " the water that I shall give him shall be in him " a well of water springing up into everlasting life;" and " all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, " and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for cor- " rection, for instruction in righteousness; that the " man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished " unto all good works." Therefore, " search the Scrip- " tures;" as Christ hath commanded, " for in them ye " think ye have eternal life: and they are they which " testify of me." Ye " have Moses and the prophets;" ye have Christ and his apostles; hear them. If men reject their testimony, " neither will they be per- " suaded, though one rose from the dead."

LECTURE XII.

LUKE IV. 16—22.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias: and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

WE read, in the history of the patriarchal ages, of an illustrious personage who exercised at once the functions of a priest and of a sovereign; Melchizedec, "King of Salem, and priest of the Most "High God." He whom this venerable person thus early represented to the world, united to these two characters a third, less splendid indeed, but not less important, that of a teacher and instructor of mankind; and thus He became all that a guilty,

enslaved, ignorant world stood in need of. In the blessed Jesus, O wretched man, thou beholdest the great High Priest of thy profession, who hath by one offering, one victim, one blood, procured the remission of all thy offences; the Prince of the kings of the earth, who has broken asunder the bands of thy yoke, and inserted thee into the "glorious liberty of the sons of God;" and the great, the unerring Teacher sent from God, who spake as never man spake, whose lessons make men wise unto salvation.

As the Sovereign and Lord of nature we have seen him exercising dominion over the powers of the worlds visible and invisible, putting Satan to flight by a word, receiving the homage and ministrations of angels. As an High Priest "after the "order of Melchizedec," we shall in the progress of this history behold him offering himself, once for all, "a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto "God." We are this evening to sit at his feet, and to listen to him in his humbler and more familiar character of the meek, patient, and condescending instructor of the weak, the ignorant, and the prejudiced. And, O may the gracious words which proceed from his mouth not only excite our wonder, but penetrate and melt our hearts, kindle our repentings together, and put all that remains of our existence under the dominion of love.

His first labours of affection were bestowed upon his kindred and acquaintance, they were consecrated to the improvement of the companions and friends

of early life. He had hitherto taught them by example, he now teaches them out of the written word. Had he been covetous of fame or of honour, he would surely have chosen another theatre on which to display his superior powers, for he well knew that no prophet is accepted in his own country. He well knew that eminent excellency excites envy, that envy produces malignity, and that malice prompts to evil speaking. But regard to his own interest and ease is lost in compassion to others, and the love of reputation with men reverently bends to zeal for the glory of God. Every circumstance of the scene before us is interesting and instructive.

We have in the preceding Lecture adverted to those of place; it was "in Galilee at Nazareth "where He had been brought up," and "in the "synagogue." Attend now to the *season;* it was *on the sabbath-day*. As to the pure all places, so all times are pure, yet to man, weak and imperfect as he is, distinction of both time and place is important and necessary. Show me a man who is habitually and uniformly that in the world, which decency obliges him to appear to be in the house of God, and I shall not presume to condemn him, though he frequent not the temple; although such an one is of all others the least likely to desert it. Show me the man whose every day is a day of order, of piety, of mercy, and of good works, and such an one shall, for me, spend the seventh day in what manner he will; though such an one is of all others the most likely to put respect on the ordinance of God.

Who of all those, who are born of a woman, stood least in need of the influence and assistance of sacred edifices and seasons? He whose conversation was continually in heaven, whose "meat and drink it "was to do the will of his heavenly Father," who never lost sight, for a moment, of the great end of his mission. And who was so regular in his attendance on the exercises of religious worship; who was so exact in the observance of every institution that was stamped with marks of divine authority?

The sabbath is an ordinance of mercy, designed by Him who "preserveth man and beast," to be an interruption of painful toil, a restorer of exhausted nature, a season of repose; but, in perfect consistency with this, it is a season of mental exertion, of beneficence; of devout contemplation, of virtuous, social intercourse. But the observance of the sabbath had, when our Saviour came into the world, degenerated into a narrow and grovelling superstition, which separated from it every idea of mercy and good-will to men, and the spirit was sunk in the letter. It therefore became this great Teacher, to restore the institution to its primitive design and use, and to guard mankind equally against the extremes of superstition, on the one hand, and of profanity on the other: and this he does with a wisdom, a delicacy, and a dignity peculiar to himself. Who can think slightly of what he treated with respect? Who dares to violate what he observed as "the holy of the Lord and honourable?" And

who again can think he is doing honour to God by expressing indifference, unkindness, and want of sympathy to men? He who attended the synagogue, who read and expounded the Scriptures on the sabbath; on the sabbath also restored the withered hand, defended his disciples from the charge of profanation; displayed the character of the sovereign Lord of the sabbath, as preferring mercy to sacrifice, and as having instituted "the sabbath for man, and "not man for the sabbath."

Observe farther, the Evangelist takes care to inform us that Christ's attendance on the services of the synagogue and the sabbath was not merely accidental or occasional, but habitual and stated: *as his custom was.* What we do according to no fixed rule, we do feebly and confusedly. What we do seldom we do with reluctance and dislike; and from dislike the natural transition is to total omission. On the contrary, what is subjected to rule is done accurately and efficiently; what we do habitually, we do with ease and delight; for custom, says the proverb, and with much truth, is a second nature. The Saviour of the world, accordingly, vouchsafed to become an example here also, as of every thing else that is wise and good; He was a pattern of regular, orderly conduct; from his childhood, and upward, He was a silent instructor of the successive stages of rising existence, in docility, in contentment, in submission, in regularity.

Let no one tell me that it is useless to habituate children betimes to the forms of devotion; to the

observance of institutions whose meaning and intention they do not fully comprehend; to restraints which to them appear harsh and unreasonable. It is a great thing, indeed it is every thing, to be under the government of innocent or praise-worthy customs; to be inured to the laws of order; to be prepared for thinking for themselves, and for having their sentiments heard and attended to, by learning to pay respect to the understanding, to the opinions, and to the experience of others. Think with what holy indignation He, whose name we bear, would have listened to a proposal to violate his custom, and to make the hour of the devotions of the synagogue, the hour of walking into the corn fields!

The historian is here singularly minute, and gives wonderful vivacity to his representation, by going into a detail of particulars. Among these, we must advert to his posture and attitude, when employed in reading to the people the word of God. *He stood up for to read.* Nature seems to point this out as an attitude of reverence and respect. Since the days of Abraham, who stood up and bowed himself before the people of the land wherein he dwelt, the wise, the benevolent, and the courteous have employed it as an expression of regard to superior sanctity, power, majesty, or multitude. Posture is, in itself, still more indifferent than time or place; but nothing is indifferent in the eyes of true wisdom by which the interests of either human virtue or felicity can be affected. Truth is the same whether delivered in an

erect or a recumbent posture. But in matters of this sort, What says common practice? Will my compliance conciliate affection, procure attention, give force to what is said? Then I will cheerfully conform. Will my singularity give offence, will it awaken prejudice, will it injure the cause which I mean to promote? Then I will not affect singularity; I will not be uncomplying nor unkind; and I will dissent only where conscience is concerned, and where compliance would be criminal.

How melancholy it is to reflect, on the talents which have been perverted, on the time which has been wasted, but that is comparatively nothing, on the angry spirits which have been excited, on the oceans of blood which have been spilt, in determining whether standing, sitting, or kneeling, whether this or the other unessential circumstance, were most adapted to the nature of things, or most conformable to the will, or conducive to the glory of the Creator. In this too, therefore, I consider the example of Christ as intelligible, decided, and instructive.

He "stood up *to read*." Happily for the world its information and instruction in matters of everlasting moment were not intrusted to the uncertainty, the changeableness, and the corruptibility of oral tradition. He who bestowed on man the gift of speech, for the mutual communication of thought, gave likewise the pattern of permanent speech, by means of writing; by which thought is transmitted from region to region, from generation to generation, unsophisticated, unimpaired. Hence the events

which Moses recorded, and which Isaiah predicted, the precepts of the Law and the promises of the Gospel, descend from age to age in equal purity, weight, and measure: and the son sees, reads, and apprehends the self-same truth which was the light and joy of his progenitors. And what must it have been to hear the sublime and pathetic strains of Isaiah pronounced by the tongue of Him who formed the ear for the perception of melodious sounds, the mouth to utter them, and the heart to receive the impression of sacred and interesting truth! We may judge of it from the mute attention with which he was heard, and from the wonder expressed, after he had finished, "at the gracious words which pro-"ceeded out of his mouth."

It would appear that it was not only "his custom" to attend the synagogue, but to perform the office of public reader to the assembly. For the proper minister delivers to Him, as to the acknowledged conductor of this part of the service, that portion of the Sacred Code which either order prescribed, or which his selection called for, or to which Providence specially directed; and he received it from Him again to be deposited in its place. And whether indeed did Providence, independent of human design or foresight, by a special interposition unfold the particular passage from ancient prophecy; or did his own choice select it as peculiarly applicable to the occasion? In either case, what portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more emphatically descriptive of his person, character, and divine

mission? And what can be so worthy of our most deep and serious attention, whether we consider the infinite and everlasting moment of the subject, the interest which we have in it, or the affecting correspondence of the event with the prediction, of the prophet with his object.

The prophecy holds up to view a person of the most distinguished eminence, consecrated in the most extraordinary manner, to the execution of the most generous, merciful, and benevolent purposes, and in language the most powerful and pathetic. It is the *anointed* of the Lord God, his *Holy One*, who alone could without presumption undertake, and triumphantly accomplish, the work of redemption, and could unfold that "great mystery of godliness" which angels desire to look into: who was set apart from everlasting to this high destination, who was gradually revealed, and, in the fulness of time, sent to be the salvation of God to all the ends of the earth. Who was anointed, not as Aaron to the priesthood, and David to the sovereignty, by a material oil of exquisite odour and costly price, but by the effusion of the Spirit, the Spirit of power, of wisdom, of holiness, which rested upon him without measure; and which was bestowed upon him, for what purpose? with Moses to humble the pride, and crush the power of Egypt? or with Cyrus, "to subdue nations, to loose the loins of kings, to "open before him the two-leaved gates, to make "the crooked places straight, to break in pieces "the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of

" iron;" to execute the righteous judgment of the Eternal on rebellion, presumption, and disobedience; to condemn and to destroy? No, when this mighty *One* cometh, armed with power, anointed with the Spirit, it is to dispense grace, to diffuse happiness, to relieve the miserable.

" He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to " the *poor*." The poor are, with the great of the earth, the objects of neglect, and contempt, and oppression. In the dictionary of the world, rich means respectable, powerful, and important: and poverty is equivalent to wretchedness, meanness, despicability. But the dispensation of grace by the Gospel inverts this order; it affixes a different, indeed an opposite, meaning to words, it raises into consequence what was lightly esteemed, and it hurls pride down to the ground. It " puts down the " mighty from their seats, and exalteth them of " low degree." Is it poverty of condition? That is no bar against the admission of the consolations of Christianity; that is no disqualification for enjoying the rights of citizenship of the kingdom of heaven; that implies no exclusion from the glorious " privi- " leges of the sons of God;" that implies neither sin nor shame. Is it poverty of spirit? It is the creature's highest glory; it is the Redeemer's brightest and most perfect image; it is the soul's preparation for the kingdom of heaven. To the one and to the other is the anointed of the Lord sent to preach the Gospel; to the poor in this

world, that they may learn to be sober-minded, patient, and content; not envying nor grieving at the good of others, but laying up for themselves "treasures in heaven;" looking for "another "country," for "a city which hath foundations, "whose builder and maker is God:"—to the poor in spirit, that they may "grow in grace," that they may contemplate and follow their pattern more closely, learning of him daily to be "meek "and lowly in heart, that they may find rest to "their souls."

"He hath sent me to *heal* the *broken-hearted*." Gracious office! divine Physician! Thou only art equal to the task. "The heart knoweth its own "bitterness." The ill admits of no cure; the officious consolation of the creature only irritates the wound; time itself brings no relief. But behold, here, not a temporary relief, but a lasting cure; not the transient spirit and calm of a stupifying opiate, but the solid support of wholesome food, and the refreshing balm of wholesome rest. An insnaring, persecuting world; mourner in Zion, disturbs thy peace, and breaks thy heart; but He hath said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the "world." "In the world ye shall have tribula-"tion, but in me ye shall have peace." In the bitterness of thy soul, thou criest out, "O wretched "man that I am! who shall deliver me from the "body of this death?" Trembling, sinking creature, speak peace to thy soul, "return to thy rest;"

"there is no condemnation to them that are in "Christ Jesus; it is God that justifieth: who is he "that condemneth?"

To preach *deliverance* to the *captives*. Bondage, slavery, captivity, are happily known to us only by the name, or in idea. We are more than Abraham's children; our fathers contended for liberty, Heaven granted it, and we enjoy it. But ah! our country is but a speck on the globe; our population is but a handful of men. And alas, even in our own country there is captivity. How many among us "wax poor and fall into decay," and that not from profligacy and prodigality alone? The creditor cometh, and there is nothing to give him. The loss of liberty is the consequence; the evil becomes worse and worse. He who entered within the walls of a prison unfortunate only, continues there under a total incapacity of shaking off calamity. What was at first the pressure of death, imperceptibly changes into an intolerable load of vice, from which a miracle of grace alone can deliver. How many thousands of our fellow subjects are in this unhappy, this almost hopeless condition! But liberty may exist even in a dungeon. If the prisoner carries with him into confinement the "spirit "of adoption," he is already delivered from bondage. No bolts, nor bars, nor fetters of iron, can restrain the heaven-born mind: he can look up and "cry, Abba, Father!" "He that is called in the "Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's free-man." "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free

"indeed." Paul in bonds, a prisoner in the cause of Jesus Christ, possesses a nobly free and independent spirit. Galled with "many stripes;" "thrust into the inner prison" at Philippi, with Silas his companion in tribulation, "their feet "made fast in the stocks," they enjoy liberty of access to the throne of grace. "At midnight they "prayed, and sang praises unto God." Thus "the "Lord looseth the prisoners," and thus the Anointed is "sent to preach," and to give, "deliverance to "the captives."

But what, in respect either of multitude or of misery, are imprisoned debtors, or even felons lying under the rod of the law, compared to the voluntarily enslaved? "Whosoever committeth sin "is the slave of sin." And what blindness is like wilful blindness, and what servitude so hopeless, so inglorious, as that into which a man degrades himself? It is some alleviation of the depression of a servile estate, that the master is honourable, and that the service required is neither humiliating nor severe: but O how mortifying the reflection of being in subjection to an unfeeling monster, to a capricious tyrant, to a contemptible groundling! And such is every slave to irregular appetite, whether it be "the lust of the flesh, or the lust of "the eyes, or the pride of life." Such dream that they are following their own will, but in truth they "are led captive by Satan at his will:" and "the "wages of sin is death." To deliver from this most inglorious, this fatal thraldom, then, is the

object of Christ's mission. What, Britons, glory, and well you may, in your civil liberties! and willingly assume the yoke of a paltry interest, of a grovelling propensity, which you are ashamed to avow! What, make it your boast that the moment the ill-fated African breathes British air he becomes free! and continue deliberately to "fulfil the desires of the "flesh and of the mind," which "war against the "soul!" Great Deliverer, exert thy power, display thy grace; "open their eyes, turn them from dark-"ness to light, and from the power of Satan unto "God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified."

"He hath sent me—for the *recovering of sight* "*to the blind.*" On what numberless, and what delicate hinges does human comfort turn! Who can describe "the thousand natural shocks that flesh is "heir to?" Were the kindness of Nature or the care of Providence to be suspended but for a day, into what a lazer-house would the world be instantly transformed! The defect of a nail of a little finger is a blemish in organization, but a blemish which nature seldom permits; how much less a deficiency of one of the nobler parts, or a disarrangement of the whole system! "But that the works of God should "be made manifest," a "man is blind from his "birth;" and another loses "the precious treasure "of his eye-sight." Of the two, the latter surely is the greater evil. We cannot regret what we have hardly an idea of, what we never possessed, and to which we become perfectly reconciled before we are

conscious of existence. But to recollect the pleasures of vision after the organ is destroyed; but to be reduced to mourn with the Poet in these affecting strains:

> With the year
> Seasons return; but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine:
> But cloud instead, and ever during dark
> Surrounds me! from the cheerful ways of men
> Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair,
> Presented with a universal blank
> Of nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,
> And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out!
>
> PARAD. LOST, III. 40, &c.

This is "darkness which may be felt." In representing, accordingly, the deplorable state of the world under the image of *blindness*, a state of ignorance, guilt, and wretchedness; and in representing the correspondent office and work of the Redeemer, that blindness is not described as an original and radical defect of sight, but as the casual deprivation of a blessing once in possession; and he is considered as sent not to confer a benefit unknown, unenjoyed before, but to restore that which was lost, to relumine the extinguished orb. The truth is, men had wilfully shut their eyes, because they could not bear the light. This was the condemnation of the unbelieving Jews, with all their superior advantages: "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this "world; that they which see not might see, and "that they which see might be made blind. And

" some of the Pharisees which were with him heard " these words, and said unto him, Are we blind " also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye " should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; " therefore your sin remaineth." And this was the condemnation of the self-conceited Gentiles, with all their affectation of wisdom; " professing them- " selves to be wise, they became fools;" " they " became vain in their imaginations, and their " foolish heart was darkened." They are in another place thus described, and under the same image: " The Gentiles walk in the vanity of their " mind, having the understanding darkened, being " alienated from the life of God through the igno- " rance that is in them, because of the blindness " of their heart:" and this mental darkness is represented as necessarily blended with moral corruption of the grossest kind. Thus are both Jews and Gentiles involved in thick darkness, and both under the dominion of sin; " God hath concluded them all " in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon " all." The promises of Messiah are of equal extent: as " a salvation prepared before the face of " all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the " glory of his people Israel."

" He is sent, *to set at liberty them that are* " *bruised.*" We have here a representation of human misery in every circumstance of aggravation; poverty, mental depression, captivity, blindness, fetters of iron. There is in this gradation, perhaps, an allusion to the horrid treatment of unhappy pri-

soners on falling into the hands of their enemies. They were shut up in prison, their eyes were thrust out, they were loaded with chains. Thus was Samson treated, the moment his strength failed, and his cruel adversaries had obtained power over him; "The Philistines took him, and put out his "eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound "him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in "the prison house." And the sight of his wretchedness they called *sport*. In this manner could one king act by another. "So they took the king, "and brought him up to the king of Babylon to "Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And "they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, "and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound "him with fetters of brass, and carried him to "Babylon." Such are the dreadful abuses which a man commits against his brother! such the dreadful malignity of the human heart; such is the detestable working of "the carnal mind," which "is enmity "against God," and an unrelenting foe to man!

This enumeration of human woes is equivalent to a declaration, that whatever may be the nature, and whatever the extent of the malady, the promised Deliverer should come provided with a suitable remedy. And when he did come, he not only exercised this gracious power himself; for "they "brought unto him all sick people that were taken "with divers diseases and torments, and those "which were possessed with devils, and those which "were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and

" he healed them;" but he communicated the same salutary virtue to his disciples also: " He gave " them power against unclean spirits, to cast them " out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all " manner of diseases." And thus was the Scripture fulfilled. The prophecy contains one important article more:

The anointed is sent *to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* " The law had a shadow of good " things to come." With its severity was blended a powerful infusion of mercy and mildness, the particulars of which had a direct reference to the times and the spirit of the Gospel. Of these the year of jubilee was one of the most distinguished. It was ushered in with the sound of the trumpet, " pro- " claiming liberty throughout all the land, unto all " the inhabitants thereof." On the return of this hallowed fiftieth year debts were remitted; alienated lands reverted to the original proprietor; the Hebrew bond-servant to a Hebrew, " he and his " children with him," were to be set free, and restored to their rank in Israel; the poor Hebrew, who had been reduced to the sad necessity of selling himself as a slave to a stranger, was to be redeemed by his next of kin. In a word, at the expiration of every seven times seven years, all the disorders which had crept into the commonwealth, from the period of the preceding jubilee, were to be rectified, and all reinstated on the original basis. It is easy to conceive how such an era would be looked unto and longed for; what a happy tendency it had to ame-

liorate the condition of myriads, and to check the progress of oppression. In contemplating it, the Psalmist exclaims: "Blessed is the people that "know the joyful sound!" It was a figure of that "acceptable year of the Lord" which it was predicted the Messiah should be sent to proclaim, the perpetual jubilee of the Gospel, for the remission of sins; for the restoration of the forfeited inheritance of the saints; for the manumission of the slave; for the redemption of the captive; for releasing and bringing back the exile: in a word, "to destroy "the works of the devil," to repair the ravages of sin and death, to introduce universal and everlasting liberty, and peace, and joy.

The sequel of this service of the synagogue, and the effect which it produced, will be the subject of the next Lecture.

Learn, Christian, to compare Scripture with Scripture, and predictions with their corresponding events. Search diligently for him to whom all the Prophets give witness, and in whom "all the pro- "mises of God are yea, and in Him amen, unto "the glory of God." Much is clearly manifested, and pointedly applied; but much still remains to be brought to light. Truth will not obtrude itself on the careless, superficial reader or observer, but discloses its hidden charms to the diligent, the devout, and the inquisitive. It is the injunction of Christ himself: "Search the Scriptures; for in "them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are "they which testify of me." Search them in this

particular view, and you will have to tell to others what Philip said to Nathaniel; "We have found "him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, "did write, Jesus of Nazareth." "With joy shall "ye draw water out of these wells of salvation;" and having tasted how sweet and refreshing it is, you will be disposed to impart it to others, for in this, if in any case, the saying of the wise man is verified: "There is that scattereth and yet increas-"eth:" and "it is more blessed to give than to

LECTURE XIII.

LUKE IV. 20—32.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

IT is truly affecting to think on what a slippery foundation men attempt to rear the fabric of happi-

ness. They dream of deriving it from their own stores. In the pride of his heart, a man imagines himself to be equal to every thing. What can elude his penetration; what can resist his force; what can fatigue his industry? Nevertheless the stammering of a child betrays his purpose; the rustling of a leaf melts his resolution; a stone cut out of the mountain, and hurled at him by an invisible hand, crushes in a moment all his powers into the dust. Are they more secure, or more successful, who depend on foreign aid; who build their felicity on the ability, the constancy, or the affection of others? Alas, it is an attempt to erect a house upon the sand; the washing of the next tide levels it to the ground. Friendship, in a flush of zeal, promised you all encouragement and support. The hour of need comes, and you have recourse to the heart which fondly cherished you; it has waxed cold, it is alienated, it acknowledges you no longer. Your mountain stood strong in a prince's favour. What shall not "be done to the man whom the king "delights to honour?" Ah, his breath is in his nostrils, he died yesterday, he has returned to his dust. Applauding multitudes hang upon your lips, the public finger points you out with approbation; but "you have heard" of the sufferings, as well as of the patience of Job. "When I went out to the "gate through the city, when I prepared my seat "in the street, the young men saw me and hid "themselves; and the aged arose and stood up.

" When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
" and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me.
" Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept
" silence at my counsel. They waited for me as for
" the rain, and they opened their mouth as for the
" latter rain; I chose out their way, and sat chief,
" and dwelt as a king in the army.—But," O sad reverse! " they that are younger than I have me
" in derision. And now I am their song, yea I am
" their by-word. They abhor me, they flee far
" from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Upon
" my right hand rise the youth, they push away
" my feet; they mar my path, they set forward my
" calamity."—And such is every one who trusteth in popular favour; he feedeth on the wind, and graspeth the east wind in his arms.

But a more illustrious and more instructive instance, to this purpose, than that of Job, is before us. Now the eyes of the admiring multitude in the synagogue are fastened with wonder and delight on the face of Jesus; anon they are filled with wrath against him: now all bear him witness, and dwell upon the " gracious words which proceed out
" of his mouth:" next moment they are up in arms, they thrust him out of the city, they hurry him to the brow of the hill, with an intention to cast him down headlong. The cry to-day is, " Let us
" take him and make him a king, never man spake
" like this man:" to-morrow it is, " Away with
" him, crucify him; not this man but Barabbas." Let us trace the progress of the scene, and observe

what produced the sudden change, and learn to cease from man, and to draw consolation and support from the approbation of God, and from the testimony of a conscience void of offence.

The passage which he had read from the prophet was deeply interesting and affecting. It held up to view a most illustrious personage, supporting a dignified and important character, and singularly qualified for the exercise of it, employed in rendering the most seasonable and the most essential services to mankind; evangelizing the poor, healing the broken-hearted, redeeming the captive, enlightening the blind, setting the prisoner free, proclaiming the Jubilee year, the era of universal joy. The value and weight of the subject were greatly enhanced by the manner in which he rehearsed it. Into his lips grace was poured; what majesty sat enthroned on his brow! what mild glory beamed from his eyes! what dignity and grace in his attitude as he rose and sat down, in receiving the book and delivering it again to the minister! Behold, every eye is fixed upon him, every ear is attention, while in these few but emphatical words, he explains and applies the prediction of the prophet, "This "day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." "I "am He to whom the prophet gives witness; I am "come into the world on this benevolent design; I, "your bone and your flesh, your brother, your "neighbour, your fellow-citizen, your friend." "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy la- "den, and I will give you rest."

On this admiration gradually gives way to a feeling less gentle. Familiarity lowers the object with which it converses; self-love cannot brook to acknowledge a superior in an equal; envy seeks to indemnify itself under the oppression of eminent worth and excellence, by discovering and fixing upon some humiliating, mortifying circumstance, that reduces the hated greatness nearer to its own level. This explains the change which so quickly appeared in our Saviour's auditory. Dazzled, at first, by both the matter and manner of his address, they crown him with applause. But perceiving themselves eclipsed in the lustre of his graces and virtues, sinking as he rose, they strive to tumble him from his excellency, as if by degrading him, they were themselves to mount. His parentage is his only vulnerable part; that was poor and mean and despised, and that, accordingly, envy brings forward with affected surprise. "Is not this Joseph's "son?" And when once this baleful, malignant passion has taken possession of the breast, every claim of justice, every plea of worth, every call of gratitude, every emotion of mercy, is disregarded, stifled, trampled under foot.

Christ observes it with pity, not with indignation; for he came not only to relieve the miserable, but to bear with and overcome the froward, to convince, subdue, and melt the obstinate, to cure prejudice, and to instruct indocility. Their uncivil, invidious inquiry excites in him no resentment; it can do him no hurt; but grieved at the hardness of their

heart, and, at the same time, compassionating their weakness, he at once reproves the one, and makes an apology for the other. The apology he draws from the common, and well known, principles of human nature. No prophet is accepted in his own country. Among strangers, a man is esteemed according to his talents and virtues. His ancestry and kindred are a matter of no moment. It is even a degree of merit to have emerged out of obscurity; but at home, among kindred and acquaintance, eminent qualities are regarded with a jealous eye. The reputation, ability, and wisdom of exalted goodness are considered by the less deserving as a reproach to themselves. What is every day within our reach we every day neglect. What costs us little we lightly esteem. Difficulty and danger and distance enhance the value of every object of pursuit. But the very apology implies a censure of human nature, as wicked, unjust, and absurd, in undervaluing worth merely because it is allied to us, and neglecting good for no better reason than that it is known.

Our blessed Lord, accordingly, blends mild and gentle reproof with the excuse which he makes for the unkind return that his countrymen and kinsfolk had made to his affectionate endeavours to serve and to instruct them. And this seems to be the force of his reasoning,—"You have heard, my dear friends, of "my going about doing good, at Capernaum and "elsewhere; and you will naturally and with justice "say to me, in the language of the common proverb,

" Physician, heal thyself: look at home; in atten-
" tion to objects more remote, overlook not such as
" are equally pressing, and still more nearly inter-
" esting; let thy own country, if not in preference,
" at least in common with strangers, reap the benefit
" of these thy extraordinary, supernatural powers.
" Well, my beloved countrymen, here I am for this
" very purpose; ready to instruct you in the way
" of salvation, ready to heal all your plagues, to
" perform all the offices of mercy and loving-kind-
" ness which the prophet, in the passage which I
" now read, predicted concerning me: but I know
" the meaning of these ungracious looks, of these
" malignant whispers, of that envious inquiry into
" my pedigree, and occupation, and connexions in
" life. You are under the power of prejudice, you
" are too well acquainted with me to reap benefit
" from my ministrations: my labours will be more
" acceptable where I am less known.

" It happeneth to me as it did to the prophets of
" old; they were neglected, hated, persecuted of
" their own countrymen; and you inherit the spirit
" of your fathers; whom no calamity could subdue,
" no arguments convince, no goodness charm. I
" appeal to the history of our own nation. The
" times of Elijah's prophecy were marked with
" many signal interpositions of Divine providence,
" particularly with a grievous famine, occasioned by
" a drought of uncommon duration, three years and
" six months. It was universally felt, particularly
" by the poorer and more unprotected part of the

" community, the widow and the fatherless; and " the extraordinary powers of the prophet were " equally well known and acknowledged. But " what is the fact? Was the prophet sought unto? " Did the general distress drive the sufferers to seek " relief in the piety and miraculous powers of the " man of God? No, he was the *Tishbite*, the son " of somebody whom they knew; he was at home, " among his own, and therefore his person was de- " spised, his office slighted, and even the widow " and the fatherless, unsubdued by the strong hand " of necessity, perished from want, because they " scorned the humane and compassionate interposi- " tion of a neighbour and kinsman. But O how " acceptable was his visit to a stranger, a pagan, a " woman of Sidon? she felt with others the pressure " of the common calamity; the law of self-preserva- " tion, and compassion for the son of her womb, " were strong in her, as in any widow or mother in " Israel; but more faithful and believing than they, " she cheerfully made the sacrifice of her last earthly " provision; at the word of the prophet, she gave " up her own and her son's subsistence; she reposed " confidence in Heaven, she acknowledged the " ensigns of Deity, she cast herself upon a miracle, " and her hope made her not ashamed.

" Take another example, my friends, from your " own history, and let it admonish and reprove you. " Elisha inherited a double portion of the spirit of " his master Elijah; he performed many notable " miracles, he divided the waters of the river, he

"made iron to swim, he raised the dead to life, he "employed the supernatural powers which were "conferred upon him, in removing the miseries of "his fellow-creatures. Among these the leprosy "was one, a disease which baffles the skill of the "physician, which not medicine, but the immediate "power of God alone can cure. Now, what saith "the record? What Israelitish lepers applied to the "prophet, of the multitudes who were affected with "this loathsome distemper? Not so much as one. "He was at home, among those of his own house; "the wretched patient, loathsome to himself, and a "burden offensive to every one about him, chooses "rather to continue an abomination, than to be "beholden to an acquaintance, to an equal, to a "prophet of his own country, for the miracle of "cleansing. Not so the son of the stranger; Naa-"man the Syrian, the commander of armies, the "favourite of a prince, a worshipper of strange gods. "He believes the report, he flies to the physician, he "follows the prescription, he washes in Jordan, and "becomes clean."

The conscience of his audience makes the application of our Saviour's doctrine; and what ensues? What always did, and always will, when the principle of conscience is awakened; either humble and co[illegible]e submission to the reproof, and an honest endeavour to profit by it; or else a rancorous animosity against the reprover, the confirmation of prejudice, a wilful exclusion of light, or a determined perseverance in what is known to be wrong. Unhap-

pily the frequenters of the synagogue at Nazareth were of this last description. Their indignation falls, not as it ought to have done, on their own mean, unworthy, ungenerous, unmanly spirit, but on their kind affectionate, gentle monitor. And what follows? Is it the cynical representation of some surly traducer of mankind; or is it truth and history? Merciful father of mankind! must I believe that the very persons who just now gazed with delight on that super-angelic face, who listened with rapture to the accents of that celestial voice, who justly gloried in their townsman, companion, and friend, are instantaneously converted into demons of hell? What, meditate, digest murder! the murder of innocence, truth, and wisdom! What all of them! not one calm, moderate spirit to suggest milder counsels, to plead the cause of goodness, to arrest the hand of violence! No, not one. O human nature, what wert thou; and what art thou become! I tremble to think that I am a partaker of thee; of a "heart deceitful above all things and "desperately wicked." "They rose up, and thrust "him out of the city, and led him unto the brow "of the hill whereon their city was built, that "they might cast him down headlong." And shall not fire come down from heaven, as it did once, and a second time, to avenge a slighter insult offered to a much inferior prophet? O no! "the Son of "man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save "them." Behold a more glorious triumph, a miracle of grace and condescension, a triumph worthy of

the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. "He, "passing through the midst of them, went his way." Behold power and mercy united. Were they, like the men of Sodom, stricken with blindness? Were their hands, like Jeroboam's, dried up and rendered immoveable? Were their eyes, like the disciples going to Emmaus, holden, that they should not know him? I stop not to inquire. Suffice it to say, his "hour was not yet come," and they had no power at all over him but what was permitted of God. And vain is the contention of man against God: it is hard for thee, O persecutor, to "kick against the "pricks."

In the history referred to by our Lord, and in the instance of a miraculous supply of food to the widow of Sarepta, in a season of extreme scarcity, as well as in the other equally noted instance of a miraculous cure of leprosy performed on the body of Naaman the Syrian, we perceive the dawning of the gospel day upon the Gentile world. They believed and obeyed the word of the prophet, and they obtained relief, while "the seed of Abraham "after the flesh" remained unbelieving and impenitent. "Of a truth, God is no respecter of persons: "but in every nation, he that feareth Him, and "worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but "now commandeth all men every where to repent: "because he 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." How God will deal in the judgment with those who never enjoyed the benefit of either the Law or the Gospel, it is not for us to determine. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do "right?" But "we ought to give the more earnest "heed to the things which we have heard, lest at "any time we should let them slip. For if the "word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every "transgression and disobedience received a just re-"compense of reward; how shall we escape if we "neglect so great salvation; which at the first began "to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto "us by them that heard him; God also bearing "them witness, both with signs and wonders, and "with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, "according to his own will?"

Among other evidences that the Christian dispensation is from heaven, the universality of it is not the least. This act of grace contains no unkind exceptions. There is no proscribed region, or family, or individual. The proclamation is, "Peace, peace "to him that is far off, and to him that is near, "saith the Lord." This dawning light was now in a progress unto "the perfect day." Though Christ's personal ministry was, in the first instance, addressed "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," its influence quickly spread far beyond the confines of Judea. "His fame went throughout all Syria;" a woman of Canaan believed on him, and her daughter was healed; the Roman centurion, who had

been made partaker of the same precious faith, in like manner had power with God, and prevailed in behalf of his palsied servant. Some of our Lord's immediate attendants lived to see "the kingdom "of God come with power." "The centurion, "and they that were with him watching Jesus" on the cross, "when they saw the earthquake, and "those things that were done," though unaccustomed to fear, "they feared greatly," and made this open confession, "Truly this was the Son of "God."

The miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, in the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, opened a passage in all directions for the speedy diffusion of the truth as it is in Jesus, over all lands. Peter no longer trembles and denies his Master, but stands boldly up to plead his cause, and precious souls by thousands are added unto the Lord. Cured of his Jewish prejudices, by a vision from heaven, he descends to Cesarea, preaches the word of life to the centurion Cornelius and "his kinsmen and near "friends." It is accompanied with power, and "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." That same Apostle was spared to address epistles "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Gala-"tia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect ac-"cording to the foreknowledge of God the Father, "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, "and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Philip, the Evangelist, "went down to the city of "Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And

" the people with one accord gave heed unto those " things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the " miracles which he did." That Evangelist finds a proselyte in the desert of Gaza, in a person " of great " authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, " who had the charge of all her treasure." He, too, gladly receives the word, is baptized, and goes on his way rejoicing, to carry into those dark regions the light of divine truth, and the Scripture is fulfilled which saith, " Ethiopia shall soon stretch out " her hands unto God."

Time would fail in tracing the progress, and marking the success, of him, who is emphatically denominated the Apostle of the Gentiles, through the islands of the Mediterranean, over the states of Greece, in Italy, at Rome. John, the beloved disciple, had the pleasure of dispatching particular letters, dictated by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to the seven churches of Asia. He was one of those, then, concerning whom Christ said, in the passage already quoted, " Verily I say unto you, " that there be some of them that stand here, which " shall not taste of death till they have seen the " kingdom of God come with power." His life was " prolonged to extreme old age. He saw the kingdom of his divine Master established in Europe, in Asia, in Africa. The great Western World was still unknown; but, in the wisdom of God, it too has emerged out of the bosom of the vast ocean, to swell the Redeemer's empire. To embrace the whole globe is its generous design. The period

approaches, when "great voices in heaven" shall proclaim, saying; "The kingdoms of this world "are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his "Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." "Though Israel," therefore, "be not gathered," Messiah shall be glorious in the eyes of the "Lord; for he saith of him, "It is a light "thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the "Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto "the end of the earth." And as the ancient dispensation contained many intimations of favour to the Gentile world, so the Gospel contains and discloses a dawn of hope to the Jewish nation. "Blindness "in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of "the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall "be saved; as it is written, There shall come out "of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away un-"godliness from Jacob." "O the depth of the "riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his "ways past finding out!"

Some interpreters of note have remarked a coincidence between the duration of the great famine which afflicted Israel, in the days of Elias, and that of our Saviour's ministry from his baptism to his death, namely, three years and six months. As during the former period, at the word of the prophet, heaven was shut up, and all elementary influence suspended, to the inexpressible distress of the whole land;

so during the latter, through the mediation of a greater than Elias, full communication was opened. In the one we have displayed the severity of the law, in the other the grace of the Gospel; in Elias, the minister of wrath and condemnation; in Jesus, the minister of mercy and reconciliation; the one inflicting a temporary curse, the other calling down an everlasting benediction; there the clouds bound up, and the dew restrained; here a "doctrine dropping as the rain, and speech distilling as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." The prophet represents, in beautiful language, the blessedness of an open communication between earth and heaven: "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." But the contrast is dreadful! "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax; and I will destroy her vines and her fig-

"trees." The prayer of faith is the channel of this interesting communication.

It is humiliating to observe, and to reflect, on the uniform and unrelenting malignity of the human heart. That greatness, power, wealth, should be envied, and the possessor hated and thrust at, is not so much an object of surprise. But that simplicity, innocence, kindness, beneficence, should provoke hostility, would exceed belief, were not the proofs too numerous and too stubborn to be resisted. We justly detest the wickedness, injustice, and ingratitude of the Nazarenes, in attempting to destroy their unassuming, unoffending townsman; but is the angry, the lofty spirit of man now subdued to the obedience and love of Christ? Has not a daring attempt lately been made by a great nation, once denominated Christian, to obliterate the name, and overwhelm the cause of Christ? Wherefore change the ancient measurements of time? It was in the hope of swallowing up the distinction of days, and thereby of sinking the observance of the Lord's day in the mass. With the abolition of the sabbath the service of the sanctuary is swept away; and the spirit of Christianity, it was presumed, would not long survive its forms and rites. Are there none among ourselves who express rancorous animosity against the worthy name which they so unworthily bear? Is not the Lord's day profaned and the temple deserted; and, in defiance of the law of the land, to say nothing of the obligations of decency and religion, are not efforts made by persons high in place

and station, to discredit and disuse the ordinances of the Gospel, and thereby to bring the Gospel itself into disrepute? We say, however, concerning such men, in the spirit and words of the wise Gamaliel: "Refrain from these men and let them alone: for "if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will "come to nought: but if it be of God, *they* cannot "overthrow it; lest haply they be found even to "fight against God."

To this fell spirit in man, what a striking, what an amiable contrast have we in the temper and conduct of our blessed Lord! To withdraw himself from among these ingrates is the only mark of displeasure expressed by him. He desisted from teaching persons who were determined not to learn; "He "did not many mighty works there," because they were liable to misapprehension, to misrepresentation. "He, passing through the midst of them, went his "way." Thus men grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and he departs from them. And thus the apostles of the Lord, Paul and Barnabas, when "the Jews, "filled with envy, spake against them, contradict-"ing and blaspheming," they said; "It was neces-"sary that the word of God should first have been "spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, "and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, "lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And is it no punishment to be forsaken of a friend; a friend whom we have grieved and offended, who feels himself constrained to retire, but retires silently, slowly, reluc-

tantly? Little do men reflect what sorrow, what remorse they are treasuring up to themselves, in slighting, in neglecting a day of merciful visitation. It drew tears from the eyes of the compassionate friend of mankind: "And when he was come near he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

We conclude with pointing out the Saviour as a pattern of perseverance in well-doing. Nazareth is no longer a theatre of teaching and working. Does he therefore sullenly, resentfully cease from discharging the duties of his high office? No, other cities will gladly receive him. "He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days." And what a course of active, unwearied beneficence did the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage exhibit! through evil report and good report, through opposition and discouragement, through sorrow and suffering, by night and by day, till, bowing his head, he could say, "It is finished." "Arm yourselves," therefore, Christians, "with the same mind:" "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith:—consider him

" that endured such contradiction of sinners against
" himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."
" And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due
" season we shall reap, if we faint not." " There-
" fore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, un-
" moveable, always abounding in the work of the
" Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is
" not in vain in the Lord."

LECTURE XIV.

MATT. IV. 12—22.

Now, when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Naphthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

AMONG the other means of arriving at *certainty*, respecting "the things wherein we have been instructed," it may be of importance to compare the present state of Christianity with its origin; to contrast the smallness of its beginnings with the greatness of its success; to consider the real influence

which a cause so unpromising has had on human affairs, and the changes which it actually has produced on the face of the globe. Who is its Author? A mighty potentate, armed with sovereign power and authority? An invincible conqueror travelling in the greatness of his strength, at the head of triumphant legions, from victory to victory? An experienced statesman skilled in every art of intrigue, and amply furnished with all-commanding gold, to gain over credulous, or to purchase the suffrages of corruptible multitudes? The reverse of all this is the fact. The Author of our faith, Christians, as has frequently been repeated, was the reputed son of a carpenter; he was brought up in an obscure village, of a region proverbially contemptible, of a conquered country; he was destitute of means, of friends, of worldly wisdom; he was a pensioner on the bounty of others, and frequently without a place where to lay his head.

Will any one presume to allege that he associated with the great of this world, that he insinuated himself into the favour and counsels of the princes of the earth, that he went forth armed with their commission, and advanced in their name conquering and to conquer? No, history contradicts all this. He lived up to the age of thirty in the very depth of obscurity; his associates and coadjutors were few in number, men of mean parentage and parts, in the very lowest ranks of society, fishermen the sons of fishermen. Did he employ, then, the arts of insinuation, address, and flattery, to captivate

the vulgar? Did he teach an easy, palatable, pliant morality, and attract the countenance and support of the million, by gratifying their passions, by conniving at their vices, or by humouring their prejudices? No such thing. His life and doctrine were quite the reverse. He preached and exemplified mortification and self-denial, and patient submission to painful and unmerited suffering, and renunciation of the world. Undoubtedly then his followers could not be numerous, nor his reputation extensive; nor his power of long duration. This too is contradicted by matter of fact. No teacher can boast of so many disciples; no name is so widely diffused; and after a lapse of eighteen centuries, the field of his triumph is extended and extending, and his outstretched arms are expanded to embrace a globe.

How is all this to be accounted for? Who shall explain this accumulation of mystery? Consult, on the subject, the learned Jewish doctor of laws, whom we formerly quoted with respect. His reasoning upon it is as sound, and as conclusive now, as it was near two thousand years ago, "If this counsel or this work were of men, it must have come "to nought: but because it is of God, it cannot be "overthrown." Christianity is the cause of Heaven, and therefore it hath prospered, and shall continue to prosper.

We have hitherto beheld our blessed Lord single and unconnected; gradually showing himself to the world as a teacher sent from God. In the passage which has now been read, we find him laying

the foundation of his church, forming and modelling his household, beginning to provide a succession of public teachers of his religion, who should carry on, to the end of time, the instruction of an ignorant, the reformation of a corrupted, the salvation of a perishing world. The career of John Baptist, his kinsman and forerunner, was now come to an end. That rigid moralist and honest reformer had, by speaking truth and acting faithfully, incurred the displeasure of an arbitrary despot, who cast him into prison, where he soon after fell a victim to the resentment of an abandoned woman. But this John had already given a repeated and public testimony to Jesus Christ, as the Messiah promised to the fathers, and as "the Lamb of God that taketh "away the sin of the world." And, at his baptism by John, God had confirmed that testimony by a voice from heaven.

As the Baptist's public labours drew towards a conclusion, those of Jesus Christ were advancing to their commencement; and, as we have seen, they were first employed for the instruction and relief of his kindred and townsmen of Nazareth, where he had been brought up. His benevolent services there, however, were most ungratefully requited, the minds of his auditors being poisoned with envy, and, as a necessary consequence, their hearts hardened through unbelief. Disappointed of success there, where it might have been so reasonably expected, he gives not up, in sullen dissatisfaction, the work which was given him to do, but leaving

Nazareth, in the manner related in the preceding Lecture, he proceeds to Capernaum, a town of Galilee on the sea-coast, on the confines of the inheritance of the two tribes Zabulon and Napthalim, denominated "Galilee of the Gentiles," from its proximity to the regions of Tyre and Sidon.

But what step of our Saviour's progress was unmarked by the finger of ancient prophecy, and consequently directed by a special interposition of Divine Providence? Isaiah, who had so clearly and fully described his character and offices, in the passage which he read and applied to himself, in the synagogue at Nazareth, has also clearly and decidedly announced his visit to Capernaum, and the light and glory which his preaching and mighty works should diffuse over a region which lay buried in heathenish ignorance and idolatry. How runs the prophecy? "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be "such as was in her vexation, when at the first he "lightly afflicted the land of Zabulon, and the land "of Naphthali, and afterward did more grievously "afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, "in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked "in darkness have seen a great light; they that "dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon "them hath the light shined." And what saith the history? "Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt "in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the "borders of Zabulon and Napthalim: that it might "be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the pro-"phet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land

" of Naphthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond " Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people " which sat in darkness saw great light; and to " them which sat in the region and shadow of death " light is sprung up." In this too is not " the arm " of the Lord revealed?" Thus clearly does infinite wisdom foresee whatsoever shall come to pass; thus confidently doth unchangeable, unerring truth declare the end from the beginning, and thus irresistibly doth the mighty power of God bring it to pass. And thus by a series of " immutable things," that " God who cannot lie" is affording " a strong con- " solation" to those " who have fled for refuge to " lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Jesus takes up the same theme which constituted the subject of John's preaching, namely, the doctrine of repentance; that humbling doctrine, which regards a world lying in wickedness, ignorance, and misery so deplorable, as to be fitly represented by the powerful and expressive imagery of " dark- " ness" and " the region and shadow of death;" that compassionate doctrine which stretches out a friendly hand to the guilty and the wretched; that reviving doctrine which gently draws the trembling sinner to the God of mercy, and which forbids the vilest to despair. And by what arguments is this salutary doctrine recommended and enforced, by both the forerunner, and by the greater who followed after him? " The kingdom of heaven is at hand:" the reign of grace, the dominion of love; a new display of divine perfection, even God descending

to dwell with men upon earth, that he might prepare men to "sit together in heavenly places in "Christ Jesus." What a fulness of time was now come, when "the Prophet of the Highest," like the sun, "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," began to "go before the face of the Lord to prepare "his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his "people by the remission of their sins, through "the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-"spring from on high hath visited us to give light "to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow "of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace!" The great Sovereign in this heavenly kingdom, in a manner peculiar to himself, announces his own public entry on the exercise of his authority; the Prince of Peace cries aloud, and proclaims "the "acceptable year of the Lord!"

We said, in a manner peculiar to himself: for it looks as if he were meaning to court neglect, to excite compassion, or to provoke contempt, not to engage attention or to command respect. When we behold the carpenter's son forming an humble alliance with three or four simple, illiterate, unconnected fishermen, the inhabitants of a little town on the coast of the sea of Galilee, who is so timid as to take the alarm? Who is so sanguine as to expect any thing from such a confederacy? Who is such a visionary as to prognosticate from it the downfall of idolatry, and the revolution of empires? But this proved indeed the grand crisis in human affairs. It produced an universal and everlasting change in the state of

the world. It was the establishment of a kingdom destined to control, and, at length, to swallow up every other; nay, which was to outlast the sun, and survive the system of nature; which was to prove the foundation whereon to rear a new and more glorious fabric of creation, to serve as a theatre whereon to display wonders which shall leave the pride of kings at an infinite distance behind. "All "these things shall be dissolved: nevertheless we, "according to his promise, look for new heavens "and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." On the day that Jesus called "Simon and Andrew "his brother, James and John his brother," from their boats and fishing-nets, imperial Rome shook to the foundation; the Jewish hierarchy expired; Satan's empire fell; and on their ruins began to arise "a kingdom which cannot be moved;" the predicted throne and kingdom of David's Lord, which the zeal of the Lord of hosts was "to order, "and to establish with judgment and with justice "even for ever."

These simple men with simple names, then obscure, unnoticed, unknown, were hastening to acquire a celebrity which speedily eclipsed the titles of royalty, and the glare of imperial purple. "Peter, "a servant and an apostle of Juses Christ;" John "the disciple whom Jesus loved," are held in lasting and grateful remembrance by the nations of the earth, while the memory of their mighty contemporaries, a Tiberius, a Nero, and a Domitian, is rotting in the dust, or preserved from oblivion by a note

of infamy, and a sentiment of detestation. In the former we revere the benefactors of the human race; from the latter we turn away with abhorrence, as from so many monsters. The despised Galileans became "fishers of men," converted myriads to the faith and hope of the Gospel, and, to this day, by their writings, continue to minister to the edification and comfort of the Christian world; and now that the papal throne is sinking after the imperial into utter annihilation, the throne of those humble followers of the Lamb is, like that of their divine Master, built upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

The power of persuasion accompanied the call of Jesus: "Walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two "brethren; and he saith unto them, Follow me, "and I will make you fishers of men. And they "straightway left their nets and followed him." Presently after, he saw another pair of brothers pursuing the accustomed labours of their humble occupation; "and he called them. And they immediate-"ly left the ship, and their father, and followed "him." It will be said that they had very little to lose, and therefore merit not the praise of having made a very costly sacrifice, No man can make a greater sacrifice than that of his all, whether it be much or little. When a person deliberately resigns the means of earning his bread he casts himself entirely on Providence. The woman of Sarepta who, at the word of the prophet, brought her last morsel of bread to satisfy his hunger, exhibited a most illustrious

display of confidence in God; as did likewise that other poor widow, whom Jesus beheld casting her two mites into the treasury, and whose liberality he so highly extols: "he said, Of a truth I say unto "you that this poor widow hath cast in more than "they all. For all these have of their abundance "cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her "penury hath cast in all the living that she had." It is not the quantity given, but the spirit in which it is bestowed, that stamps value on the gift. Peter indeed, on a certain occasion, seems to have highly rated the surrender which he made, and to have deemed himself fully entitled to a compensation: "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; "what shall we have therefore?" Jesus admits the claim; he undervalues not the sacrifice which affection has offered up, and points out the glorious compensation which he was ready to make: "And "Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that "ye which have followed me in the regeneration, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne "of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, "judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one "that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, "or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, "for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred "fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Such is the unbounded generosity of him who saith in another place: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of

" these little ones a cup of cold water only in the " name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall " in no wise lose his reward."

But there must have been an inconceivable something in the manner and address of Jesus Christ, which could induce men in circumstances such as those of the disciples, to forego the very means of subsistence, and to follow him at all hazards. They feel the attraction of true goodness, but have not as yet any apprehensions of the person, nature, and mission, of the Master whom they were preferring to all worldly relations, possessions, and prospects. But their choice was shortly justified, as they attended his footsteps through the cities of Galilee: and it is highly grateful to find a first favourable impression completely confirmed or far exceeded by knowledge and experience. They were to be made witnesses for Christ to all nations; every opportunity is therefore afforded them of the most intimate communication with him, " all the time that the Lord Jesus " went in and out among them:" that they might declare to the world " that which was from the be- " ginning which they heard, which they saw with " their eyes, which they looked upon, and which " their hands did handle of the word of life." Through a channel, and on the testimony of witnesses, so little liable to suspicion, " the truth as it is in Jesus" has been transmitted to us.

The mode of conveying to the minds of men " the gospel of the kingdom " next arrests our at-

tention. He went *teaching in their synagogues.* This consisted, if we may judge from his practice at Nazareth, in rehearsing aloud, before worshipping assemblies, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, either in their order, or passages selected for special occasions, and particularly applied. And this in every age and state of the church, ever since a revelation came down from heaven, was and is the ground-work of public instruction and devotion; even the word of the living God, the standard of truth, the foundation of faith, the rule of life.

The second mode of instruction employed by our Lord, was "*preaching* the gospel of the kingdom." This seems to have been something more than a simple reading of the Scriptures, followed by an equally simple application of the word read to its appropriate object, as in the instance which has already been under review: "This day is this Scrip-"ture fulfilled in your ears." The word translated *to preach* is derived from a noun which signifies *herald,* public crier, the messenger of prince to prince, of nation to nation. Thus the prophet Isaiah might be said *to preach* to the men of his day, when, by the command of God, he executed the office of a herald; "Cry aloud, spare not; lift "up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people "their transgression, and the house of Jacob their "sins." And thus, in strictness of speech, Christ himself might be said *to preach* when "in the last "day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and

"cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come "unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as "the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow "rivers of living water." In a greater latitude, *to preach* is, from a given topic, to argue, to exhort, to reprove, to encourage; to assail the heart, in the view of producing conviction, and of regulating the life through every avenue of the soul, the intellect, the passions, the very senses. Thus Paul, on Mars-hill at Athens, "preached Jesus "and the resurrection." Thus also at Troas, after breaking of bread, "he preached, and continued "his speech until midnight." And as Christ himself thus preached, "he sent out his twelve disciples to "preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and with this solemn charge he left them, when he ascended into heaven: "Go ye, therefore, and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy "Ghost; teaching them to observe all things what-"soever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am "with you always, even unto the end of the world. "Amen." And thus until now, through the operation of his mighty power, "the foolishness of "preaching," the preaching of "Christ crucified" is, "to them that are called, Christ the power of "God, and the wisdom of God."

Teaching and *preaching* were accompanied and supported by the display of *miraculous powers*, all employed in doing good. "He healed all manner "of sickness, and all manner of disease, among

"the people." This general description of human wretchedness, to which the promised Messiah was to apply a remedy, is followed by a sad enumeration of the several particulars which compose this depressing aggregate; some of them were more common, and in many cases removeable by human skill and the use of ordinary means; some were more obstinate and hopeless, as the palsy, lunacy, which in general bid defiance to the healing art, and terminate at length, the one in the dissolution of the body, the other in a total derangement of the mental powers. This catalogue is closed by an extraordinary malady, seemingly peculiar to that period and spot of the world, diabolical possession. Attempts have been made to explain away this terrible affliction into a species of madness or epilepsy, to which the human frame has in all ages been deplorably subjected, but which can with no propriety be ascribed to the operation of malignant spirits. The instances, however, both of the existence of the disease, and of the cure, are too numerous, and too specific, to be confounded with mental disorder or bodily infirmity; and every attempt of the kind ought to be resisted, as a blow aimed at all historical evidence, as an insidious design to limit the agency of spiritual beings, and to measure all existing powers by those of man. The influence of "the spirit that "now worketh in the children of disobedience" has no need to be demonstrated. And wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible that for a season, and for purposes by us inscrutable, this

evil spirit might be permitted to harass and convulse the bodies of men, that the superior power of the Son of God might be manifested in recovering, both in body and in spirit, "out of the snare "of the devil, them who are taken captive by him "at his will?"

The whole taken together, the *teaching*, the *preaching*, and the *miraculous cures* performed by Christ, in their combined effect, amount to this: There is not an evil which man is liable to, in his body, his mind, his estate, of yesterday or of many years standing, but what must yield to the wisdom, the power, the grace of Christ. It was the union of those several methods of conducting his divine mission that gave weight to each separately, and to the combined whole. Miracles without instruction might have amused, might have excited admiration and astonishment. But we know how very transient and inefficient impressions of this sort are. The wonder ceases, it is driven out by a new prodigy, and this, in its turn, gives place to a third, and so on in succession, till extraordinary become mere common things, and no salutary effect is produced. But when the person who has been trying to instruct me, and whose lessons I found wearisome, and treated with neglect, takes a kindly interest in me and my concerns, makes my health and comfort his own; when he interposes seasonably, condescendingly, in behalf of myself, my child, my friend, my neighbour; and not only seasonably, but powerfully, effectually, in the way that far transcends the

usual course of things; when I behold my teacher and my benefactor to be one and the same, the same man who vouchsafed to point out truth and tell me my duty, giving sight to a man that was born blind and raising the dead to life, then the lesson comes with force to the heart and conscience. Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler, felt and acknowledged the irresistible power of this combination. He said to Jesus, "Rabbi, 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." Thus the simplicity of doctrine is dignified and impressed by the lustre of miracle, and the effect of miracle, on the other hand, acquires permanency from the stability, importance, and usefulness of the doctrine.

The preaching of the Gospel is no longer supported and confirmed by miracles. Granted. It is no longer necessary that it should. While supernatural, external aid was necessary, such aid was communicated. In Jesus Christ, and in what he did, taught, and suffered, the Scriptures were fulfilled. He authenticated his commission by the seal of miracles. Under that seal he executed it; and that seal he transmitted to his immediate disciples. Under it they acted, and the world was Christianized. Miracles have effected all that they were intended to effect, and the Gospel now rests on its own immoveable basis. What need of the formality of a seal to a writing which bears the impress of Deity on every line, on every letter? You call for miraculous proof of its divine original. That very call, in the nine-

teenth century from its first establishment, is the proof. Had it not been the cause of God and truth, it must long ere now have ceased to be a subject of discussion. When the opposition of avowed enemies, and the treachery of pretended friends, are taken into the account, that Christianity should at all exist, is the greatest wonder that ever was presented to the world. You call for proof; it is at hand. What political, philosophical, moral system ever lasted so long, or could boast so many proselytes? What system is so favourable to science, to intellectual, civil, moral improvement? Introduce the spirit of Christ, and despotism and slavery expire together; man is settled on a basis of equality which disturbs not the order of society, and a prospect is opened of a state of being in which all the disorders now prevalent shall be completely rectified. You call for proof; it is at hand. Go to hamlets and huts: look to empty scrips and exhausted penury, to the field of painful, unproductive toil, and to the bed of languishing; see Rachael weeping for her children because they are not, and David mourning over living, ungracious children. The sufferers repine not, they charge not God foolishly; they commit themselves to him who clotheth the lily and feedeth the raven; labour makes rest sweet, and hope puts a pillow under the drooping head; the heart is poured out before God, and the countenance is no more sad. Is this no miracle? In what school of the philosophers are such lessons taught? And let it be observed that these, and such as these, are

not the glaring, splendid triumphs of Christianity, but its daily, noiseless, unobtruding, unostentatious operation.

"Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not "believe." Is miraculous proof of the divinity of the Gospel still demanded? It is at hand. By what instruments does the great Jehovah still support and extend the Mediator's kingdom? By men themselves feeble, ignorant, forlorn like those to whom they minister: men standing in need of the self-same instruction, consolation, and support which they are called to administer to others: men, in general, as little qualified by natural endowments, or by the acquisitions of literature, to subvert the kingdom of Satan, and to build up that of Messiah, as the fishermen of Galilee were to shake the throne of the Cæsars, and to restore that of David which was fallen down. It is in every age the same. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is "the disputer of this world? hath not God made "foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, "in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew "not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of "preaching to save them that believe." "Who then "is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom "ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave "the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth "any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that "giveth the increase."—"We have this treasure in

"earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power "may be of God, and not of us."

Still call for proof! What kind and degree of proof will satisfy or silence Infidelity? Shall the sun stand still and the moon be stayed? Are not the constant and uniform motions and appearances of those great luminaries an equal, or a superior demonstration of sovereign power and wisdom? Shall the shadow upon the sun-dial of Ahaz be accelerated or retarded ten degrees? What can it prove more than is done by a steady and regular progression? Thousands are fed miraculously, at once, by a few loaves and fishes. Is the miracle less which day by day feeds the innumerable tribes of the human race, by a process of vegetation, and of animal increase? The producing hand is the same in both cases, the manner of production makes all the difference. Should one rise from the dead, will ye believe and repent? One has arisen from the dead; but Infidelity still holds out. And we must leave it to its consequences: "If they hear not Moses and "the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though "one rose from the dead."

As the evidence, so the doctrine of Christianity is the same that it was from the beginning. Whether to the Jew or to the Greek; the preaching of John or of Christ himself, of the primitive disciples, or of the ministers of to-day, it is a "testifying of repen-"tance toward God, and of faith toward our Lord "Jesus Christ." From the beginning to the end of

the world, the call is, "Turn ye, turn ye, why "will ye die?"—"Bring forth fruits meet for repen- "tance." The command and the promise are blended together: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and "thou shalt be saved," and they are addressed equally to the jailor at Philippi, and to the multitudes at Jerusalem: "Repent and be baptized every one of "you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission "of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy "Ghost." The universality of guilt demands universality of contrition and of reformation; and there is but one "blood" that "cleanseth from all sin;" "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is "none other name under heaven given among men "whereby we must be saved."

What other teacher, what other legislator, did not find himself under the necessity of suspending, of relaxing, of mitigating the severity of the law; of accommodating himself to times, tempers, and circumstances? Even Moses himself was obliged to temporize, and to connive at the breach of the law, in favour of the hardness of the people's hearts. But the great Christian Legislator has but one unvarying inflexible code, for the prince and the peasant, for the noble and the ignoble, for the slave and his master. It alone suits all nations, all seasons, all situations. Among the other marks of Deity this is not the least. Christianity is a religion, not for this district or for that, but for the globe; not for the Jew or the Greek, but for mankind, and thus approves itself to be of him who "hath made of one

"blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the "face of the earth." Nay more, Christianity is a religion for both earth and heaven, for time and for eternity. Its spirit is the spirit of love, and perfect love is the fulfilling of the law and the perfection of felicity. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these "three; but the greatest of these is charity:" Wherefore? Faith and hope are adapted to a state of trial and suffering; they imply doubt, difficulty, imperfection: "but when that which is perfect is come, "then that which is in part shall be done away." But after the exercise of faith and hope has ceased, charity is arrived at its maturity; a maturity that knows no decay. Thus are "the spirits of just men "made perfect."

Once more we ask, Is the history which we have been reviewing, the history of a mere man? Is there nothing superior, nothing divine, in this mode of teaching and acting? What mortal could have engaged in such an enterprise, with such support, and have prospered? What human power and skill reach to the paralytic, the lunatic, the leper? What arm of flesh can control "the prince of the power "of the air?" What eloquence of man can persuade the rich, or the poor, to give up every thing? What tongue can say, with effect, to the wind and to the sea, "Peace, be still?" If these are not proofs of a present Deity, what proof can be demanded; what proof can be given. Our knees bow, our tongues confess, "that Jesus Christ is "Lord to the glory of God the Father." Amen.

LECTURE XV.

Before the Administration of the Lord's Supper.

LUKE X. 17—22.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

WISE and good men have attempted to present an artificial arrangement of the several events recorded in the history of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or what they call a *Harmony of the Gospels*. It is both a pleasing and an useful amusement to ascertain the dates and to settle the order of events; and labours of this kind merit high commendation. But the native majesty and simplicity of Scripture stand in no need of artificial arrangement. The

whole spiritual building is august and venerable, and each particular part has its peculiar beauty and excellency. To be assured that such things were done, is of infinitely higher importance than to determine the exact series of succession. Every line of the history of Christ is a radiant display of divine perfection; every step he takes leaves an impress of benignity behind it. It was predicted concerning him, that he should be "a man of sor-"rows and acquainted with grief." But it was likewise predicted, that he should "see of the travail of "his soul and be satisfied." The words which have been read contain the accomplishment of this last prophecy. In all our affliction he was afflicted: let us weep with him; and when he "rejoices in "spirit," let us also "rejoice with joy unspeakable "and full of glory; receiving the end of our faith, "even the salvation of our souls."

The followers of Christ had now increased to a great multitude. And need we wonder, if such doctrine, supported by such purity and dignity of character, and by such mighty works, had the power of attracting attention and respect wherever he went? "There followed him great multitudes of "people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and "from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond "Jordan." Out of those multitudes he selected first Twelve, with the peculiar designation of disciples and apostles, to whom he imparted a portion of his Spirit and power: "He gave them "authority over all devils, and to cure diseases,

"to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal "the sick." Afterwards "he appointed other "Seventy, and sent them two and two before "his face into every city and place whither he him-"self would come." It was on occasion of the return of those Seventy, after having fulfilled their mission, and upon the report which they made of their success, that Jesus broke out into this holy rapture: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and "said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and "earth, that thou hast hid these things from the "wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto "babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in "thy sight." Let us trace the process.

The evangelist records, at full length, the commission granted to those seventy, but gives us no particulars respecting their progress. These must be collected from the account which they themselves give of it. *The seventy returned again with joy.* Every thinking man enters on a difficult or a hazardous enterprise with very mixed emotions. He feels the consequence attached to an arduous and important station; he feels the pressure of responsibility, and the solicitude of general expectation pointed toward him. The animating stimulus of hope is repressed by the dread of miscarriage. It is a terrible thing to return foiled, disappointed, discomfited. The eve of a battle is a season of solicitude. But when the conflict is over, when success is no longer doubtful, the soul enters into a state of perfect composure. Mournful is the reflection, "I

"have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength "for nought, and in vain;" but how complete is the triumph of an apostle reviewing a successful ministry, and looking forward to the glorious recompense of reward: "I have fought a good fight, "I have 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 in that day." Such was the triumph of the Seventy, having finished their circuit of the cities of Galilee.

They express peculiar satisfaction in reporting to their divine Master, that "even the devils were "subject to them, through his name." It was matter of great joy to them, that their preaching had been acceptable and useful; that they had been the honoured instruments in his hand, to "heal all "manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;" to predispose the minds of men to receive the kingdom of God, by healing their bodies: but to prevail against the great adversary who had so long tyrannized over the nations, leading them "captive "at his will," this filled up the measure of their joy. At the same time, they modestly disclaim all personal merit. They humbly ascribe the glory of all this wonderful success to the potent name of their almighty Lord. Jesus himself exercises underived power over universal nature. "What a word is "this!" exclaimed the astonished multitudes; "for "with authority and power he commandeth the un-"clean spirits, and they come out:" but the

disciples have power, and prevail only through virtue communicated to them, "Without me," says he, "ye can do nothing;" and then is the believer most strong when he rests on imparted strength. Now those disciples were speedily to be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, carrying with them the doctrine and the name, that is, the wonder-working power, of their Master. Wherever, therefore, virtue accompanied that name, there was Christ himself present; and of whom but of Deity can it be affirmed, that he is in more than one place, in many places, in all space at once? God challenges omnipresence as his own: "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 not I fill heaven "and earth? saith the Lord." "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 hence; 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." The great Author and Finisher of our faith asserts to himself the same divine attribute, and connects with it perpetuity of duration, in the charge which he gave to his disciples before he ascended up into heaven; "Go ye and teach *all* nations;" there is a claim of universal power and presence; and he adds the gracious assurance: "and lo, *I am* with

"you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here are omnipresence and endless, unchanging existence united. When the viper dropped harmlessly from the apostle's hand, in the island of Melita, there was the name, the presence, and the power of Christ. When Philip, in the desert of Gaza, "preached "Jesus" to the Ethiopian eunuch, and converted him to the Christian faith, there was the name, the presence, and the power of Christ. When John, in the isle that is called Patmos, "heard "a great voice, saying, I am Alpha and Omega," there was the name, the presence, and the power of Christ. That presence, my brethren, we hope and trust, is in the midst of this worshipping assembly, and presiding over it; is to consecrate that table and those elements of bread and wine; is to sanctify and ennoble our communion and fellowship. But it is not confined to this place. It is at this moment diffusing light and life and joy over myriads of worshippers in the east, in the west, in the south, in the north. It is "the confidence "of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are "afar off upon the sea." "In all places where I "record my name I will come unto thee and bless "thee." "Where two or three are gathered together "in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This subjection of the devils to the disciples, through the name of Christ, Jesus in his reply contemplates as the beginning of Satan's complete and final overthrow, as a step toward the total subversion of his kingdom. "He said unto them, I

" beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven: when " I sent you forth armed with my commission, and " furnished you with power to execute it, I saw " swift destruction overtaking the destroyer. You " have begun a conquest which I am proceeding to " accomplish. You have subjected his mischievous " agents. I shall 'bruise Satan himself under your " feet shortly.' His usurped dominion, as 'the " God of this world,' as 'the prince of the power " of the air,' as 'the ruler of the darkness of this " world,' is hastening to expire. Rooted, esta- " blished as it may seem to be, it shall vanish in a " moment, rapid as a flash of lightning which disap- " pears before it is well seen." The expression is in use with both the sacred and profane authors. The downfall of the king of Babylon is, by the prophet, represented under this bold imagery: " How art " thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the " morning! how art thou cut down to the ground!" The Roman orator says of Antony, " Thou hast " dragged down thy colleague from heaven;" and when Pompey the Great was hurled from his proud pre-eminence, Cicero represents him as having " fallen from the stars." The time to favour a dark- ened, enslaved world was now come, and Jesus triumphs in the near prospect of the conversion of the gentile nations " from darkness to light, and " from the power of Satan unto God."

The former mission of the Seventy was limited to " the cities and places, whither he himself would

"come;" now their sphere is enlarged, and with an extended commission, fresh assurances are given of divine protection wherever they went. "Behold "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and "scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; "and nothing shall by any means hurt you." After the resurrection from the dead, an unbounded career is set before them; the vast globe is spread out as the scene of action, the whole human race, through all ages and generations, is the grand object of the gospel ministry, and powers adequate to the undertaking are granted. "Go ye into all the "world, and preach the Gospel to every living "creature"—"and these signs shall follow them "that believe: In my name shall they cast out "devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they "shall take up serpents; and if they drink any "deadly thing it shall not hurt them: they shall "lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Here every obstruction is removed, all opposition dies, every enemy is subdued, and the Scriptures are fulfilled, which say: "Every valley shall be "exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made "low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and "the rough places plain:" "Thou shalt not be "afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow "that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that "walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that "wasteth at noon-day." "Thou shalt tread upon "the lion and adder; the young lion and the dra-"gon shalt thou trample under feet." Thus was

the serpent's head bruised, and the triumph of the Redeemer completed. Compare spiritual things with spiritual, the commission of the great Head of the Church with the execution of it, the promised support of the apostles with what they were enabled actually to achieve, as the facts stand recorded in the book of their acts.

But Jesus points out to his disciples a purer source of joy than even a grant of miraculous powers could bestow. It was highly honourable and unspeakably grateful to be invested with authority to control evil spirits, to cure inveterate distempers and quicken the dead, and to enjoy perfect personal security amidst snares and dangers and the shadow of death, to speak with tongues and instruct the ignorant. But these and other choice gifts of God have been conferred on the unworthy. Great talents are not always sanctified to the possessor. Beneficial to others they may be unprofitable or even pernicious to the man himself. He may speak with the tongues of men and of angels; he may have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; he may have all faith so as to be able to remove mountains: he may lay out his whole estate in works of charity, and even submit to suffer martyrdom, and after all remain destitute of that principle which alone admits into the kingdom of heaven. The magicians of Egypt performed wonders, but they served only to harden the heart against God. Balaam was a true prophet, but "he "loved the wages of unrighteousness;" he knew

and approved the better course, but he deliberately persevered in the worse. Simon had the art of bewitching the people of Samaria with sorceries; "to "him they all gave heed, from the least to the great-"est, saying, This man is the great power of God." "He himself believed also, and was baptized," but his "heart was not right in the sight of God;" he was still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond "of iniquity."—"Not every one that saith unto me, "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of "heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father "which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that "day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy "name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and "in thy name done many wonderful works? And "then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: "depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Where God has bestowed much he will expect much, and in proportion to the number and value of the gifts received is the account that must be given. Who was equally honoured with the apostle of the gentiles, by extraordinary communications from heaven? but "it is not expedient for me," says he, "to glory;" "of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." In what then does a Paul, in what does every believer, chiefly rejoice and glory? In the composing reflection, "My name is written in the book of life." "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded "that he is able to keep that which I have com-"mitted unto him against that day."—"Hence-"forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteous

" ness, 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." Compared to this, what a poor trifle it is for a man to know that his name is in an opulent testator's will for a splendid bequest, were it even the reversion of a kingdom? This is that " peace of God which " passeth all understanding, which shall keep the " heart and mind through Christ Jesus," and which the world can neither give nor take away.

This is " the hour," the eventful hour, when " Jesus rejoiced in spirit:" the hour when the great Sovereign of the universe was subjecting spiritual wickedness to human agents, and perfecting praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings; when all the glories of the kingdom of heaven unveiled themselves to his view, and the nations of the earth hastened into it. The scenes of sorrow and suffering which must intervene are absorbed in contemplating the blessed effects which they were to produce. " In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I " thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, " that thou hast hid these things from the wise and " prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even " so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Here we behold our great pattern setting us the example of referring every thing to God, as the first cause and the last end of all; who acts by his own uncontrollable, inexplicable supremacy, and with a view to his own glory. But we are not to understand our Lord as giving thanks that " the wise and

" prudent" were kept in a state of ignorance respecting the things of God, but that while they were so, while they remained under the power of wilful blindness, it had graciously pleased God to manifest these things to the comparatively simple and illiterate. We have a similar mode of expression, and which falls under the same mode of interpretation in the Epistle to the Romans, vi. 17, where the apostle says: " But God be thanked that ye were " the servants of sin :" meaning obviously, " that " although, that whereas, ye were the servants of sin, " ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine " which was delivered you :" So here, " I thank " thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that " while the wise in their own conceits, and the pru- " dent in the estimation of the world, neglect and " despise the things which belong to their peace, " their all-importance is discerned, felt, prized, and " improved by persons lowly in their own sight, con- " temptible in the eyes of men, but estimable in the " eyes of Him who ' resisteth the proud, but giveth " grace unto the humble.'"

Jesus ascribes to the Father universality of dominion, under the title of " Lord of heaven and " earth;" and he resolves all creatures and all events into divine sovereignty: " Even so, Father; " for so it seemed good in thy sight." " He giveth " not account of any of his matters." " He doeth " according to his will in the army of heaven and " among the inhabitants of the earth; and none " can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest

" thou ?" That which is good in the eyes of man is frequently a sore evil; but that which is good in the sight of God must be good in itself, and when Deity shall have executed the whole plan of his providence, the myriads of his saints and angels shall with one voice proclaim, " All is good." " Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be " unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto " the Lamb, for ever and ever."

Having made this ascription of universal power, authority, and property, to the Father, he represents himself as invested in an equal extent of dominion, as sole and sovereign administrator of the world which he made, which he upholds, and which he came to redeem. " All things are delivered to me " of my Father." God is " Lord of heaven and " earth." Now these two words imply all space, with all the beings which inhabit the worlds " visible " and invisible, whether they be thrones, or do- " minions, or principalities, or powers." To the utmost extent of the words, therefore, and of their import, the sovereignty of God Redeemer extends, and it is asserted and ascribed neither in a single passage, nor in doubtful terms. " All power," says he in another place, " is given unto me in heaven " and in earth:" " authority to execute judgment " also;" " power over all flesh, to give eternal life." " The Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth " them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. " For the Father judgeth no man; but hath com- " mitted all judgment unto the Son; that all men

"should honour the Son, even as they honour the "Father." Now this is either mere pretension, unfounded as that of the devil over "all the kingdoms "of the world, and the glory of them," or it is a claim of right: and who but God can support such a claim? Who but God can possess and exercise the power of quickening the dead, of executing judgment upon all, not only according to their works, but according to their most secret thoughts, and of bestowing eternal life? Is a creature, a mere man like ourselves, to be entrusted with, is he capable of managing, such an empire? No? Where *all* power, then, is lodged, there is Deity; "in "that he put all in subjection under him, he left "nothing that is not put under him." Behold, Christian, and rejoice in spirit, the powers of darkness prostrate under the feet of the Prince of Peace: He "maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a "flaming fire," and "are they not all ministering "spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be "heirs of salvation?" Behold the heathen given him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession: "He must reign, until he "hath put all enemies under his feet." We, my beloved brethren, are part of the *all things* which are delivered by the Father unto the Son; and the precious deposit is securely placed: Thine they were, and thou gavest them me:—those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is "lost:" and you are going this day solemnly to deliver up yourselves to him, to be taught by his Spirit, to be

governed by his laws, to be protected by his arm, to be supplied by his providential care; therefore "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."

It is added, "and no man knoweth who the Son "is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but "the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal "him." That is, the nature, excellency, and dignity of the Godhead can be known only by Deity. God is infinite in all his perfections, but in contemplating infinity all created understanding is lost. This reciprocal knowledge of the Father and of the Son is itself a mystery inscrutable, for it presents at once plurality and unity; which human reason sinks under. "No man hath seen God at any time; the "only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the "Father, he hath declared him." If man has been enabled to form any right notion of God, he is indebted for it to the revelation of Jesus Christ the Son of God. That revelation has unfolded God's purpose and grace, before the world began. That revelation has explained the history of Providence through ages and generations past. That revelation has disclosed an eternal duration to come, for unfolding, in endless succession, the inexhaustible treasure of the knowledge of "the only true God, "and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Every past, every present, every future discovery of the divine counsels, and of their execution, is the operation of the great Light of the world; "for

" God, who commanded the light to shine out of " darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the " light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the " face of Jesus Christ."

If such were the honour and the power conferred on the Twelve and on the Seventy simple Galileans; if through the grace of Christ they not only exceeded the attainments of science, and the operations of art, but exercised authority over the devil and his angels, then what may not man become? what bounds shall be set to the progress of an immortal being: " the new man, which after God is created " in righteousness and true holiness?" The eye of sense discerns a frail child of dust, sinking under a load of growing infirmity; " in heaviness through " manifold temptations;" " through fear of death sub- " jected to bondage." The eye of faith beholds in that same forlorn creature, one hastening unto the resurrection of the dead, about to assume a glorious body fashioned after the similitude of that of a risen and glorified Redeemer, arising " to meet the Lord " in the air," triumphing over death, and " him " who has the power of death," " with open face, " beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, " and changing into the same image from glory to " glory."

Christ has taught us, my brethren, to resort to the radical source of consolation; " rejoice, because " your names are written in heaven." It is a pleasant and an honourable feeling to take complacency in an illustrious or even reputable descent; to re-

flect on the attainment of eminence of station by eminence in talent; to contemplate wealth earned by industry and fair dealing. But these, and such advantages as these, are transient. They may be marred and embittered by untoward circumstances. But to meditate on an inalienable, unalterable good running through the whole progress of duration, increasing continually in lustre and value; to think that all is the free gift of a Father, whose love is not liable to change, whose bounty is inexhaustible, whose power sustains the worlds visible and invisible, and whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting; this soothes the soul to peace, this sweetens the bitterest morsel, this quenches the flame of the fiery trial, this disarms the king of terrors. "These things "saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and "the seven stars."—"He that overcometh, the same "shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not "blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will "confess his name before my Father, and before his "angels."

The highest privileges which Christianity confers, and the fairest prospect which it opens, powerfully recommended the spirit of humility. Is thy name written in heaven? What hand wrote it there? Might not the hand that wrote blot it out again? Has not thy own right hand made many a dreadful attempt to erase the signature? If it has found a place on that hallowed page, if it has been permitted to remain there; if it has not in fatherly displeasure been for ever obliterated, it is all of free sover-

eign grace. Art thou an heir of "a kingdom which "cannot be moved?" it is "your Father's good plea- "sure to give you the kingdom:" have grace, whereby you may "serve God acceptably, with reverence "and godly fear." The highest and the holiest are also the humblest of beings. With whom does "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, "whose name is Holy," delight to dwell? "With "him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to re- "vive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the "heart of the contrite ones." He who is most humble has the greatest similitude to his divine Master, and to be like Christ is to possess the highest glory which the creature is capable of attaining. "Learn "of me," says he, not to walk upon the water or rebuke the wind, not to open the eyes of the blind or quicken the dead, but "learn of me: for I am meek and lowly "in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"Jesus rejoiced in spirit," as he contemplated the rise, the progress, the consummation of his kingdom, and the correspondent downfall of the empire of sin and Satan. He is the same who wept over the grave of Lazarus, who "groaned in the "spirit and was troubled," in sympathy with the woe of others; the same who beheld the devoted city, "and wept over it;" the same who in the agony of Gethsemane exclaimed, "My soul is ex- "ceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Let our sorrows and joys flow from the same sources with his. Are the ravages of time and death presented to our view, or the still more dreadful ravages, which

issue in death, committed by "the carnal mind "which is enmity against God," and hatred to man? Are we the spectators of the progress of moral corruption from evil to worse, till all is lost? Can we behold it unmoved? "Fools make a mock at sin," but every serious spirit is very differently affected. "I beheld the transgressors," says the Psalmist, "and was grieved: because they kept not thy word. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because "they keep not thy law." On the other hand, how delightful is it to mark the progress of goodness: "the path of the just as the shining light, that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" to behold "a brand plucked out of the fire," a soul saved from death, an heir born into the kingdom of God! This causes "joy in heaven, in the presence of the "angels of God." This is that "travail of his soul," which the Redeemer "shall see, and shall be satis-"fied." This is the dawning of that eternal day when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and "come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon "their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." That we all may be found in that company, partake of that joy, assist in raising those songs, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer in consecrating the Elements.

WE thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for all thy inexpressible, all thy inconceivable goodness to the children of men. Thou didst form the first human body of "dust of the "ground," and thou didst breathe into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul, capable of knowing, of admiring, of loving, and of enjoying the glorious excellencies of the Divine nature. Under thy creative benediction he increased, and multiplied, and replenished the earth. But man that was in honour continued not. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin has passed upon all men. Nevertheless God, who is rich in mercy, pitied, and spared, and said, "Deliver him from "going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." To guilty man, driven out from Paradise, a door of grace opened, a dawn of hope arose. That dawning light, that day-spring from on high, through thy favour, waxed brighter and brighter, till it reached meridian splendour. The fulness of time came, when "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, "spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," was pleased to speak "unto us by his Son, the heir "of all things," who "made the worlds, being the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of "his person, and upholding all things by the word "of his power." But he "made himself of no re-"putation, and took upon him the form of a servant,

" and was made in the likeness of men:"—" He " was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows " and acquainted with grief:" and " being found in " fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became " obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and " when he had by himself purged our sins, sat " down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Which things the angels " desire to look into;" let our souls rejoice and adore.

To thee voluntarily-humbled, to thee highly-exalted Saviour our knees shall bow: that name which is above every name our tongue shall confess; " the " love of Christ constraineth us:" " we love him, " because he first loved us:" And what proof, blessed Lord, what proof of love art thou this day demanding of thine infinitely indebted creatures? Not to suffer the loss of all things, not to go to prison and to death, for thee, not to give our body to be burnt, not to give but to receive: " Take and " eat, Take and drink, Do this in remembrance of " Me." Of a truth thy commandments are not grievous; thy yoke is easy and thy burden is light. Draw us, we will run after thee; these are cords of a man, these are bands of love. We hear the command and we obey. We present our bodies a living sacrifice, which is our reasonable service. We devote the superior powers of our immortal spirits to the contemplation of the great mystery of godliness, that we " may be able to comprehend with " all saints what is the breadth, and length, and " depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ

"which passeth knowledge, and that we may be "filled with all the fulness of God."

We employ, risen and exalted Redeemer, we employ these elements of bread and wine as a memorial of thy dying love, because, in the near prospect of death, thou wert pleased, by giving thanks over them, to set them apart to this sacred purpose. We would, after thy example, look up to our Father in heaven, and give thanks for all the blessings which they commemorate, for redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of free sovereign grace; for the abolishing of death, and for all the exceedingly great and precious promises, and the glorious prospects of life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel.

In thy name we solemnly separate from a common to a hallowed use, so much of this bread and of this wine as we are now to employ in commemorating the death of Christ, his body broken, and his blood shed as a propitiation for the sin of the world. And over these sacred symbols we again solemnly dedicate ourselves unto thee, to be disposed of by thy providence, to be governed by thy laws, to be guided by thy Spirit, to be accepted through thy intercession. Thee having not seen we love; in thee, though now we see thee not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. In thy presence we become witnesses to each other, and we call angels and men to witness, that we subscribe with our hand unto the Lord, in

trembling hope that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life among the living in the heavenly Jerusalem. And in this blessed hope we would, with one heart and voice, ascribe to God in Christ the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

Address to Communicants at the Sacramental Table.

To sit down at one table, to partake of the same fare, is the happiest view of domestic comfort and of friendly intercourse. The body and the mind are refreshed at once. The bond of union is strengthened and sweetened between the father and mother, between the parents and their children, among brothers and sisters, among kindred and friends. To the enjoyment of that pure and exalted felicity, my brethren, we are now invited; and with the prospects of immortality blend the endearing charities of human life. The great Master of our Gospel repast is not now indeed the object of sense, but he is assuredly with us, he contemplates with complacency our common faith and hope, our mutual affection. He rejoices in spirit while he beholds those for whom he died remembering his death, obeying his commandments, living under the influence of his Spirit, advancing in his strength toward the kingdom of heaven. Him not having seen ye love, and ye look forward to the day when ye shall be like him, for ye shall see him as he is.

Communicants, ye are elevated to the summit of an exceeding high mountain, but not by the spirit of delusion, to survey airy or earthly kingdoms, and a glory unsubstantial and transient; but by the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, to contemplate a kingdom which cannot be moved, a kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. You survey an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; not with the feelings of a Balaam, who beheld from the high places of Baal the goodly tents of Jacob, and the tabernacles of Israel, in which he had neither part nor lot; nor with the emotions of a Moses, who from Pisgah viewed the land flowing with milk and honey, into which he must not enter; but with the confidence and composure of an Abraham, to whom God said; "Lift up now thine "eyes, and look from the place where thou art, "northward, and southward, and eastward, and "westward: Arise, walk through the land, in the "length of it, and in the breadth of it: for I will give "it unto thee;" but with the rapture of a Stephen, who expiring exclaimed: "Behold, I see the "heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on "the right hand of God." That ye, Christians, may through grace be made partakers of the same divine consolation, we administer unto you, and partake with you, the commanded memorial of the sufferings and death of the Redeemer of Mankind.

"The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he "was betrayed, took bread; and, when he had given

" thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is " my body, which is broken for you: this do in " remembrance of me."

How powerfully emphatical every word is! The bread of nature, in order to become the aliment of the body, is bruised, and broken, and passes through the fire: " The bread of life, which came down " from heaven," says Christ in his doctrine, " is " my flesh, which I will give for the life of the " world." " It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" " he hath put him to grief:" behold him buffeted of wicked men, scourged, his head crowned with thorns, his hands and his feet pierced, his soul poured out unto death. And for what end? His body, my sinful fellow-creature, was " broken *for* " *you*." " He was wounded for our transgressions, " he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement " of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes " we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone " astray; we have turned every one to his way, " and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us " all." And what does he demand in return? *Do this in remembrance of me.* Blessed Jesus! if thou hadst bidden us to do some great thing, would we not have cheerfully complied? How much rather then, when the yoke of love is imposed? We come at thy call: " We will remember the name of the " Lord our God;" " O Lord our God, other lords " besides thee have had dominion over us; but by " thee only will we make mention of thy name."

"After the same manner also he took the cup, "when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new "testament in my blood, this do ye, as oft as ye "drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do "show the Lord's death till he come."

In drinking together, my Christian friends, from this cup, we joyfully acquiesce in the new, and better, and well-ordered covenant, "ordained by angels "in the hand of a Mediator," and "established upon "better promises;" a covenant which makes provision not only for human infirmity, but for the deepest and most malignant guilt, and which affords not merely a temporary relief, but confers an unchangeable and everlasting security. "This is the covenant "that I will make with the house of Israel, after "those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws "into their mind, and write them in their hearts: "and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to "me a people: and they shall not teach every man "his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord, for all shall know me from the "least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to "their unrighteousness, and their sins and their "iniquities will I remember no more." And what is the seal of this better covenant? It is before you. "This cup," says the Saviour, "is the new testament "in my blood;" the wine in the cup is a symbolical representation of my blood shed for the remission of sin. "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with "corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with

" the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb with-
" out blemish and without spot;" " slain from the
" foundation of the world," and which " cleanseth
" us from all sin."

In celebrating this holy ordinance, we are not only more closely cementing the ties of nature and the bands of friendship among ourselves, but we are extending our communion to the church of Christ universal, in the East and West, in the South and North; we are stretching out the right hand of fellowship over continents, over oceans, to give the salutation of brotherly-love to all who love our Lord Jesus; and to invite men of all colours and of all languages, to cast in their lot among us, and to take shelter with us under the shadow of this " great rock in a weary land," to repose with us amidst " the trees of life," whose " leaves are for the " healing of the nations."

But is not " our fellowship with the Father, and " with his Son Jesus Christ?" Is it not, then, with them who are drinking new wine in our Father's kingdom, with the spirits of just men made perfect; with those whom on earth we loved; with those who have often eaten and drank with us at this table, and with whom we hope to eat and to drink at the table that is above, sitting down with them, and " with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, " in the kingdom of heaven?" Delightful reflection! The employments of earth and heaven are the *same; the animating principle, the spirit of love, is* the same; the subject of their praise and the source

of their joy are the same. "Unto Jesus Christ, "who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten "of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the "earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us "from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us "kings and priests unto God and his Father; to "him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. "Amen."

The solemnity concludes with an intimation of Christ's second appearance. "As often as ye eat "this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the "Lord's death till he come." "Why trouble ye the "woman?" said Christ to the indignant disciples, who grudged the waste of the ointment which she poured on his feet; "for she hath wrought a good "work upon me; for in that she hath poured this "ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." Her pious act embalmed the body for the grave: ours contemplates Jesus and the resurrection; ours looks forward to the day when "the Son of man shall "come in the clouds of heaven with power and "great glory." "Yet a little while and He that "shall come will come, and will not tarry." "He "which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come "quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you "all. Amen."

LECTURE XVI.

JOHN II. 1—11.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six water-pots stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

IT requires no common degree of wisdom to make the transition from various situations, one to another, with dignity and propriety. The gravity and seriousness of deportment that suits the temple do not suddenly melt away into the familiarity and ease of private life. Men are called to act various parts,

but often lack the skill to discriminate between character and character. At other times the scene changes too rapidly, and the habit of the public personage is scarcely laid aside, when the spirit of it is likewise shifted, and the man discovers that he is merely an actor. Difference of behaviour may undoubtedly be assumed with change of place and of company, without incurring the imputation of hypocrisy; but there is a radical character which the honest man never lays aside, whatever be the season, whatever the situation. He cannot indeed be gay and serious at the same moment; but in the house of mourning he may be sad without sinking into depression, and in the house of feasting he may be cheerful without rising into levity. He can "rejoice "with them that rejoice, and weep with them that "weep," without losing the firmness of his mind, or betraying inconsistency of spirit and temper. In truth, if you would be useful to men, you must accommodate yourself, where the rights of conscience do not interfere, to their circumstances, and to the laws of decency and prudence.

But where, alas! shall we find the man who is continually on his guard, who in every situation possesses his soul, and governs his spirit, and keeps the door of his lips? In vain we look for such a one among men of like passions with ourselves. But it is not for want of a perfect pattern, in the person of him who in all places, at all seasons, and in every situation approved himself the Son of God and the friend of men. Let this mind be in you which also

was in Christ Jesus. He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps. Blessed Lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

We have attended the great Teacher sent from God to the synagogue at Nazareth, and have heard him fulfilling the duties of that gracious office, by reading and opening up the Scriptures, and thus producing one species of evidence to the truth of his divine mission, the accomplishment of ancient, well-known and acknowledged prophecies concerning himself, his person, his consecration to the great work which he should come to execute, and the wonderful success with which it should be crowned. We have seen him with complacency receiving his disciples on their return from a progress of preaching and healing, and of casting out devils; and rejoicing in spirit, as he contemplated the sudden and utter destruction of Satan's kingdom, and, on its ruins, the universal and everlasting establishment of his own. We are now to behold him exhibiting a different kind of evidence, but calculated to produce the same effect, that is, a full conviction that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, namely, the display of miraculous powers, to support the truth of the doctrines which he taught. This "Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews," felt and admitted. "Rabbi," says he, "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." As on the two great commandments, love to God and love to man, "hang all the law and the

" prophets," so on these two unmoveable pillars rest the whole fabric of Christianity. The fulfilling of prediction is a demonstration of the foreknowledge of Deity, " declaring the end from the beginning, " and from ancient times the things that are not " yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will " do all my pleasure:" and of his truth and faithfulness in bringing it to pass, to an iota, to a tittle: and the working of miracles evinces the presence and concurrence of almighty power, which is able to support and to suspend, to control and to alter, the laws of nature, by a word, by an " I will." If the spirit and native tendency of the gospel be taken into the account, we shall find it to possess every character of Divinity that the heart of man could desire, or reason demand, or imagination figure.

The period, and the place, and the occasion of Christ's first public miracle are all specified. It was *the third day* after the noted conversation that passed between Christ and Nathanael, which is recorded in the conclusion of the preceding chapter. There Jesus gave proof not merely of superior sagacity, but of a knowledge that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nathanael, with all his guiltless integrity, laboured under the common prejudice of the day, and had the vulgar proverb in his mouth, " Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He soon received conviction that there could, and that too the best of all things; for while he was yet speaking to Philip, Christ himself drew nigh to meet them, and instantly, in hearing of Nathanael,

pronounced a character of him which the searcher of hearts only could have unfolded: "Behold an Israel-"ite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathanael, justly conscious of inward rectitude, finds himself at once reproved and detected. His sarcasm respecting Nazareth not retorted, but disarmed by receiving in return the honourable appellation of "an Israelite "indeed," was a keen reproof to an ingenuous mind; and to find himself minutely known to a stranger, must have inspired high respect for that stranger, not unmixed with awe. With astonishment he exclaims, "Whence knowest thou me?" The answer completely displays the character of the Nazarene: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast "under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Here is an eye which at once penetrates into the heart, and marks minute, external, contingent circumstances, even to the species of plant under the shadow of which Nathanael, at a certain moment, happened to repose. The "Israelite indeed" now resigns his prejudices and dismisses his doubts; wonder changes into veneration: "Nathanael answered, and saith unto "him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the "King of Israel:" and thus another respectable disciple is added to the school of Christ.

Let not this be considered as foreign to the subject of the present Lecture. Nathanael was, of course, one of the invited guests to celebrate the marriage at Cana of Galilee. He was there, within three days, to behold another species of demonstration of his Master's divinity, that he might bear

witness to it. And it was fit that a man so candid and upright should be furnished with every kind of evidence, which could remove prejudice or subdue infidelity. He is not indeed hereafter mentioned in the gospel history, but it seems highly probable that a person of his description was specially called to take an active part in propagating the truth as it is in Jesus. Some commentators have supposed him to be the same with Bartholomew, one of the Twelve.

The place where the miracle exhibited the glory of the Redeemer was "Cana of Galilee," perhaps to distinguish it from another city of that name in Celosyria, mentioned by Josephus in his Jewish Antiquities. It was situated in that part of the Holy Land, which, in the partition under Joshua, fell by lot to the tribe of Asher; and stood on a river of the same name, which flowed through part of the inheritance of the tribe of Ephraim, into the Great Sea. It was hitherto a mere name, or a speck which might casually catch the eye as it wandered over the map of Palestine; but Cana now acquired a celebrity which makes her to rank with the proudest of capitals, from an event which will transmit her name to the latest posterity.

The *occasion* was a marriage solemnity. It is an institution of Heaven, nearly as old as the creation: it was first celebrated in Paradise; God himself formed the union, presided over and witnessed the contract, and pronounced the nuptial benediction. This stamps a purity, a dignity, a permanency on

the ordinance, which man is bound highly to respect. The great Interpreter and Restorer of the Law, accordingly, puts honour upon the institution by his presence and countenance, and by contributing to the comfort of the assembly convened on this happy occasion, by the charms of his conversation, and by a seasonable supply of one ingredient in a feast: and he afterwards vindicated the primitive sanctity of marriage from the irregularity and impurity which the hardness of the human heart had constrained even a Moses to permit, at least to connive at. "Have ye not read, that he which made "them at the beginning made them male and female; "and said, For this cause shall a man leave father "and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and "they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are "no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore "God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

John the Baptist incurred the imputation of being possessed with a devil, because he was a man of more austere manners, and of a more sequestered mode of living; because he "came neither eating "bread nor drinking wine." His divine Master, more gentle in deportment, more affable, accessible, and condescending, because he mixed with society, because he "came eating and drinking," is by the self-same persons represented as "a gluttonous "man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans "and sinners." Where there is a disposition to censure, no purity nor prudence can escape. Nothing can please the peevish children in the market-

place. If their fellows excite them to dance by the sound of the pipe, they are disposed to look grave and mourn: if their companions are in a serious mood, it is with them a time to dance. You cannot tell where to find them. It is not, at the same time, a mark of wisdom to brave the opinion of the world; but woe be to that man whose conduct has no better regulator than either popular opinion, or the decisions of a self-constituted censor. Christ has by example taught his disciples to seek, and to take opportunities of being useful, whatever construction may be put upon it by malignant observers.

"The mother of Jesus was there," apparently, as one of the family, who took an interest in the credit of her relations, and to assist in attending to the comfort and accommodation of the guests; for we find her watching over the expenditure of the provision, and devising the means of supply when it should fail. But Jesus and his disciples were among the persons especially invited. As the aim of the Evangelist is simply to detail the circumstances relating to the miracle, every thing foreign to this is suppressed. This remark is applicable to the sacred writers in general. They present the leading object in its strongest features, leave it to make its native impression, and pass from it without exclaiming, without parade, without a commentary. On the other hand, where minuteness of description and enumeration is necessary or of importance, all is examined with a microscopic eye, and beauties dis-

close themselves to closeness of investigation which the careless glance had overlooked.

Whether the company had proved more numerous than was expected, or whether a provision too scanty had been made, but in the middle of the banquet, wine failed. Things which are in themselves, and as far as man is concerned, merely contingent, are predisposed and produced by a special interposition of divine Providence, to fulfil some valuable purpose. This little awkwardness of domestic arrangement furnished occasion for a grand display of almighty power. The deficiency was observed by the mother of Jesus, who communicated it to him as simply a remark of her own. But did not the communication partake of the nature of request, of expectation, of suggestion? "They "have no wine:" Is not this saying, Can nothing be done to save the credit of the family? They will suffer in the estimation of their friends, as too parsimonious at a season of festivity like the present. Canst thou find no supply? There must, undoubtedly, have been something offensive in her meaning or mode of expression, for she meets with a reproof. And the mildest censure from such lips is a mark of displeasure. As to Nathanael before, so to Mary now, he gives proof that he could read in the heart what had not yet fallen from the tongue: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have "I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." "Woman:" we are not to estimate the spirit and import of this term of address by the refinement of

our modern ideas and manners. A British female of very middling rank would consider herself as very highly insulted to be thus abruptly accosted by an equal, from an inferior it would be intolerable, and even in a superior it would be resented. But it was the appellation by which princes addressed themselves to ladies of the highest rank, and which even slaves employed in speaking to their mistresses, for it marks respect not familiarity. And we have a demonstration in the present case, that it could imply nothing harsh or unkind, for it is Jesus who uses the word in speaking to his mother. On an occasion still more tender and interesting, when sovereign love was in its triumph, and dictated every expression; when his cross was surrounded by some of the persons who witnessed the miracle of Cana of Galilee; this conversation took place: "When "Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple "standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his "mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he "to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from "that hour that disciple took her unto his own "home." Here was the dying effusion of filial affection: "Woman, behold thy son."

"What have I to do with thee." This has an air of severity, and probably was intended to check encroachment. There is a point beyond which parental authority itself must not presume to go. At the age of twelve, excess of maternal solicitude received a mild rebuke: "How is it that ye sought me? "wist ye not that I must be about my Father's busi-

" ness?" Nevertheless " he went down with them" from the temple, " and came to Nazareth, and " was subject unto them." But to the man of thirty even a mother must not presume to dictate, or so much as insinuate. The words of the original have by some been differently translated; and Jesus is made to say, in reply to his mother's observation, " They have no wine," " What is that to me and " thee!" What does it concern us whether there be wine or not? Such a question is little in the spirit of Christ, who took a condescending and an affectionate interest in all the infirmities and distresses incident to humanity, and to whom nothing could be indifferent which tended to promote the comfort of others; and the sequel plainly shows, that he actually cherished those kind affections, and expressed them in a manner peculiar to himself. It is more natural to adopt our common version, consistent as it is with the same sense of the phrase in a variety of other passages. " The devils coming out " of the tombs exceeding fierce," in the country of the Gergesenes, exclaim, " *What have we to do* " *with thee*, Jesus, thou Son of God?" Meaning evidently; " We are afraid of thee; let us alone; we " desire no acquaintance with thee; art thou come " hither to torment us before the time?" The seventy interpreters translate the Hebrew idiom in the same phraseology and spirit, in a great many passages. Thus Jephthah addressed the king of Ammon, " What hast thou to do with me?" saying plainly,

"I wish no intercourse; we can have nothing in "common: wherefore should we go to war "together?" And thus, not to multiply instances, David said to Abishai, when he proposed to go over and, in cold blood, to cut off Shimei's head, "What "have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?" "I "like not your spirit; I want no such triumph; let "God's will be done; you are taking his work out of "his hand, and are deciding hastily when you ought "to wait patiently." This is entirely in the spirit of the passage before us. "Woman, what have I to do "with thee?" "Intrude not; prescribe not; I "know what is fit for me to do; all my movements "are already settled." In this view all is of a piece; all breathes the spirit of meekness; there is the majesty of Deity, and there is the united firmness and mildness of the man.

If there be any thing like sternness in the question, "What have I to do with thee?" it is sunk in the solemn asseveration concerning himself: "Mine hour is not yet come." The hour of a man's birth, of his baptism, of his majority, of his marriage, of his death, is an epoch of singular importance both to himself and others. We measure time, we know its value, and we trifle with it. With an experience of its necessary lapse, and with the certain knowledge that no moment can be responsible for the debt of its predecessor, having enough to do with itself, the thoughtless sons of men will be drawing on a day which they are never to see, and they sport with borrowed property as if it were their own. The wise

man, in the face of this reckoning of folly and madness, states the just account of the expenditure and use of time: "There is a season and a time to every "purpose under heaven." But we look up to Him who is wiser than the wisest, that we may learn to measure time, to understand the value of a day, and to improve the flying hour, which is gone, before we are sensible that it has come.

"Mine hour is not yet come." It is an expression applied to various events of Christ's life and ministry. When his unbelieving brethren urged him, by way of defiance, to go up to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, and there make an open display of his miraculous powers, this was his reply: "My time is not yet come—Go ye up "unto this feast: I go not up unto this feast; for "my time is not yet full come:" intimating that all his movements and operations were regulated to a moment, and therefore could neither be hurried forward nor retarded. When he did go up to Jerusalem, and taught openly in the temple, though his plainness and fidelity gave much offence, it is remarked that "no man laid hands on him; for his hour was "not yet come:" that is, the hour of his apprehension, trial, and condemnation. When the devout Greeks, who had come to worship in the temple, desired an interview with him, Jesus said to his disciples; "The hour is come that the Son of man "should be glorified;" meaning the dawn of the Gospel day upon the gentile world. But while he

rejoiced in spirit, as he contemplated that auspicious hour, he saw it leading to another and a darker hour, the hour of suffering and death. The prospect spreads a transient cloud over the serenity of his mind, and he said: "Now is my soul "troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me "from this hour." Thus far the man of sinless infirmity. But the cloud passes away, serenity is restored, and the hour of sorrow is lost in contemplating the glory that should follow, the accomplishment of his heavenly Father's purpose of mercy in the redemption of a lost world: "but for this cause "came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." When his "time was full come that he should "glorify God by his death, with heavenly composure "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, the "hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also "may glorify thee." Thus every step of the Redeemer's progress was weighed, measured, established by an antecedent counsel incapable of being overthrown or of failing.

His mother, though reproved, is not wholly discouraged. She perceives that whatsoever he did must be done at his own time and in his own way, and therefore enjoins the servants carefully to attend to whatever he should say unto them.

The ablutions, at this period, practised among the Jews, were carried to an absurd and superstitious excess. The law had indeed prescribed certain washings, which nature herself points out as conducive to health, cleanliness, and comfort; but tradition.

had multiplied these without end; they had acquired an authority paramount to that of law, and the primary duties of life were sunk in an affected attention to external purity. "The Pharisees," says St. Mark, "and all the Jews, except they wash their "hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the "elders. And when they come from the market, "except they wash they eat not. And many other "things there be which they have received to "hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen ves-"sels, and of tables." This drew upon them a severe censure from the lips of Jesus Christ. He charges them with the vilest hypocrisy, "in teach-"ing for doctrines the commandments of men." "For," says he, "laying aside the commandment "of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the "washing of pots and cups: and many other such "like things ye do." Full well ye reject the com-"mandment of God, that ye may keep your own "tradition." He then produces, as an instance, their open and avowed violation of the fifth precept of the decalogue, engraven by nature on the heart of man, and proclaimed from Sinai by the mouth of God. The unnatural child had but by a vow to devote his substance to a pretendedly sacred purpose, in order to be for ever released from all obligation to assist aged or decayed parents. Thus a punctilious attention to washing the body could be reconciled to a deliberate purpose of hardening the heart. These copious and frequent ablutions account for the large provision of water made for the

marriage feast. "There were set six water-pots of "stone, after the manner of the purifying of the "Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece." To pretend to ascertain the quantity, by the names of ancient measurement, would be nugatory and absurd. If the thing could be done, what profit would arise from it? Is it not well known that all the wisdom of the British legislature, though frequently exerted, has hitherto been unable to establish a standard of weights and measures for the southern division of this little island? The precise quantity is left in intentional obscurity, by the use of the indefinite expression *two or three;* it is sufficient for us to know that the supply was very considerable. The expenditure of water, at this advanced period of the feast, must have been great. Jesus determined to make those partially exhausted vessels the medium of his intended miracle. To have replenished the empty wine vessels might excite suspicion of collusion; but into water-cisterns for purifying, wine never entered, and therefore no doubt could arise. He, then, who could have transformed the bottom of a dry cistern into a fountain of water, or of wine, at his pleasure, commands the servants to "fill the water-pots with water. And they filled "them up to the brim."

The miracle is already performed. By an unseen unperceived energy; without a word spoken, without a gesture, by a simple act of the will, plain water is instantaneously converted into wine of the finest quality. What dignified simplicity! what

unaffected majesty! A fact so very extraordinary is narrated with no more pomp of language than the most common process of nature. He now desires the attendants, hitherto the only witnesses of this wonderful change, to draw off some of the wine, and bear it to the governor of the feast, at the moment when the deficiency began to be felt. Thus every supply which comes immediately from the hand of Providence is at once seasonable, salutary, and excellent in its kind. What comes through the channel of men like ourselves must of necessity have a mixture of their impurity and imperfection.

With us the master of the house is also the governor of the feast. It is his concern to see that his friends be properly accommodated and supplied. But among the Jews an officer of this description was appointed to preside, whether elected by the company, named by the bridegroom, or constituted by public authority, whose business it was to pronounce a benediction on what was provided, and who, when the cup was blessed, first drank of it himself, and then passed it round the table. In compliance with this custom, Jesus directed the first-fruits of this miracle to be carried to him to pass judgment. He instantly perceives the difference, though ignorant of the process; and in surprise addresses himself to the bridegroom, whose it was to prepare the entertainment, and to defray the expense, in these words; "Every man at the be-"ginning doth set forth good wine; and when men "have well drunk, then that which is worse:

"but thou hast kept the good wine until now." Though this too may not perfectly coincide with modern manners, it exhibits a picture of the common practice in that country and in that age; and it led to a discovery of the whole mystery, and Jesus stood confessed the Son of God, the Lord of universal nature, the searcher of hearts, the ruler of elements, the friend and brother of mankind. "This "beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, "and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples "believed on him."

Many and useful are the practical reflections which flow from this subject. Permit me to suggest some of them.

1. The religion of Jesus Christ embraces the whole circle of Duty. Duties are of various orders and importance. Some are essential and indispensable, others are agreeable and ornamental; as in a well-constructed edifice there are parts absolutely necessary to its existence, and there are parts which might be removed indeed without affecting the solidity and durableness of the fabric, but the removal would greatly impair its elegance and beauty: so in the scale of morals there are the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; and there are obligations of an inferior order; though highly important in the commerce of human life; such as gentleness, courtesy, affability, sympathy. Of both ranks of duty our blessed Lord set the happiest example. He mixed with mankind, he partook of their griefs and their joys, he sat down at their tables,

he assisted at their nuptial festivity, he indulged in the mutual endearments of friendship, he paid attention to little children, took them to his arms, and blessed them. Disciple of Jesus, go thou and do likewise. Ill does it become thee to be stately, and distant, and reserved, and ungracious, when he was so meek and condescending. There are certain austere Christians who will on no occasion, and on no account, descend from the pinnacle of their dignity, and who render religion disgusting to others by the harshness of their manners, and a severe, morose, ungainly deportment. This they cannot have learned of Christ, nor at his old school. Will they vouchsafe to take a lesson from the apostle Paul, who understood his own real dignity as well as any man? "Mind not high things, but con-"descend to men of low estate." And I beg leave to add, from him: "Be not wise in your own con-"ceits."

2. Jesus himself was all purity and perfection, but the mother of Jesus was subject to culpable infirmity. She incurred censure oftener than once, and therefore is not to be looked up to as a perfect model, much less to receive the adoration which is due to Deity alone. It is one of the most humiliating views of human understanding, to behold it so far degraded as to think of approaching the great intercessors and friend of mankind, through the intercession of another. "There is one God," saith the Scripture, and one "Mediator between God and "men, the man Christ Jesus." No, says popery,

you must have a mediatrix between you and that Mediator; nay, one armed with authority to control and command him. The mind turns away with horror from the blasphemous suggestion. The rights of parents have a boundary, both as to extent and duration, the authority of God knows no limit, and never can expire. When his voice is heard, that of nature must be suppressed. The duties of the public character must absorb the feelings of the private individual. We may warrantably lay before our compassionate Redeemer our most secret thoughts, and pour out our hearts before him in prayer and supplication, in perfect submission to his will; but we must not presume either to prescribe to his providence, or to arraign his conduct. He doeth all things wisely and well.

3. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for "it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Whether therefore God supplies the good things of life in the ordinary course of nature, or by a special interposition of his almighty power, they are liberally bestowed, they are the bounty of a Father, to be used, to be enjoyed. When God placed our grand progenitor in the terrestrial paradise, the parental grant was large: "Of every tree of the garden "thou mayest freely eat;" but with one single reservation; "But of the tree of knowledge of good and "evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that "thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." We are still on the same footing, in a world which has

indeed ceased to be a paradise, but which, nevertheless, is still abundantly stored with every thing necessary, convenient, and comfortable for man. The grant is still as liberal: "The good of the land is "before you:" take, thou mayest freely eat, freely drink. But, mark the reservation, still indispensable as ever, eat, drink, in moderation, to the support and refreshment of the body, not its depression and derangement. To a certain bound this is cordial, salutary, nutritive; beyond, its nature changes, it becomes a deadly poison. Satisfy thyself with knowing its good, and venture not to make trial of its evil. Did Jesus convert water into wine, that he might minister fuel to excess? The thought is impious. As well might a bountiful Providence be charged with the gluttony, the drunkenness, and all the other sensual lusts in which men indulge themselves, because it "gives us rain from heaven "and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food "and gladness." The miracle of Cana of Galilee, as all those which our Lord wrought, was a miracle of goodness; it provided a supply of a necessary of life, to a family in moderate circumstances, and which lasted them, I doubt not, for many days; it was the repayment of a debt of friendship and hospitality in a manner peculiar to himself: and it was a manifestation of his glory in the eyes of his disciples, who had far other thoughts than that of abusing their Master's bounty; "they believed on him."

4. We have said that this and all our Saviour's other miracles were miracles of goodness: We now

add, They were all disinterested. He here gave proof of sovereignty uncontrollable. It was exercised to supply the temporal wants of a few, and to minister to the everlasting consolation of myriads. But "Christ pleased not himself." What might not his power have commanded, of all that is exquisite on the earth, in the air, through the paths of the sea? But though an hungered, he will not command stones to be made bread for his own use; if he miraculously multiply a few loaves and fishes, it is to feed a starving, fainting multitude. If he makes the sea tributary, it is at one time to compensate the painful labour of poor men, who had "toiled all "night and taken nothing;" at another, to prevent offence by paying his tribute money. Fish broiled on a fire of coals, and a morsel of bread, are the simple fare on which he and his disciples dine," even "after that he was risen from the dead." "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; "but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his "head."—"They that wear soft clothing are in "king's houses:" His clothing was not worth dividing among a few of the basest of mankind: His raiment, his lodging, his fare, were all of a piece. And is the servant greater than his lord? To the poor the Gospel is preached, and to the poor the example is set, the example of contentment with a low condition, of meek submission to hardship, of superiority to the vanities and luxuries of this world, of self-government and self-denial. His modern disciples have been accused of love of ease and in-

dulgence, of fondness for dainties and delicacies, of aiming at power and pre-eminence. If the imputation be just, it is to be lamented: and Christians of every rank and denomination are concerned, as far as in them lies, to do it away. If it be ill-founded, it must be borne as part of the reproach of Christ; and his disciple must bear in mind that he is bound by the law and by the practice of his divine Master, not only to abstain from all evil, but from all *appearance* of evil.

LECTURE XVII.

LUKE IV. 38—44.

And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her. And immediately she arose, and ministered unto them. Now, when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him: and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. And when it was day he departed, and went into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

THE religion of the Gospel is adapted to every possible condition of life; for it is adapted to the nature of man, who, with the variation of a few circumstances, is the same universally, and in every age. There is the difference of colour and speech, the difference of climate and soil, the difference of high and low, of rich and poor; but still it is man, with all his excellencies and imperfections, with all his capability of degradation and of improvement,

with all his propensities to evil and to good. Christianity takes him up as he is, and undertakes to make him what he ought to be. "Can the Ethiopian "change his colour, or the leopard his spots?" No, replies nature, I gave that colour, I painted those spots! but I cannot undo my own work. He that is black must, for me, continue black still; that which is spotted must be spotted still. But the grace of the Gospel unfolds a mystery which it is beyond the reach of nature to solve. It transforms that which was as scarlet into the whiteness of snow, what was red like crimson into the colour of wool. "Can these dry bones live?" Yes, at the word, and by the Spirit of the Lord. Miracles like these the Spirit of Christ is exhibiting every day. Do we not see: O that the spectacle were more common! Do we not see loftiness of station united to lowliness of mind: a hard lot to a contented spirit; the fulness of this world to the exceeding riches of the grace of God?

When the Son of God came for the salvation of a lost world, "verily he took not on him the nature "of angels." But more wonderful still! he united the divine nature to the human, and thereby became at once an object of supreme adoration, and a familiar instructor. What he said and did as the Lord, "wise in heart and mighty in strength," we must ever contemplate at an awful distance, admiring, venerating, what we cannot find out unto perfection, and which we are still more incapable of imitating. But in what he said and did as a man, we behold a

pattern most amiably simple; most powerfully impressive, most consummatively perfect. In vain do we look any where else for that steadiness and uniformity of character which alone can merit the distinction of being proposed as an example. Whom else can we with safety follow in every thing? In the most perfect of mere men, while there is much to respect and to commend, there is ever a something to blame and to regret; some fault of temper, some inconsiderateness of expression, some inconsistency of conduct. But in our divine Master all is estimable, uniform, and consistent. He presents one and the same character in solitude and in society, in the synagogue and in domestic retirement, at a marriage feast and before the tribunal; displaying a native dignity undebased by an infusion of insolence, condescension pure from servility, fortitude without ferociousness, sensibility without affectation, the sublimity of devotion with the perfect ease of friendship.

In the last Lecture we attended this friend of mankind to the celebration of a marriage solemnity, and beheld him partaking of the pure delights of friendly and domestic intercourse, mingling with his kindred and with the disciples whom he had chosen; and while he miraculously ministered to their wants, as the great Ruler and Lord of nature, we observe him, as bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, sympathizing in their joys, adopting their solicitudes, their wants and expectations, and joining in their conversation. Thus he tacitly and

obliquely reproves that haughty reserve, that unbending stateliness, that ungracious distance from men, which frequently attempts to pass for superior wisdom, sanctity, and importance. We pretend not to arrange the several events of our Lord's history in the exact order of time. The Evangelists display them in an energetic simplicity far beyond the reach of art. There is in the word of God, if it be lawful to say so, a majestic irregularity that transcends the control of rule; just as the surface of our globe, with its mountains and valleys, its precipices and plains, its rivers and oceans, defies the application of the straight line and of the compasses; and as the face of the starry heavens presents to the eye a magnificent assemblage of worlds scattered about by a hand that rejects all measurement by any standard but its own. Science has indeed contrived artificial combinations and arrangements both of the heavenly bodies, and of Scripture truths, but their native glory and magnitude are not reducible to systems of human invention. It may be pleasant, and far from unprofitable, to ascertain dates, to unravel the chain; but it is surely of secondary moment. The actions and events themselves, and the evidence that they existed, are the great concern of the Christian world; but above all, the practical influence of those great truths on the hearts, the consciences, and the lives of men.

Precluded from opportunities of being eminently useful at Nazareth, through the envy and unbelief

of his townsmen, Jesus withdraws from that city, not in anger but in sorrow, though a most cruel, ungrateful, and atrocious attempt upon his life had been made by its unworthy inhabitants; and proceeds to prosecute his labours of love at Capernaum, a city situated on the sea of Galilee. From this place, it would appear, he was called to the adjacent town of Cana, to the celebration of the marriage; and that solemnity being ended, he returns to Capernaum accompanied by the disciples whom he had already chosen. Here we find this Teacher sent from God still indefatigably pursuing the great object of his mission, and still putting respect on the word and ordinances of God. Behold him devoting the day of sacred rest to useful purposes; employing the leisure and retirement from temporal concerns which it afforded, in executing the benevolent office of instructing the ignorant and guilty, in the way of life and salvation. We know, from the general strain of his public ministrations, and particularly from the portion of Scripture which he rehearsed and applied in the synagogue at Nazareth, that the things written concerning himself constituted the great burthen of his preaching: Scripture the source, Christ Jesus the subject, the sabbath the season, the synagogue the scene. "Never man spake like "this man."

But the services of an earthly sanctuary must close. There is a season of retirement and repose, as there is of labour and exertion. The duties of private friendship, of domestic devotion, the rights

of hospitality, the care of the body, put in their several claims, which must be answered. Christ accordingly "arose out of the synagogue, and entered "into Simon's house." The accommodations of a poor fisherman's hovel, on the shore of the lake of Gennesareth, could not be very elegant. The fare provided by a hard-working plebeian, doomed frequently to toil all night long, without taking any thing, could not be very luxurious or delicate. But when a man gives you the shelter of his roof, however mean, and a place at his board, however homely, he does all that a prince can do; and the difference is a paltry circumstance or two, beneath the consideration of a rational being.

But the house of Peter was, at this time, not only the abode of penury, but likewise the house of mourning; for "Simon's wife's mother was taken "with a great fever." The sabbath had not been to her a day of rest, but of agitation and pain; and the distress of a sick-bed might probably be aggravated by reflecting on absence from the house of prayer, and from the comfort of the public worship of God. The value and importance of objects vary strangely in our estimation, as they are viewed through the medium of health or of sickness, of pain or ease. The illusion of the world disappears, when the fever in the blood forms in the distempered imagination whirling orbs of perturbation, and perplexity, and despair; or when, in cold blood, conscience darts an anxious look into the world of spirits. Very different is the aspect of

the sabbath in the eye and the hour of thoughtless dissipation, and when the son of dissipation is stretched on a bed of languishing. Then he "snuffed "at it, and said, Behold, what a weariness is "it? When will the new moon be gone, that we "may sell corn, and the sabbath, that we may set "forth wheat?" But how very different are the reflections of "the days of darkness," of the "months "of vanity," of the "wearisome nights," appointed, when the sleepless patient is constrained to cry out, "When shall I arise and the night be gone?" "What "fruit had I then in those things, whereof I am "now ashamed? for the end of those things is "death."

The visit of Jesus to Peter's family had more than one object in view. The friend of man retired to converse with men, the master to instruct his disciples, the poor to feed with the poor, the weary to repose with the weary. The Son of God entered into the house to manifest his glory, to display his power, to exercise his benevolence in the miraculous relief of distress. Thus amply does he repay every token of affection bestowed on himself, or on one of the least of his brethren. Distress awakens sympathy. The children of the family cannot think of sitting down to eat bread, while the mother of it lay in extremity. Filial tenderness had undoubtedly exerted herself to the uttermost. The poor scrip of the Galilean had, perhaps, been drained in purchasing medicine and cordial for his afflicted mother-in-law: though this be none of the least of the

evils which attend poverty, to behold the person whom we love perish for want of advice and medicine, for want of a cordial beyond the reach of our means. As a last resource they lay her case before Jesus: "and they besought him for her." Did he need to be importuned? Was he difficult of access? Did his goodness flow reluctantly? No, but the intercourse between heaven and earth, between the Creator and the creature is the confidence, the prayer of distress meeting the benignity, the unremitting attention of the Father of mercies, who will be sought unto, that he may show himself gracious.

"And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever, "and it left her." The miracle of turning water into wine was effected by a simple act of the will, without either gesture or speech, and the evidence of it rested, in part, on the testimony of the servants who had filled the pots with water. Here we have both gesture and speech, and the immediate and personal conviction of all who were in the house. In nothing is the sovereignty of Deity more conspicuously displayed than in the *manner* of his acting. It is so unlike human conjecture, that the pride of man is apt to be offended that Providence did not observe the mode which his sagacity had prescribed. Naaman the Syrian had settled, in his own mind, the whole process of the cure of his own leprosy. "Behold, I thought, he will surely "come out to me, and stand, and call on the name "of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over

"the place, and recover the leper." Not one iota of his conjecture was realized. The prophet did not come out, nor assume the supposed attitude, nor pronounce the supposed invocation, but "sent "a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in "Jordan seven times:" and pride is hurrying him away in a rage, to think that the rivers of Damascus should be postponed to the waters of Israel. Thus while prophecy has been successively fulfilling, the event so ill accorded with prevailing opinion and expectation, that while the prediction was admitted, the accomplishment, however coincident and exact, has been rejected.

This divine sovereignty our blessed Lord exercises in performing all his mighty works. He *wills* water into wine. Now he rebukes the disease, and now speaks to the patient. He heals the feverous son of the nobleman, at the distance of Cana from Capernaum, and the feverous mother of Simon's wife standing by her bed-side. He anoints the blind man's eyes with clay, and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam; he cries with a loud voice over the grave of his departed friend, "Lazarus, come forth." All demonstrates the underived and independent, as well as the almighty power of God, whose will is the sole and the supreme law, as to the time, the manner, and the matter of the work.

There is a wonderful vivacity in the unaffected conciseness and simplicity of the narration. He stood, he spake, he prevailed. "He rebuked the "fever." Disease is here personified, as susceptible

of reprehension, and of voluntary subjection to authority, "and it left her," as one who has encroached and intruded, and who feels and acknowledges the power of a superior repelling and casting him out. —

The transitions of nature are gradual, slow, imperceptible in their progress. When the ocean is roused into fury by the raging wind, it continues in a state of agitation long after the tempest has ceased to roar; but when Christ speaks the word, the effect is instantaneous and complete. "He arose, and "rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, "be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a "great calm." When the fever has spent its force, and the crisis of convalescence has taken place, it leaves the patient feeble and languid, and it frequently requires a considerable length of time to restore both the body and the mind to the full exercise of their several functions; but when Jesus rebukes the fever, it not only in a moment departs, but the sufferer is at the same moment made perfectly whole: "And immediately she arose, and "ministered unto them." As in creation so in Providence, He speaks and it is done, he gives commandment and it stands fast. "He is the Rock, "his work is perfect."

The circumstance of her *ministering* to her physician and the family, is striking and instructive. It teaches us the proper use of prolonged life, of restored faculties. They are to be devoted to the honour of God, and to the service of our fellow-creatures.

They were deeply affected by her danger, they looked in anxious expectation to the return of her health, and they besought the Lord for it; she employs that precious gift in contributing her best endeavours to promote their ease and comfort. What debt is so sacred as that of gratitude? and what benefactor has laid us under so many and such unspeakable obligations as He who gave us life, and who sustains it, as He who died to redeem us? We have here a beautiful and interesting view of human life. Every relation has its corresponding sphere of duty. The happiness of domestic society consists not in the interchange of great benefits, on signal occasions, but in the hourly reciprocation of the little offices of love, in kind looks, in kind affections, in mutual forbearance and forgiveness, in the balm of sympathy whether we sorrow or rejoice, in a word, according to the apostolic injunction, in being of the same mind one towards another.

The religion of the Gospel wears an aspect peculiarly favourable to families. The infancy and childhood of Jesus Christ were passed in the bosom of his family. His first public miracle was performed in putting honour upon a family-party, at Cana of Galilee. He made one in the family of Simon, at Capernaum. The house of Lazarus and his sisters, at Bethany, he made his home, and there he cultivated all the endearing charities of exalted friendship. To find a home for his mother was his last earthly care; and, as the head of his own family, he presided at the Paschal solemnity, and instituted

the memorial of his dying love. Thus are domestic relations strengthened, sweetened, sanctified, ennobled. A Christian kingdom or state never existed. But a family of Christians, all of one heart and of one soul, we trust, is not a rarity. And to Christianize families is the direct road to the Christianizing of nations. In the contracted sphere of a family, however numerous, every one knows every one; every one cares for every one. The master's influence is felt and acknowledged by all. A common interest, both temporal and eternal, unites the individuals to each other, and Heaven descends to dwell with men upon earth. So propitious is Christianity to the dearest and best interests of civil society.

The scene which we have been reviewing passed on the evening of the sabbath. Nor could the sanctity of the day be profaned by a work of mercy, or by the pious and friendly intercourse of kindred spirits, whose religion was seated in the heart, not chilled into lifeless forms. But the superstitious observance of the sabbath operated powerfully on the multitude. Though prompted by natural affection to apply for relief to their afflicted friends, they defer it till the going down of the sun, that is, till the sabbath was over; for they had yet to learn "what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" and "the Son of man is Lord even of "the sabbath-day;" and "the sabbath was made "for man, and not man for the sabbath." "Now, "when the sun was setting, all they that had any "sick with divers diseases brought them unto him."

A sense of the weakness of those good people is lost in respect for their humanity. They are not chidden away from Peter's door as unseasonable intruders; they are not referred to another day. It is the cry of misery entering into the ear of mercy, and it cries not in vain: "and he laid his hands on "every one of them, and healed them." Here the mode of cure is the imposition of hands. Even so, blessed Jesus, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Let me be the subject of thy miraculous grace, and convey thou the healing power through whatsoever channel thou wilt.

The service of the synagogue, in the morning of the sabbath, had been disturbed by a wretched demoniac, who "cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone: what have we to do with thee, thou "Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? "I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." Jesus, by a word, dispossessed the impure spirit, and restored the unhappy man to himself, in the presence of the whole assembly, who were justly filled with astonishment at such a display of power and goodness. It is affecting to think that this dreadful species of malady was far from being uncommon at that period; for we find the fame of the morning's miracle spread abroad, and it attracts to the place where Jesus was, in the evening, many persons in the same deplorable condition. One of the depths of Satan, in these cases, was to pay affected homage to Jesus of Nazareth, in the view of infusing a suspicion that there might be a

secret combination and collusion between him and them, and of thereby diminishing his dignity and authority in the eyes of the people. To be praised by the wicked is offensive and dishonourable to the good; and the adversary is never more dangerous than when he "is transformed into an angel of "light." But when the prince of this world came, he found nothing in Christ; no weak part to attack, no foundation whereon to erect his engines; but wisdom ever prepared to meet cunning, purity to resist every evil suggestion, and authority to silence the tempter whenever his encroachment became too daring. He disdained the testimony of a demon in his favour, and rejected the insidious praise of an enemy. "And he, rebuking them, suffered them "not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ:" that is, he permitted them not to declare, though they spake the truth, that they knew him to be the Christ.

Having thus fulfilled the public duties of the sanctuary, and the more private offices of friendship; having employed the greater part of the night in receiving and relieving the numerous objects, who came, or who were brought to him, he withdrew, toward the dawning of the day, into a still closer retirement; and, for a season, shut the world entirely out. "And when it was day he departed, "and went into a desert place." Sacred were those hours of solitude to heavenly meditation, to devotional intercourse with Him that sent Him, whose glory he ever sought, and whose will it was his

delight to execute. "Ye shall leave me alone;" says he to his disciples, "and yet," adds he, "I am "not alone, because the Father is with me." When some great arrangement is to be made toward the establishment and extension of his kingdom, preparation for it passes in solemn abstraction from all sublunary things. Thus his own public ministry was preceded by a forty days' retreat into the wilderness. "And it came to pass in those days," when he was about to consecrate the Twelve to the office of apostleship, "that he went up into a mountain to "pray, and continued all night in prayer to God;" thus also was the glorious scene of his transfiguration introduced; and thus he exemplified the practice which he so powerfully recommends to his disciples: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy "closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray "to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, "which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The admiring and delighted multitude trace him into his place of retirement, and, sensible of the value of such a visit, they entreat him to prolong it. Various motives might suggest this request. In some, it might be the attraction of novelty, in others the love of the truth: here the sense of gratitude for benefits received, there the principle of curiosity gaping after a farther display of wonders. In one it might be the full conviction of an honest and enlightened mind, and in another a malignant disposition to discover a blemish. We know from the sequel that the success of our Lord's miracles

and preaching at Capernaum was woefully similar to what it had been at Nazareth, for this is the dismal account which he himself gives of it, "And "thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, "shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty "works which have been done in thee had been "done in Sodom, it would have remained until this "this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be "more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day "of judgment than for thee." Whatever were their motives for wishing his longer continuance among them, they are for the present resisted, and a reason is assigned: "I must preach the kingdom of "God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." Every word here is significant and powerful. "I "*must* preach." What imposed the necessity? The commission which he had undertaken to execute; his own sovereign will and pleasure; his own unerring understanding; his own unbounded benevolence; the extensive demands of perishing humanity. "I must preach *the kingdom of God:*" its descent to earth; its adaptation to the nature and condition of ignorant and guilty men; its divine object, to raise fallen men from earth, from hell, to heaven; its present operation and effect, "righteousness, and "peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" its stability, "a kingdom that cannot be moved;" the sovereign grace which confers it, "fear not little flock; for it is "your Father's good pleasure to give you the king-"dom." Such was the glorious subject of Christ's preaching; a subject, compared to which the pursuits

of avarice, of ambition, and the pride of kings, are less than nothing and vanity; a subject that interests not Nazareth and Capernaum and the cities of Galilee only, where it was first proclaimed, but the men, the cities, the nations, of all ages and generations. On such a narrow and seemingly slender foundation, what a fabric has arisen? "This is the "Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes." Let the great object of Christ's mission direct and control our pursuit of every object. He was *sent* to bring men under the dominion of the kingdom of God; and he has taught us when we pray to say: "Thy "kingdom come." If we enter into the spirit of that petition, it will be our concern that the empire of sin and Satan in our own hearts be completely subverted; that peace on earth and good-will among men be promoted; that the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and that he may reign for ever and ever.

Let us review this portion of our blessed Lord's history, and thus reflect:

1. The duties of religion, then, and those of ordinary life are intimately united and interwoven; they are perfectly consistent, and yield mutual support. The service of the sanctuary must not be unnecessarily protracted, to the wearying of the flesh, and to become an encroachment on the just, prudent, or necessary concerns of the family, and no domestic regards must preclude works of charity and mercy, even to strangers. On the other hand, no attention to civil and domestic affairs, except in

cases of urgent necessity, and no works of mercy, must plead a dispensation for the non-observance of the ordinances of God. Under the governance of a well-regulated spirit, daily lawful employments become not only a reasonable but a religious service, and the functions necessary to the support of mere animal life may be performed to the glory of God. And neither the public offices of the temple, nor family order and devotion, must be alleged as an exemption from the obligation of private and personal religion. Indeed all must begin here. For families are composed of individuals, and the churches of Christ of families. To the perfect health of the natural body, the soundness of every member is essential: a perfection, however, rarely to be found, and seldom of long continuance. But the present feebleness, imperfection, and disorder of the particular members of that body whereof Christ is the head, are relieved by the prospect of "the perfecting of the saints, of the edifying of the body of Christ;" when "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. Can the father of lies speak truth? Yes, when it promises to answer his purpose; and truth itself partakes of the nature of a lie, when it is employed for the purpose of deception. Do devils believe? Yes, to their sorrow; "they believe and tremble." Does Satan give a just testimony to the Son of God! Yes, in hope of bringing it into discredit. Let no

one, then, value himself on the mere truth and soundness of his principles, on the exact orthodoxy of his faith. A principle, however excellent, that remains inactive, is of no value, like a mathematical proposition, demonstrably certain, but applied to no use; or a wholesome stream frozen up and stagnating at the very source. "Not every one that "saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the "kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will "of my Father which is in heaven." "This is the "victory that overcometh the world, even our faith: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that "believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

3. Who has not known disease, and danger, and manifold affliction? And who has not experienced frequent and merciful deliverance? The distress came from an unseen hand, and so did the relief. The agent, the instrument, was human, was sensible. It was the skill of the physician, it was the power of medicine, it was the sympathy of friendship. But who taught the physician to comprehend my malady, and to reach it? Who gave virtue to the prescribed medicine? Who excited compassion in the bosom of my friend? He who rebuked the fever, and it fled; he who laid his hands on the sick, and they were made whole; he who took the dead daughter of the ruler of the synagogue by the hand, and said, "Damsel, arise;" and "straightway she "arose and walked." Whether, therefore, health remain unimpaired, or be restored, by natural or extraordinary means; whether deliverance come imme-

diately from God, or be wrought through the instrumentality of second causes, the hand of Deity is equally to be acknowledged; and prolonged life and renewed strength are to be devoted to Him who "giveth to all life and breath, and all things; for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

LECTURE XVIII.

JOHN II. 13—17.

And the Jews' passover was at hand; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting; and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables: and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

BESIDES the usual, universal, and fixed measurements of time, all men have a particular and personal standard of calculation and reference, namely, certain incidents of their own lives, to themselves inexpressibly momentous, however uninteresting to the rest of mankind. Thus a mother, with much accuracy and distinctness, refers every other event, of whatever magnitude and importance, to the respective dates of the birth of her children. The expiration of his *time*, as it is called, that is, of his clerkship, or apprenticeship, forms an important epoch in the existence of a young man; and the fate of princes, and the revolutions of empire, acquire in his eyes, a peculiar consequence from their relation, in point of time, to that grand revolution in

his own little state. The consecration of prelates, and the inauguration of kings are, at once, public and private measures of duration. Every act of the state is dated by the year of the sovereign's reign. But human life admits not of a repetition of those more distinguished periods. They are remembered and referred to because they are rare. Were every day to exhibit a state-trial, hardly any, except the parties and their connexions, would care to attend it, or think of setting a mark upon it.

There is one life, however, of which every hour is an epoch, of which every act is decisive, of which every event is highly and universally interesting, and of which every period is a "fulness of time." Of this life each instant, each incident, every progressive step, furnishes a theme for the tongues, for the pens of thousands of thousands of men and angels, and, when their stores are exhausted, it presents a subject as new, as important, as unbounded, as it was at the beginning. The beloved disciple having thrown his mite of information into the public treasury, concludes his gospel with declaring his belief, his deliberate conviction, that the history of the life and actions of his divine Master was a subject infinite and inexhaustible. "There are also "many other things which Jesus did, the which, "if they should be written every one, I suppose "that even the world itself could not contain the "books that should be written;" meaning undoubtedly, that the things which Jesus said and did

were so many, so extraordinary, so significant, so efficient, as infinitely to exceed human comprehension and belief. But wherefore should the expression of the Evangelist be considered as hyperbolical, when we are told that these are the "things which "the angels desire to look into;" and when we reflect on the burthen of the eternal song of the redeemed in heaven; "I heard," says John, "the "voice of many angels round about the throne, "and the living creatures, and the elders: and the "number of them was ten thousand times ten "thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying "with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was "slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, "and strength, and honour, and glory, and "blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, "and on the earth, and under the earth, and such "as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard "I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and "power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, "and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

From the marriage in Cana in Galilee, Jesus again "went down to Capernaum, he, and his "mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and "they continued there not many days." How those days were employed we have seen in the preceding Lecture: in conducting the service of the synagogue, in cultivating the charities of private life, in secret devotion, in healing the sick, in casting out devils, in preaching the kingdom of God. Having made a progress of teaching and preaching over the

cities and synagogues of Galilee, He now for the first time since he assumed a public character, went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the passover. Preserving the order of events as accurately as an attentive comparison of evangelist with evangelist enables us, we are now to contemplate an incident in our Lord's history marked with very peculiar features, and presenting a new and instructive opening into his character, namely his purgation of the temple from the impurities with which it was profaned by an impious and infamous traffic.

From his earliest years the commanded solemnities of that sacred place were punctually observed. Whatever the law enjoined was to his infant state duly performed. While under parental authority, particularly when it led to the house and worship of God, He respectfully submitted to it; and in the maturity of age, voluntary and cheerful obedience to the ordinances of Heaven distinguished the great examlar of decency and order. Through the goodness of God, we are delivered from all burdensome and costly attendance on the service of the temple. We are not called to wait upon God with rams and calves of a year old. Our husbandmen, manufacturers, and merchants, are not summoned, under severe penalties, several times in the year, to join in the worship of the metropolitan church, at a great expense of time and substance. Is therefore the service of the Christian sanctuary worthless and contemptible? Do we therefore requite the Lord of the sabbath with neglect and ingratitude? Do we therefore snuff at

his bloodless sacrifices, and say, "Behold, what a "weariness is it? and bring that which is torn, and "the lame, and the sick, for an offering?" Dare Christian parents set the example to their children and dependants of irreligion and profanity, and because they are set free from a costly ceremonial, and a superstitious observance of the sabbath, will they claim and assume an exemption from the offices and the spirit of piety, devotion, and gratitude? Liberated from an intolerable yoke of iron, disdain they to wear the honourable, the golden chains of love?

The Jewish ritual was at this period vilely profaned, and was rapidly hastening to dissolution. But so long as it is in force, our blessed Lord condescends to be the pattern of attention and respect to it. And yet, what a scene did the house of God then present! The forms of religion remained, but the power and glory had departed. The letter of the law was still held in affected veneration, but the spirit was completely evaporated. The sacrifices of the living and true God were shamefully prostituted to gratify the most sordid of human passions, godliness was perverted into a mere instrument of filthy lucre, and the house of prayer was degraded into a den of thieves. And such is the fearful progress of moral corruption. Fervour gradually subsides into lukewarmness, and lukewarmness into cold. Indifference soon becomes mere formality, and formality is but a step from total neglect. Neglect degenerates into hatred and aversion, and an unhallowed zeal at length attempts to destroy what a zeal accord-

ing to godliness once endeavoured to build up. What can be more opposite and unlike than devout worshippers engaged in a holy contention of gratitude, praise, and love, striving who should present the most acceptable sacrifice to the Father of spirits; and carnal worldly-minded formalists trying to overreach one another; the one eager to purchase the ox or the sheep for his offering at as cheap a rate as possible, and the other to sell it at the highest price. And the very court of the temple is made the open theatre of this abominable commerce.

Before thou liftest up thy hand, O man, to scourge out those impious, sordid, profane Jews, pause, and look into thine own heart. Is no unholy traffic going on there? Knowest thou not that thine own body is the temple of the living God? Whose altar, then, is reared up in that sacred edifice of God's own building; and what incense smokes upon it? Say, is the name of Mammon inscribed there? Does sensuality there celebrate no nocturnal revels? What, shall the palace of the great King be transformed into "a cage of every unclean and hateful "bird!" Or, with the superstitious Athenian, art thou ignorantly bowing down before an "unknown "God?" Thou regularly observest the hour, and frequentest the house of prayer; but is there no table of "the money-changer" lurking in some obscure corner? Didst thou leave the world at the door on coming in? Why wander these eyes abroad over thy neighbour's garb and appearance? They ought to be fixed on "thy Father who is in secret,"

and who "seeth in secret." Dost thou too "offer "the sacrifice of fools?" darest thou approach the altar of God, conscious that thou art not yet reconciled to thy brother? the gift in thy hand is polluted; presume not to offer it. "Leave it before the "altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy "brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

It was the court of the Gentiles which this scandalous trade thus shamefully profaned, by the buying and selling of sheep, and oxen, and doves; and by the exchange of foreign for current coin, and of money of a higher for that of a lower denomination. And thus not only was the worship of the great Jehovah debased and perverted, but the minds of decent and devout strangers, who "had come to "Jerusalem for to worship," must have been grievously shocked and scandalized, to the utter extinction of every serious and devotional impression. This it was which excited a holy and just indignation in the Son of God; in beholding the temple violated, the sacrifices of God defiled, and a stumbling block laid in the way of proselytes, by men invested with a sacred character.

"And when he had made a scourge of small "cords he drove them all out of the temple, and "the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the "changers' money, and overthrew the tables: and "said unto them that sold doves, Take these things "hence; make not my Father's house an house of "merchandise." This discloses a new and singular exhibition of our blessed Lord's spirit and temper.

No personal injury or insult could provoke one expression of resentment. He "gave his back to the "smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off "the hair: he hid not his face from shame and "spitting:" You have heard of the meekness of Moses, and of the patience of Job. But what are they to the patience, meekness, and gentleness of Christ? Nevertheless these gracious qualities have a boundary. There are occasions where the exercise of them would cease to be virtue, and where a man would "do well to be angry." Wanton, deliberate profanation of the name, the day, the house of the Lord, is one of those occasions which justify severity. A commanding dignity, an irresistible glory must have occasionally beamed from the person of our Lord, which overawed and intimidated the beholder. How is it possible otherwise to account for the quiet submission of those men to corporal chastisement. They were many in number; they had a common interest to bind them to each other; they were in hitherto unquestioned possession of the ground; their property was concerned: they had the connivance at least, if not the permission, of the higher powers. He was alone, unknown, unconnected, unsupported. But they cannot stand the lightning of his eye, his voice strikes horror into their guilty consciences. They presume not to reason or to resist, but tamely give up their gainful traffic abashed and confounded. Thus the multitude that came with Judas to take Jesus, though furnished "with lanterns, and torches, and weapons,"

were so overwhelmed by the majesty of his appearance, that "as soon as he had said unto them, *I am* "*he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground." And if such were the glory with which he sometimes invested himself, in his state of humiliation, what must be the glory of his second coming "with "clouds," when "every eye shall see him, and they "also which pierced him?"

What a severe reproof was this action of our Lord, of the carelessness and indifference of the high-priest, and of the other ministers of religion? To them it belonged to guard the sanctity of the temple and of its worship. The dignity of their own station and character suffered, when the house of God was violated. Is it doing them injustice to suspect that they partook of the profits of this illicit trade? If this suspicion be well-founded, the grossest enormity is immediately accounted for. When the love of money has once taken possession of the heart no tie of religion or morality is binding. Conscience, sense of honour, sense of decency, sense of duty, all, all is sacrificed at the shrine of this insatiate demon, which never says "it is enough." At those seasons the demand for cattle to be offered in sacrifice must have been very great. Josephus, in his Wars of the Jews, informs us, that no less than two hundred and fifty-six thousand and five hundred victims were presented at one passover. A small share of the gains upon such an extensive consumption must therefore have amounted to a very large sum. What a confederacy, then, had

the zeal and intrepidity of Christ to encounter! a whole host of inhuman, unfeeling dealers in flesh, actuated by the basest and most unrelenting of human passions, and leagued with a time-serving priesthood who put every thing up to sale.

We have before us a striking and an encouraging instance of the power and influence of one person of inflexible integrity, in a corrupted state of society. He may singly and successfully oppose a torrent of iniquity. Vice is timid when directly attacked. "The wicked flee," saith the wise man, "when no "one pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a "lion." Irresistible is the force of truth and conscience. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith "the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the "rock in pieces?"—"The word of God 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." This is the weapon which our Master wielded, together with the "scourge of small "cords." Smitten at once in their persons and in their consciences, they retreat with shame from the field, acknowledging, feeling, the superiority of real goodness. Thus then learn, O man, to arm thyself, and say, "The Lord God will help me; "therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore "have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I "shall not be ashamed." From the inexhaustible stores of Scripture draw thy resources for the war-

fare, and thou shalt find thyself invincible. What has he to fear, who is conscious of the goodness of his cause, who employs "the sword of the spirit, "which is the word of God," and who goes forth conquering and to conquer in full confidence of divine conduct and support.

It is evident from the censure pronounced upon the violaters of the temple, that their trade was every way unlawful. This transaction is recorded by all the four Evangelists with little if any variation. And by comparing them together we shall find, that the abuse exposed and condemned was a horrid mixture of impiety and dishonesty, of contempt of God, and robbery of man. Not only was "the house of prayer for all nations" abominably polluted by what fell from the flocks and herds for sacrifice, but it was literally perverted into "a den of thieves," who had entered into a wicked combination to prey upon the public, by enhancing the price of an article which was at once a necessary of life and of religion. These two enormities, however, generally go hand in hand. If there is no fear of God before a man's eyes, his neighbour has but a slender hold upon either his veracity or integrity, when the falsehood may be uttered, or the fraud committed without danger of detection. And, on the other hand, he who deliberately practises deceit upon "his brother whom he hath seen," cannot have a very high degree of reverence for "God whom he hath not seen."

While we contemplate with shame and sorrow the

corruptions which disgraced the Jewish Church, is it possible to refrain from lamenting the equally deplorable corruptions which have disfigured the hallowed form of Christianity? Did not all history attest the truth of it, who would believe that there was a long period, not quite expired in some parts of Christendom, and that there was a succession of priests, called Christians, who presumed for a piece of money, to grant a man indulgence to commit every species of wickedness, which his corrupt heart might suggest, and for any given period, with complete impunity? Who could believe that this priest, in consideration of something cast into his treasury, would take upon him to issue a pardon of the most atrocious offences, and thereby screen the vilest of offenders from punishment; nay, confer the power of pardoning on stone walls and lifeless altars? The murderer who smote his brother to death in the open street, in broad day, had but to step into the next church, and it stood always open on purpose, to be protected from the vengeance of the law. Who could believe that a present or bequest to the Church, was considered as a full compensation for all the crimes of a life of violence, and rapine, and blood, and as a fair passport to the kingdom of heaven? That such things should ever have existed is most wonderful: that they should have maintained their ground over all Europe for many centuries together, is most wonderful. But the scandalous usurpation is hastening to a close. And with the downfall of popery, may

every remaining error in the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the churches of the Reformation finally terminate.

The disciples of our Lord possessed one great preparatory qualification for the exercises of their future ministry, acquaintance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Struck with this display of their Master's zeal for the honour of God, and for the purity of Temple-worship, they call to remembrance a text from the Psalms of David, which appeared to them a prefiguration of what had just passed. "And his disciples remembered that it "was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten "me up." We pretend not to affirm that the words of the Psalmist amount to a prediction of what Christ felt, and said, and did upon this occasion. David unquestionably uttered his own feelings, though there was as yet no temple at Jerusalem dedicated to the most High God. But the expression amounts to this: Whatever affects the character and worship of Deity, I make my personal concern. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me "up:" ardent regard for the honour of thy sanctuary, like a secret flame pent in my breast, must either have vent or consume me; and the sequel is in the same spirit, "and the reproaches of them "that reproached thee are fallen upon me." But though we may not have here a direct prophecy of a future event, we have a powerful assimilation between two most eminent personages, at very distant periods, breathing one and the same spirit,

aiming at one and the same end; and this similitude partakes of the nature of prophecy. And the whole leads us to this conclusion, that there may be predictions, resemblances, analogies in Scripture, hitherto concealed even from the wise and prudent, to be hereafter unfolded, or perhaps reserved for the instruction and delight of the kingdom of heaven, when there shall be in Scripture nothing obscure, or hard to be understood. What a motive is this, now, to listen to the command of Christ. "Search the Scriptures, for in "them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are "they which testify of me."

In this passage of our Lord's history, as in all Scripture, we have many things "profitable for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction "in righteousness."

1. We have a humiliating view of the treachery and deceitfulness of the human heart. The very persons who considered it as a crime to "eat bread "with unwashen hands" could quietly digest the profanation of the temple and of the worship of God. Such self-delusion do men practise every day. They treat their own infirmities as some mothers do very homely, wayward, or even deformed children, who not only show them all possible indulgence themselves, but are offended if others adopt not their fondness and partiality. At the same time, the slightest blemish in the character of another is quickly seen and severely censured. The deception is frequently carried much farther.

A man shall actually discern and rigidly condemn in his neighbour, the very fault to which he himself is notoriously addicted. The proud person can endure no one's pride but his own; the passionate stand astonished at the transports of those who are hasty like themselves; and who are so severe upon hypocrisy as the hypocritical? Every lesson taught by the great Teacher has a foundation in human corruption, and has a tendency to correct it, and this is an important one: "Judge not, that ye be not "judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye "shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, "it shall be measured to you again. And why be- "holdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, "but considerest not the beam that is in thine own "eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me "pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a "beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first "cast out the beam out of thine eye; and then shalt "thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy "brother's eye." To which I subjoin the prayer of the Psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my "heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see "if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me "in the way everlasting."

2. If such were the dignity which the Son of God assumed, and the authority which he exercised, while he tabernacled with men upon earth, attended by a few simple Galilcans, is it not a matter of very serious concern to meditate on the majesty and importance of his coming to judge the quick and

the dead? If his presence was thus awful and tremendous when armed with only "a scourge of "small cords," what must it be, when "the Lord "Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his "mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance "on them that know not God, and that obey not "the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall "be punished with everlasting destruction from the "presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his "power." In this judgment to come we are all equally interested, and we are furnished with a present rule of judgment in the decisions of conscience and the dictates of the word of God. Happy is that man who understands, believes, and improves the testimony of those faithful and true witnesses; who, knowing the terrors of the Lord, is persuaded to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life, "He that believeth on him is "not condemned; but he that believeth not is con-"demned already; because he hath not believed "in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come "into the world, and men loved darkness rather "than light, because their deeds were evil. For "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither "cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be "reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to "the light, that his deeds may be made manifest "that they are wrought in God." These last words open a brighter prospect, and disclose to us

"the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, "with power and great glory, and sending his "angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they "shall gather together his elect from the four winds, "from one end of heaven to the other." Then shall he be "glorified in his saints, and admired in "all them that believe." Thus are good and evil, death and life, the blessing and the curse, set before us. Thus all that is terrible in justice, armed with almighty power, addresses itself to our fear, and all that is amiable and alluring in unbounded goodness and love, expands to our hope, "an inheritance "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not "away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept "by the power of God, through faith, unto salva-"tion, ready to be revealed in the last time." May we this day know him as a Saviour whom we must in that day meet as a judge. May we have wisdom to comply with the counsel of Him, as a friend, whom it is certain and utter ruin to encounter as an adversary. "Behold, now is the accepted time: "behold, now is the day of salvation."

3. Take care, frail, ignorant, erring man, how thou proposest to thyself the purifier of the temple as a pattern of zeal. "It is good," saith the apostle, "to be zealously affected always in a good thing;" but unless zeal be directed by prudence and knowledge it may produce incredible mischief. There is a zeal about trifles, which diverts the mind from objects of serious importance. Battles have been fought, and volumes written, to determine the pos-

ture in which the sacrament ought to be received, and the habit to be worn by the priest in reading the service of the Church. While contention about such non-essentials waxed hot, the spirit of piety and prayer grew cold. There is a zeal which is the offspring of prejudice and habit. It actuated Saul of Tarsus, when "he made havock of the church "entering into every house, and haling men and "women, committed them to prison;" and while he "yet breathed out threatenings and slaughter "against the disciples of the Lord:" and when, speaking of himself, he says: "I verily thought "with myself, that I ought to do many things "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and "many of the saints did I shut up in prison, "having received authority from the chief priests; "and when they were put to death, I gave my "voice against them. And I punished them oft "in every synagogue, and compelled them to blas- "pheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, "I persecuted them even unto strange cities." There is a vain-glorious, ostentatious zeal, which cannot bear to pass unobserved, which must be fed with public attention and admiration. Such is that which inspired Jehu, when he exultingly challenged applause: "Come with me, and see my zeal "for the Lord." There is a malignant, intolerant zeal, which pities not, spares not. Even the disciples James and John were under its influence,

when a village of the Samaritans refused to receive their Master. "Lord," say they, "wilt thou that "we command fire to come down from heaven, "and consume them, even as Elias did?" and it received a just and severe reprehension from the mouth of Christ: "He turned, and rebuked them, "and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye "are of. For the Son of Man is not come to de- "stroy men's lives, but to save them." The disciples themselves became the victims of this fiery, exterminating zeal, as Christ predicted concerning them. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you "will think that he doeth God service." Thus the hard measure which they would have meted to others, was measured out unto themselves. But there is a zeal as well as a doctrine, "which is "according to godliness:" a pure and lambent flame of love to God, which admits of no mixture of human passion, which views every object through the medium of Deity, and aims but at one end, that God may be glorified. This excellent spirit will never think of doing God service, by showing unkindness or cruelty to man. But it is so rare, and so easily counterfeited, that even its emotions are to be regarded with a jealous eye, for there is no small danger of a man's mistaking the ebullitions of his own mind, for the impulse of God's Spirit, especially in cases where guilt is to be condemned and vengeance executed. David made a wise and a happy choice, when constrained to submit

to one of three great evils. "I am in a great "strait," said he; "let us now fall into the hand "of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let "me not fall into the hand of man." I like not to see the scourge, the sword, the torch voluntarily assumed by one of like passions with myself. In vehement attempts to reform abuse, I should tremble to think of their degenerating into a rage to destroy. The tremendous attribute of vengeance, God will confide to no hands but his own, but he permits man to carry the imitation of divine mercy as far as he can. "Dearly beloved, avenge not your-"selves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it "is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith "the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, "feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in "so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his "head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome "evil with good."

4. Mark the power of conscience, and learn to secure its testimony in your favour. What made cowards of those gross and brutal men? An ill conscience. What chased away a multitude before one man? An ill conscience. What overawed a rapacious priesthood and a licentious populace? An ill conscience. Conscience drove our guilty progenitors to seek concealment "from the presence of "the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden." Conscience sent out murderous Cain "a fugitive "and a vagabond in the earth," under the dire apprehension that every one who found him would

slay him. It is conscience that dictates the unavailing cry to despairing wretches, who in bitterness exclaim "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, "and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on "the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: "for the great day of his wrath is come; and who "shall be able to stand?" But what, in opposition to this, is the source of a Christian's composure and satisfaction? "Our rejoicing is this, the tes- "timony of our conscience, that in simplicity and "godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but "by the grace of God, we have had our conver- "sation in the world." Herein consisted the triumph of the apostle over the fear of the Roman governor, and over the oratory of Tertullus: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a "conscience void of offence toward God and to- "ward men." And this constitutes the triumph and the security of every believer in Christ Jesus: "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, "through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we "stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations "also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; "and patience experience; and experience, hope; "and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love "of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy "Ghost, which is given unto us."

Though the buyers and sellers were abashed and put to flight, some of the consequential cavillers,

who are to be found in every age, and in every society, maintain the ground, and call for the commission under which Jesus acted. "Then answered "the Jews, and said unto him, What sign showest "thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" This furnished him with a fair occasion of bringing forward the peculiar and distinguishing doctrine of his religion, the resurrection of the body, which was soon to be exemplified in his own resurrection from the dead, as "the first-fruits of them that "sleep." This will accordingly constitute the subject of the next Lecture. "Blessed and holy is he "that hath part in the first resurrection: on such "the second death hath no power; but they shall "be priests of God and of Christ."

LECTURE XIX.

JOHN II. 18—25.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men: and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

THE actions and events of Christ's life are the basis on which the truth and importance of his doctrine rest, and the solidity of the foundation must be estimated from the structure which it supports. The foundation of a building lies buried under ground, and cannot be examined by the eye; but when we behold a stately, lofty, and venerable pile, which has withstood the attack of ages, and which still presents undiminished beauty and strength, we justly reason from what we do see to what we do not; and we feel ourselves constrained

to applaud the excellency of the design, from the perfectness and durability of the execution. "Be- "hold," saith the Lord God, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, more than seven centuries before the fabric began to appear, "behold, I lay in Zion "for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a pre- "cious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that "believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also "will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the "plummet." Here is the design of the sovereign Architect, not sleeping like many a beautiful human plan in the port-folio of the artist never to be realized, but quick with the spirit of life, already executed "in the purpose of him who worketh all "things after the counsel of his own will," and to arise, in due time, the wonder of angels and of men. This building of God at length began to appear and to ascend. But it accorded not with human ideas of grandeur and magnificence. The very depositaries of the original design were the first to resist the completion of it, because it justified not their prejudices and prepossessions. Their opposition, however, served only more illustriously to display the manifold wisdom and goodness of God, and to expose the weakness and folly of man. Had the edifice been of man's devising and rearing, it could not have stood "the washing of a tide," for the "foolish "man built his house upon the sand: and the rain "descended, and the floods came, and the winds "blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and "great was the fall of it." But infinite Wisdom

founded the fabric of Christianity upon a rock. The rains have descended, the floods have come, the winds have blown and beaten upon this house, but it has not fallen; for it is founded upon a rock.

In the Gospel history we behold the ground-floor or platform of the Christian religion. It principally consists in a narration of plain unadorned facts, well authenticated indeed, but recommended by no artificial polish, and deriving all their importance and effect from their own native truth and excellence, serving, nevertheless, as a solid support to the precepts, the promises, the predictions, the doctrines, the consolations of our most holy faith. Take, for instance, the event which our blessed Lord, in the passage which has now been read, foretold concerning himself, namely, that the temple of his body should be destroyed, and in three days raised up again. Now when this event actually did take place, not only was the voracity of Jesus as a prophet completely established, but a foundation was laid of sufficient strength to sustain the whole weight of the Christian's hope, of a resurrection to life and immortality. We shall, therefore, first consider this all-important doctrine, in the history which is the foundation of it, and then in the superstructure reared.

In purifying the temple from the abominations practised in it, Jesus had undoubtedly assumed the authority of one invested in the office of magistracy, or with the character of a prophet. That he was no magistrate all men knew, and he never pretend-

ed to it. To have acted in this capacity might have been considered as usurpation. As a prophet, then, and only as a prophet, could he appear in the character of a public reformer. But it is requisite that a prophet should produce his credentials. This suggested the demand: "What sign showest thou "unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" which plainly implied, that one acting under a commission from Heaven, was obliged to support his claim by a sign from Heaven. But is there need to produce supernatural testimony to a right to reform known, public, flagrant abuse? Did not their own history furnish a noted instance of a private person's assuming the sword of justice, and acting at once as judge and executioner, in the case of open and gross violation of the divine law; that of Phinehas, who was but the grandson of Aaron the priest? He not only became liable to no censure, but obtained a deathless name, and an honourable office for his seasonable interposition. "Then stood up Phinehas, "and executed judgment: and so the plague was "stayed. And that was counted unto him for "righteousness unto all generations for evermore." Did not the sign, in the present instance, appear in the act? Did not the great Reformer authenticate his powers by the manner in which he exercised them, and by the effect which they produced? Did the guilty resist? Did they call in question his authority? Did they drag him, in their turn, to the tribunal? No, they feel his ascendant and shrink from his rebuke. Who, then, call for a sign? Not

the offenders; they had received sufficient evidence; not the populace, for they must have been equally overawed and confounded. The rulers of the Jews hearing of this singular transaction, some of them perhaps being on the spot, and eye-witnesses of what passed, jealous of their honour, and considering their prerogative as invaded; they, as men having authority, demanded a sign. From their general character, and from the inefficacy of this and other signs afterwards given, we know from what motive the present demand was made; not in the spirit of meekness, not from the love of truth, not to obtain conviction; but in the hope of finding occasion to censure, or of putting the assumed authority of Christ to a test which it could not stand.

A sign is given them, and a most remarkable one it is. "Jesus answered and said unto them, De-"stroy this temple, and in three days I will raise "it up." Whatever construction the Jews might put on these words, what Jesus intended to convey is obvious, and it was in every point justified by the corresponding event. He who is simplicity and truth itself could have no design to mislead. The action and emphasis with which he spake clearly pointed out the object. The general attention had just been directed to a temple made with hands, a temple wickedly profaned by an abominable traffic, which was connived at by its professed conservators, and whose honour had been so nobly vindicated by a stranger. That stranger had already attracted general notice, by the singularity of his speech and

deportment; every eye was fixed upon him, his every attitude and gesture were observed, and these plainly indicated that the temple to be destroyed, and raised up in three days, could not be the venerable pile in the court of which this conversation passed. When he afterwards foretold the approaching destruction of *that* temple, he expressed himself in terms not liable to misapprehension. "As he went "out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto "him, Master, see what manner of stones and "what buildings are here! And Jesus answering "said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? "there shall not be left one stone upon another, "that shall not be thrown down." Now he points to an edifice infinitely more sacred. From both the first and second houses built on mount Zion the glory had long since departed. The sensible tokens of the divine presence were withdrawn. The holy oracle was no longer consulted by Urim and Thummim. But in Him, who was the only glory of the second house, "dwelled all the fulness of the God-"head bodily," and the destruction of this temple he thus predicts as a sign not to the men of that generation only, but to all ages even to the end of the world. From the very nature of prophecy, a vail must be drawn between the prediction and the event. "Hope that is seen is not hope," and "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the "evidence of things not seen." Christ indulges not those unbelievers with an immediate display of his miraculous power, in support of his pretensions

to the character of a prophet, which they could easily have explained away or misinterpreted; but he refers them to a sign shortly to be exhibited, which should be, at once the exact accomplishment of a well-known prediction, and the greatest miracle that can possibly exist. That the misconception of the Jews was perverse and affected is evident from this, that when they had actually fulfilled the part of the prediction which depended on themselves, by destroying that sacred temple, we find them labouring under the most dreadful apprehension that Jesus would accomplish the other part, which depended on him, and they employ every precaution, which terror could suggest, to prevent and defeat it. "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. Command, "therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until "the third day, lest his disciples come by night "and steal him away, and say unto the people, He "is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be "worse than the first." And when the astonished watch came into the city, and made report to their employers, of "all the things that were done," did it produce conviction? No, it only filled them with mortification and kindled rage. "The chief "priests, when they were assembled with the "elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large "money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His "disciples came by night, and stole him away while

" we slept. And if this come to the governor's
" ears, we will persuade him, and secure you."
To what purpose, then, ask for a sign? They resist and reject the most illustrious, which, with reverence be it spoken, God himself could give, thereby approving the truth of what Jesus on another occasion said, " If they hear not Moses and the pro-
" phets, neither will they be persuaded, though
" one rose from the dead."

" Destroy this temple." Let it be observed, that this is simply a prediction or supposition, and not a precept; equivalent to, *ye will* destroy this temple, or, *though ye should* destroy this temple. It is a mode of expression that frequently occurs in Scripture. Thus in the Old Testament, Joseph says to his brethren, " This do, and live," that is, do this, and *ye shall* live. Thus God speaks to Moses, " Get thee up into this mountain, and die in the
" mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered
" unto thy people," meaning evidently, *thou shalt die* in the mount, and *shalt* be gathered unto thy people. Thus, Isaiah viii. 10. " Take counsel
" together, and it shall come to nought; " speak
" the word, and it shall not stand:" " that is, *though ye* take counsel together, and *though ye* speak the word. And in the New Testament, the word of Christ to Judas, " That thou doest, do
" quickly," cannot be considered as a command to accomplish his plan of treachery, but merely as an intimation that he was seen through, and that under the impulse of a diabolic spirit, he was hurrying

on to commit that dreadful enormity. Thus Paul exhorts, "Be angry and sin not?" surely not as if he meant to encourage violent transports of wrath, but in the event of a man's giving way to a fit of passion, the apostle means to guard him against excessive indulgence in it, by restricting its duration to the going down of the sun. This early notice did Jesus give, not to his disciples only, but to all who came to worship in the temple, "of his decease "which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" that it should be effected by the hand of violence; not by decay, but by destruction, and that his own countrymen should be the perpetrators of it. This declaration was frequently repeated, and became plainer and plainer, till the fact justified every particular of the prediction.

"This *temple*." Our blessed Lord in this place and elsewhere denominates his body a temple, as declaratory of his superiority to the lofty pile on mount Zion, even in its greatest glory, much more in its then degraded, defiled state. "I say unto "you," addressing himself to the Pharisees, "that "in this place is one greater than the temple," because Deity resided continually and inseparably in him, as the Jews believed he did in that which was built by Solomon, in answer to that petition; "O "Lord my God, hearken unto the cry and to the "prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee "to-day; that thine eyes may be open toward this "house night and day, even toward the place of "which thou hast said, My name shall be there;"

according as it was foretold by Moses near five centuries before: "Then there shall be a place "which the Lord your God shall choose to cause "his name to dwell there." Josephus informs us that not only did the answer to Solomon's prayer imply a real and sensible residence of Deity, but that it was the universal belief of the Jews and of the strangers who visited Jerusalem, that there was an ingress of God into the temple, and a habitation in it; and, in another place, that God descended, and pitched his tabernacle there. The Jews themselves, however, admitted, that whatever glory these expressions might signify was now departed. To restore that glory, and to bestow it on the second temple in more abundant measure than the first ever possessed, was the end of Christ's mission; and in him was the prediction fulfilled: "The glory of "this latter house shall be greater than of the for-"mer, saith the Lord of hosts." He was that Oracle by whose answers all light and truth were emitted; the true Shechinah who had the Spirit without measure; he was anointed with the "oil "of gladness above his fellows," and thus in all respects greater than the temple. *That* temple, says he, which you have defiled I have cleansed; and *this* temple of my body, which you are going to destroy, I will raise up again.

When this prediction was verified by the matter of fact, that fact became the foundation of one of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, the resurrection of the dead. Jesus early taught and fre-

quently repeated it, that it might be clearly understood and carefully remembered. The impostor is at pains to conceal his purpose till it is ripe for execution. He fears prevention, and therefore endeavours to take you by surprise. The thief gives no warning of his approach, but comes upon men while they sleep. The true prophet discloses his design, prepares, forewarns, puts the person who doubts or disbelieves upon his guard, bids defiance to prevention. His own resurrection, and the doctrine of a general resurrection which is founded upon it, were not barely hinted at, or declared in obscure and equivocal terms. They were not the casual topic, and for once only, of private conversation with his disciples. No, this was a leading, a commanding object, presented continually to view, placed in the strongest light, announced with equal fairness and simplicity to friends and to enemies. "And Jesus going up to "Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the "way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to "Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed "unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and "they shall condemn him to death, and shall "deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to "scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day "he shall rise again." He declares the same truth thus openly in the court of the temple. He repeats it in the presence and hearing of the multitude. "When the people were gathered thick together, "then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees "answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign

" from thee. But he answered and said unto them, " An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after " a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, " but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas " was three days and three nights in the whale's " belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and " three nights in the heart of the earth." The Sadducees, opponents still more virulent than the Pharisees, perfectly understood him as meaning on the basis of his own, to establish the belief of a resurrection of the body; for they argue with him on the subject, and frame a case which they supposed would reduce the author of the doctrine to an absurdity. This afforded our Lord an opportunity of showing that the doctrine in dispute was actually an article in their own creed, as being the disciples of Moses. Thus it runs through the whole of divine Revelation. The fathers beyond the flood lived and died in this faith. The dust of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thus rested and rests in hope. It is indeed more clearly stated under the Gospel dispensation, and the ground of it is more fully demonstrated, that is, the dawning light of the morning gradually brightened into the perfect day.

" In three days *I* will raise it up." This is an explicit declaration of his own inherent Deity, for God alone has the right and the power over life and death. An angel may be the delegated instrument in executing the sentence of divine justice, by taking away life; as in the case of the first-born of Egypt, of those who fell by the pestilence, to the

number of seventy thousand, for the offence of David in numbering the people, and of the hundred, fourscore, and five thousand smitten in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians. But we no where find the power of quickening the dead delegated to a created being. Man has the desperate power of destroying his own body, but there it ends, and the disembodied spirit ceases from all power to repair the awful violence which it has committed. Man cannot by a mere act of his will even lay down his life, any more than he can reanimate the breathless clay. It is the incommunicable prerogative of him who has life in himself, to dispose of it at pleasure. This prerogative Jesus Christ claims and exercises. "For as the Father "raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even "so the Son quickeneth whom he will." In the case of his own death, it was an act of sovereign, almighty power. "Jesus said, It is finished: and "he bowed his head, and *gave* up the ghost," while as yet the principle of natural life was strong within him, thus demonstrating that his assertion concerning himself was founded in truth: "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." And on this power over his own life, he founds his right of dispensing life and death to others. "And this is the Father's "will which hath sent me, that of all which he "hath given me I should lose nothing, but should

" raise it up again at the last day. And this is the " will of him that sent me, that every one which " seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have " everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the " last day." Whether therefore it is said that " Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory " of the Father," or that he himself raised up the temple of his body, one and the same source of life, one controlling, irresistible will, and one supreme, efficient power, are displayed.

" Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was " this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up " in three days?" It has been already shown that this was a wilful misapprehension: and it exhibits a humiliating view of the power of prejudice. Something may be made of a stupid child, if he be disposed to exert the poor faculties which he possesses, but obstinacy sets discipline at defiance. It is possible to assist weak eyes, but what can be done for the man who wilfully shuts them, or who madly plucks them out? To enter, with commentators, into discussion respecting the period of the temple's rebuilding, is foreign to our purpose. What is it to us how long time was employed in the work, by what prince or princes it was carried on, and what was its comparative magnificence, with relation to the first temple, and to other structures of a similar kind? But it is of high importance to know, that the prediction of Christ concerning it, already quoted, was exactly fulfilled, about forty years afterward; when Jerusalem was

besieged and taken by the Emperor Titus, was pillaged and burnt, the temple completely destroyed, upwards of one million and one hundred thousand of the Jews destroyed by famine and the sword, ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners, the whole nation expatriated and dispersed; and that the state of the temple from the year of Christ 70 down to the present 1802, and of this scattered, degraded, yet providentially supported and distinguished people, at this day, are a standing evidence of the truth and certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed. He is faithful and true who promises and who threatens. "When ye "shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then "know that the desolation thereof is nigh. "Then "let them which are in Judea flee to the moun- "tains; and let them which are in the midst of it "depart out; and let not them that are in the "countries enter thereinto. For these be the days "of vengeance, that all things which are written "may be fulfilled. And they shall fall by the "edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive "into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden "down of the Gentiles, until the times of the "Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in "the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and "upon the earth distress of nations, with per- "plexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's "hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after "those things which are coming on the earth: for "the powers of heaven shall be shaken. Verily I

" say unto you, this generation shall not pass away " till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass " away; but my words shall not pass away."

" When therefore he was risen from the dead, " his disciples remembered that he had said this " unto them." Words as they are spoken, and events as they pass, frequently make a slight impression, but when recalled and fixed by some striking correspondent circumstance they rush on the mind like a torrent, and we wonder at our own preceding carelessness and inattention. Had the disciples been men quick of apprehension, and of easy belief, the fabrication of a cunningly devised fable might have been suspected: but they were persons of a simplicity of character that sometimes bordered on stupidity; they were " slow of heart " to believe;" they often misunderstood their Master; they were of all mankind the most unfit to plan and to support imposture. When Jesus spake of destroying and of raising up again the temple of his body, the Jews wilfully perverted his meaning, and his disciples seem hardly to have marked his words. The greatest of miracles must be performed to subdue the incredulity of the one, and to rouse the attention of the other. In both we contemplate the wrath and the weakness of man ministering to the glory of God. It was meet that the mouth of malignity should be stopped, and that the truth as it is in Jesus should be taught to the world by men whose own ignorance had been instructed, whose doubts had been removed, whose

the evidence of his mission, must have been noticed and felt. When these proofs of an extraordinary character were accompanied and supported by a display of miraculous powers, the effect must have been what the Evangelist relates: "When he was "in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, "many believed in his name when they saw the "miracles which he did." Nor was this impression confined to vulgar minds, for we presently find a man high in rank and office bearing testimony to Christ's prophetic character, and to the foundation on which it rested. "Nicodemus, a Pharisee and "ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and "said unto him, Rabbi, 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. But the sacred historian subjoins a reflection most humiliating to human nature; for it implies that the understanding may be enlightened, and the conscience perfectly convinced, and yet the heart remain corrupted and malignant. "Many "believed in his name, when they saw the miracles "which he did." But the searcher of hearts discerned under a sound belief, a dangerous, an unsubdued perversity of disposition in which he could not confide. "But Jesus did not commit himself "unto them." In this Christ acted as a pattern to his disciples, and conformed himself to the doctrine which he taught them. "Beware of men: be ye "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." There is an excess of caution unworthy of a noble and

generous mind, which damps exertion and poisons society. But there is also an excess of confidence which puts the candid and sincere in the power of the crafty and designing. True wisdom safely conducts its possessor through the channel which divides them. "A prudent man," says Solomon, "foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the "simple pass on, and are punished."

The chapter concludes with an ascription to Christ of one of the incommunicable attributes of Deity, the knowledge of the thoughts of men: "He knew all men, and needed not that any "should testify of man: for he knew what was "in man." Of this he had given an illustrious instance in the case of Nathanael, whose character he clearly discerned before any personal intercourse had taken place: "Before that Philip called thee, "when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Here it is reduced to a general proposition of high moment. "The Father hath committed all judg-"ment unto the Son:" and he is qualified for the discharge of this all-important office, by a perfect knowledge not only of the actions of a man's life, but of the motives from which he acted, and of the end at which he aimed. May it be engraved on the living table of our heart, that 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."

LECTURE XX.

After administering the Lord's Supper.

1 *CORINTHIANS, XV.* 35—44.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead: it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

TO him who believes in the life and immortality which are brought to light by the Gospel; to him who has the witness of death every day presented to his eyes, and who feels it continually in his own frame, can it ever be unseasonable or unprofitable

to hear of the ground of his holy faith, of his glorious privileges, of his exalted hope? Does the worldling ever tire in calculating his gains, and of reckoning over his hoard? Is the eager heir ever cloyed in contemplating his fair and ample expected inheritance? When were the praises, the reported successes, wisdom, and virtue of a darling child, a burden on the listening ear of parental affection? When was the eye fatigued in surveying the beautiful and majestic fabric of nature, or turned away from it with disgust? Wherefore, then, should it be apprehended that the disciple of Jesus, who has fled for refuge to the hope set before him, whose brightest prospects open beyond the grave, who is rejoicing in the promise of his Master's coming "the second "time, without sin, unto salvation;" wherefore suppose that such a person could say, "What a "weariness is it!" when the preacher's theme is the complete restoration of man's fallen nature, the resurrection of the body, the perfect resemblance of all the members of Christ to the glorious head, the final and unfading triumph of redeeming love? No, well-pleased you withdraw from the pursuit of temporal pleasure and profit, from surveying the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, from contemplating even the more glorious wonders of the starry heavens, to expatiate over the blissful regions of Emanuel's land, to drink of "the pure "river of the water of life," to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, to feast on the promise of "new "heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth "righteousness," where there is no more death,

where the curse is not known, where God himself shall wipe away all tears from all eyes.

Previous to the breaking of bread, in commemoration of our Saviour's dying love to perishing sinners, we were led to meditate on the final consummation which the ordinance has directly in view. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye "do show the Lord's death till he come;" an event which involves in itself the fate of angels and of men; an event which shall exhibit the grandest display of the divine power and wisdom, of justice, goodness, and truth; an event which is at once the object of just terror, and the purest source of joy. One, and that not the least interesting, consideration connected with the prospect of that "great and notable "day of the Lord," is that which constitutes the subject of the apostle's reasoning in the passage which has been now read, namely, the resurrection of the dead. The ground of belief respecting this is the truth and certainty of Christ's resurrection, on the third day after his passion, conformably to frequently repeated, well-known, and minutely particular predictions respecting this illustrious event. These were the subject of the preceding Lecture. "Jesus and the resurrection" were the great theme of Paul's preaching at learned Athens, and of his epistles to the churches, particularly to the Corinthians, in this chapter. This is the sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and lo, what a structure is Providence rearing upon it!

The apostle introduces an unbeliever cavilling at the doctrine of the resurrection, and triumphantly

demanding, as one defying all possibility of reply, "How are the dead raised up? and with what "body do they come?" Grasping at mere phantoms of worldly hope, credulous as children in admitting "the unreal mockery" of a heated imagination, men doubt and disbelieve only when the God of truth speaks; they are careless only where their spiritual and everlasting interests are concerned; they reject that which reason and religion concur to prove, which the constitution and frame of nature, in her unceasing reproductions, stamp with striking marks of probability, and which a revelation from heaven has rendered infallible. The objection of infidelity proceeds on the supposition that there is nothing apparent in the system of the universe which is analogous to the resurrection of the body; that it is inconsistent with all knowledge and experience. The apostle goes on to demonstrate that this change, wonderful as it is, has its counterpart in nature, and is perfectly consistent with appearances which fall every day under every man's observation, and which are level to every human capacity. He refers the infidel to the universally known and understood progress of vegetation, which is a constant representation of death and the resurrection, of corruptibility and incorruption. One of the most obvious and ordinary operations in husbandry daily presents the image of this great mystery of godliness. The seed, O man, which thou castest into the ground, is surrendered to loss, to putrefaction, to death. It disappears, it

seems for ever gone, its form and substance, all, all is dissolved. No, Sir, it dies but to be quickened. Indeed it could not have been quickened, unless it had died. What dropped into the earth, a single, solitary grain, springs up out of it, increased thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. Had the little seed never known corruption, where would have been that goodly tree laden with golden fruit? It fell naked into the ground; it rises thence clothed with a new, verdant, transparent covering. It every day unfolds some latent beauty, it assumes a more majestic form, it expands an unknown excellence. Its temporary destruction is its perennial establishment.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead." The body was emaciated by disease, it withered by reason of age, it was lost in the grave, it became a mass of corruption. But does it follow that it shall remain for ever a prey to corruption? Does it follow that it shall rise again with the self-same qualities which it formerly possessed? No, it is the glory of God not to raise up again weakness, mortality, corruption, but out of weakness to raise power, to clothe corruption with incorruption, to swallow up mortality of life. But *how* is this done? I cannot tell. O man, "thou knowest not what is the "way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow "in the womb of her that is with child: even so "thou knowest not the works of God who maketh "all." Who is able to trace and to describe the common process of vegetable nature? Where is the man that presumes to explain that which is least?

Is it any wonder, then, that limited faculties are lost in the investigation of that which is greatest? Can the clown tell how the handful of "bare grain" which he scattered along the surface of the ground, has been transformed into a multitude of stately, fair, and fragrant plants? No, and neither can the philosopher. But the simplest clown is a philosopher too enlightened to doubt, or to disbelieve, what uniform observation and experience have confirmed to him. He is too wise to suspend the operations of his useful and necessary art, till he has discovered the *how* and the *wherefore* of it. Can the philosopher then arrogate to himself the praise of wisdom, who refuses the information, and denies himself the consolations of Christianity, because he cannot penetrate into every mystery, resolve every difficulty, and dispel all the obscurity which it presents? What one art or science has been carried to its highest possible perfection? Do men therefore neglect to avail themselves of the progress which has been made in science? And shall the most profound of all sciences, but which has of all others been most successfully investigated, whose discoveries are more far in number, and in their nature infinitely more important, than all the rest, be laughed to scorn, be despised and rejected, because it presents "some things hard to be understood," because some of its grander discoveries are reserved to a future exhibition, because there are "times and seasons," interpositions, relations,

and dependencies "which the Father hath put in "his own power."

Again, "God," it is said, "giveth to every seed "his own body." "Thou fool," argues St. Paul, "that which thou sowest is not quickened except "it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest "not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it "may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: "but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, "and to every seed his own body." This implies, that the change produced by the resurrection is not arbitrary or contingent, but established by a certain law, conformably to the nature and qualities of each distinct species. What was wheat continues to be wheat, after it has risen again. What was any other kind of grain, when cast into the earth, rises up that self-same kind of grain, and no other. The individual substance is indeed changed, but the essential properties, the specific and distinguishing qualities, remain. The same vital principle animates it in every state; when it sprang up in the germ of the parent seed; when it became naked, dry grain; when it lay buried under the clod; when it mouldered away and died, and when it started up again in all the vigour and freshness of a new life. Doth not man, in like manner, in his body, in his mind, in his condition, undergo revolutions equally obvious, equally impressive, and yet continue always the same? He possesses life and motion long before he begins to breathe; he lives, moves, and breathes, long before he begins to

reflect and reason. The dawnings of his reason are not greatly superior to the instincts of some of the brute creation. Arrived, at length, at fulness of stature and of understanding, his faculties, like the tide at full, are instantly on the decline. Accident destroys them, vice deranges, disease impairs, age wastes them. All the while it was one and the same being who struggled in the womb, who crawled in infancy, who tottered in childhood, who flew on the wings of the wind in youth, who stately walked in the majesty of manhood, who again stooped, bended, tottered, crept under the pressure of old-age, who sunk in death. It was the self-same individual who now blazed in all the lustre of talents, station, and success, who strutted the envy and wonder of mankind, and who now moped and blinked in premature second childishness, the pity and scorn of the world. Explain to me wherein consisted the sameness which ran through all the successive changes of a short and transitory life of threescore years and ten, and you will teach yourself to conceive what it is that constitutes the identity of that which was sown "a natural body," and which shall be raised "a spiritual body."

Instead of vainly attempting to account for the *sameness*, is it not rather the part of wisdom to contemplate, and endeavour to improve, the *difference* of the one from the other, as it stands displayed in the person of Christ the first-fruits, on the hallowed page of inspiration? The temple of

his body was both before and after his passion free from stain and blemish: but every other human frame has in it radical pollution and corruption. It is *earthly*, a mass of clay, taken from the earth, dependant upon it, chained down to it, and ready to be swallowed up of it again. It *shall be heavenly*, spiritual, impassive; endowed with the capacity of moving with the expedition of thought, the celestial vehicle of an immortal spirit, adapted to the vigour and activity of that spirit, subservient to its will, on the wing at pleasure up to its native seat, with the velocity of lightning in the east, at the west, according as the command of the Most High, or the desire of surveying his ways and his works, may determine the choice. Roused by that voice which awakens the dead, behold the human body arrayed in light; it attempts a region, it mingles with elements untried before; it spurns the tomb, it mounts on high, it springs up "to meet "the Lord in the air," it mixes with angels, it checks the aspiring flight, and presents the first-fruits of eternal bliss before the throne, it joins with adoration, love, and joy in the song of the Lamb: "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to "God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and "tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made "us unto our God kings and priests: worthy is the "Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, "and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, "and blessing:" "Blessing, and honour, and "glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon

"the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and "ever."

It is now a *vile* body; composed of gross elements, subsisting on gross aliment, subjected to the same laws which govern the beasts that perish. It may be rendered loathsome by sloth, by infirmity, by disease, by vice, by death. The loveliest form is in one hour so altered, so disfigured, that we are obliged to turn from it with horror and aversion. Abraham must hasten to bury his Sarah out of his sight. Remove that transparent veil of skin which the hand of nature has so curiously spread over the sinews and the flesh, and what a frightful spectre instantly appears! Imagination shrinks from the hideous apparition. It shall rise a *glorious* body, composed of the purer elements which fly upward, living on incorruptible food, a pellucid wall of fire through which every emotion of the soul is distinctly visible, but which no sword of the adversary can penetrate, unsusceptible of wound, unsusceptible of depression, of weariness, of pain, of decay. In this world of woe the body has a glory not belonging to it, a glory that is its disgrace, its misery; the unnatural, ruinous glory of holding the immortal spirit in thraldom, of leading its sovereign captive at its will, of bending the heaven-born mind to the ignominious drudgery of the flesh. In the world of bliss, the real order of nature shall be restored, the spirit shall resume its just empire, the body shall be invested with its proper glory, shall descend into its subordinate station; shall feel its

highest gratification in becoming the ministering servant of intelligence, of rectitude, of benignity.

That we may not seem all this while to have been retailing a fond man's dream, we recur to the history of the wonderful changes which the bodies of some men have already undergone, and from which we may conclude what future changes, through the almighty power of God, the human frame is capable of undergoing. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not "found, because God had translated him:" his body, without being resolved into its principles, without tasting death, was quickened into newness of life, and entered into the kingdom of heaven without passing through the grave. Moses subsisted for forty days together in the mount with God, and neither did eat nor drink. On his descent, the skin of his face shone, so as to dazzle the eyes of the beholder, and to render the interposition of a veil necessary. At the age of one hundred and twenty years, "his eye was not dim, nor his "natural force abated." After a lapse of fifteen centuries he revisited our earth in a glorious form, to do homage on the mount of transfiguration. Elijah undismayed mounts on fiery wheels to meet his God. His body, in an instant of time, acquires the power of resisting, of repelling the flame, or becomes assimilated to it, and burns unconsumed. The three children of the captivity fall down bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, but arise and walk through the flames uninjured. Paul is

"caught up to the third heaven," carried out of himself, transported into Paradise, and made to hear "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for "a man to utter."

But even those illustrious instances "have no "glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth." The glory to be conferred on every believer's vile body is, that it "shall be fashioned like unto his glorious "body, according to the working whereby he is "able even to subdue all things unto himself." Let us, therefore, take our ideas of the future "ex-"ceeding and eternal weight of glory," from what we know it was in him. What must have been the majesty of his person, and the dignity of his deportment, when he expelled the profaners of the temple, and they answered him never a word? With what energy and eloquence must he have expressed himself, when a multitude under the influence of violent prejudice against him, overcome by force of truth, exclaimed, "Never man spake like this man." Behold him in the midst of the sea; the yielding waves become a pavement of adamant under his feet. He speaks the word, and the wind ceases to rage, and the tempest subsides into a calm. Moses endured, supported, a fast of forty days and forty nights in communion with God; Jesus underwent a similar period of abstinence in the wilderness, being tempted of the devil. Mark that band of ruffians, assembled to apprehend him in the garden: they are lost to decency, lost to shame; they are ready to rush upon their prey: He arrays himself in mild-

ness, he simply demands, "Whom seek ye?" They instantly feel how awful goodness is, they shrink from the lustre of his eye. When with native, irresistible majesty he meets the inquiry, "I am "he," they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Such was the glory of that sacred body while as yet it had not invested itself with immortality; while as yet it was liable to pain, and sorrow, and death. But he displayed an anticipated view, even in a state of humiliation, of that splendour which he could assume and lay down at pleasure. On Tabor his whole form was altered; "his face did "shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the "light." This however was to undergo an eclipse. The Scripture must be fulfilled which saith, "His "visage was so marred more than any man, and his "form more than the sons of men." But after the resurrection from the dead, this occasional and transient glory became permanent and immutable. Behold, he bursts asunder the bars of the grave. On the third day he raises up again the temple which the hands of wicked men had destroyed. Earth and heaven feel and acknowledge a present Deity. The sons of light descend from their thrones to announce his revival, to minister at his feet. The solid globe is thrown into convulsions. "There "was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord "descended from heaven, and came and rolled back "the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His "countenance was like lightning, and his raiment "white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers

" did shake, and became as dead men." Early in the morning of the first day, he appears unto Mary, but " her eyes were holden that she should not know " him;" she supposes him to be the gardener, and in the bitterness of her soul exclaims: " Sir, if " thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou " hast laid him, and I will take him away." In the twinkling of an eye, his voice, his appearance changes, and as his lips pronounce, in their well-known accent, the name of Mary, he stands confessed to the astonished mourner as her Lord and her God.

At a more advanced period of that same day, we behold him on the road which leadeth from Jerusalem to Emmaus, on which he found two of his disciples, " talking together of all these things which " had happened." He joins himself to them, as they walked on their way in sadness. He enters into conversation with them; he expounds to them the Scriptures concerning himself. They are deeply affected, they are edified, their hearts burn within them, as he talks with them by the way, and while he opens to them the Scriptures. But all the while his body is concealed under a veil through which their eyes cannot pierce. In a moment the veil is withdrawn, as he blesses the bread, breaks it, and gives it to them; they recognize their much-lamented, greatly-beloved Master; he has resumed his form, and in an instant disappears: " Their " eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he " vanished out of their sight."

In the evening of that same memorable first day of the week, the eleven and their companions being assembled to worship, and the doors carefully shut for fear of the Jews, lo, he is in the midst of them, speaking and dispensing peace. And yet it is the same body which was crucified. It bears the print of the nails which pierced his hands and his feet. His side presents the scar of the wound inflicted by the soldier's spear. But that celestial body is no longer subject to the laws of matter. Walls of stone can neither exclude nor confine a spiritual substance. Gates and bars have no power of coercion, they are passed without being opened. Behold the first-fruits of them that sleep. Behold the proof, the pledge, the mode of the resurrection from the dead. Behold the glory which awaits all the redeemed of the Lord in that day when he maketh up his jewels.

Let us take one glimpse more of the Saviour's glorified body. See, he leads out his wondering, delighted train as far as to Bethany, "seen of above "five hundred brethren at once;" he lifts up his hands and blesses them; "and it came to pass, "while he blessed them, he was parted from them, "and carried up into heaven." Into this blessed image, Believer in Christ Jesus, thou art going to be transformed. That feeble body which sometimes can with difficulty creep to the house of prayer, to a communion table, "shall mount up with wings "as eagles," shall behold the stars under its feet, shall range through unbounded space, shall ascend into the heaven of heavens, shall associate with the

cherubim and with the seraphim, with the bodies and spirits of just men made perfect, "shall with "open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of "the Lord, be changed into the same image, from "glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Such, Christian, is the end of thy faith, the salvation of the soul, the redemption of the body from the grave. Such is the fruit of the love of God, the effect of Christ's death, the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Beloved, 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."

The apostle suggests another very interesting idea on the subject of the resurrection. The children of the resurrection shall all be glorious, but the glory of all is not the same: for as in the natural world, "there "is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, "another of fishes, and another of birds;" as there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial, each invested with its peculiar and appropriate glory and excellency, as "there is one glory of the sun, and "another glory of the moon, and another glory of "the stars; for one star differeth from another star "in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." Next to the uniformity and regularity which pervade the system of the universe, the diversity and variety of the productions of nature, and of the ways of Providence, claim our attention and excite our admiration. To this diversity the field and the forest, the fragrant earth and the starry heavens, are indebted for

all their beauty. Hence the brute creation derives utility and importance, and human society its being and comfort. Under the addition of another orb similar to that which illumines and animates the world, nature would be oppressed, and mourn, and expire. Withdraw that single little moon, that speck in creation, that mere attendant minister on our globe, and what a blank is left in the system, what myriads are rendered comfortless, how the harmony is destroyed! Countless as various are the stars in the firmament; but the subtraction, the transposition, the accelerated or retarded motion of one of the least of them would unhinge the general frame, unsettle the balance, and introduce confusion. But arranged as they are, counterpoised, sustained by the arm of Omnipotence, every one lends its portion of strength, beauty, and stability to the whole. Each orb reflects lustre on its opposite; an harmonious discord becomes productive of perfect union; every thing differs, and yet every thing agrees. In the present imperfect state of the moral world, we must not look for the harmonious variety which reigns in the kingdom of nature. Society presents not only variety of rank, of talents, of possessions, but differences of opinion, oppositions of interest, the fermentation of passions. Offences will come, peace must be disturbed, blood must flow. But in the resurrection of the dead the harmonies of grace shall correspond to those of nature, for universal nature shall be under the dominion of love. "Christ loved the Church, and "gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and

" cleanse it with the washing of water by the word:
" that he might present it to himself a glorious
" church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such
" thing; but that it should be holy and without
" blemish." From what has been said, let us,

1. Bless God for the clear light in which this all-important doctrine is placed. The evidence of it pours into the eye, rushes into the heart, every step we take. As often as we walk out into the cornfield, we have the image of death and of the resurrection from the dead. The husbandman cast in the seed that it might die, that it might see corruption. The sight of the springing grain assures us that he sowed in hope, and that his hope maketh him not ashamed. " So also is the resurrection of
" the dead." Every time the epicure sits down to a feast, he has in the dainties of his table a representation of the varieties which the day of the renovation of all things shall display. Every time that the contemplative man " considers the heavens, the
" work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars
" which he hath ordained," he perceives an image of the future glory of the redeemed. " As one star
" differeth from another star in glory, so also is the
" resurrection of the dead." The weariness and wasting of the bodily vigour throws the human frame night by night into the semblance of death, the freshness of the dawn restores it to newness of life; " so also is the resurrection of the dead,"
" them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with
" him." Why should it be thought a thing incre-

" dible with you that God should raise the dead?" Was not that stately oak once a dry acorn? Was not that gorgeous bird of a thousand radiant colours enclosed in a putrid shell? Did not that wonder of every eye, of every ear, once crawl a poor helpless reptile? How grievously do men err, " not knowing " the Scriptures and the power of God."

2. The doctrine has a happy tendency to reconcile the mind to the prospect of our own dissolution. The body, the object of so much anxiety and attention, is after all but a flimsy garment, of feeble texture, and of perishable materials. And is it indeed such a mortification to lay down an old, rusty, galling armour, and go to rest at ease, when the labours and dangers of a hard warfare are at an end? Is it so very humiliating to part with worn-out raiment, with filthy rags, to exchange them for robes of immortality? This is the prospect which the resurrection opens to the Christian's hope. This is the change which passed upon Joshua the high priest in prophetic vision, the emblem of final deliverance, of unfading glory. " Now Joshua was " clothed with filthy garments, and stood before " the angel. And he answered and spake unto " those that stood before him, saying, Take away " the filthy garments from him. And unto him he " said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass " from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of " raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre " upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his " head, and clothed him with garments. And the

"angel of the Lord stood by." These are the words which deserve to be written, to be printed in a book, to be graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever: "I know that my Redeemer "liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day "upon the earth: and though, after my skin, "worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I "see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine "eyes shall behold, and not another; though my "reins be consumed within me."

3. "I would not have you to be ignorant, bre-"thren, concerning them which are asleep, that "ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." You have been called, it may be, to bury out of your sight what was once youth and beauty, talents and virtue, wisdom and piety. But these were, on earth, necessarily blended with weakness and imperfection. That weakness and imperfection remain in the grave, never to rise again. What are the transient youth and fading beauty of this world? What are the talents and the virtues of the wisest and the best of men, compared to the celestial radiance, the immortal vigour, the unsullied purity, the sublime wisdom, of beings shining in their Redeemer's likeness! Were it in your power, could you find in your heart, to bring back a beloved child, a friend dear to you as your own soul, to a state of depression, and pain, and sorrow? No, the bitterness of death is past. The last enemy hath done his worst. They were first ready; they have reached home before us. Therefore,

4. "Be ye not slothful, but followers of them "who, through faith and patience, inherit the pro- "mises." Be constantly aiming at higher degrees of moral and intellectual excellence; at those qualities which, though of little estimation in the eyes of men, are in the sight of God of great price, and constitute the glory of the kingdom of heaven. Be silently, unostentatiously adding, "with all diligence, "to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; "and to knowledge, temperance; and to temper- "rance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and "to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly "kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, "and abound, they make you that ye shall neither "be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our "Lord Jesus Christ." "Finally, brethren, what- "soever things are true, whatsoever things are "honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever "things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, "whatsoever things are of good report; if there be "any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on "these things:" Seeing that in the resurrection, those "who sleep in the dust of the earth shall "awake,—and they that be wise shall shine as the "brightness of the firmament; and they that turn "many to righteousness as the stars for ever and

LECTURE XXI.

JOHN IV. 46—54.

So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

THE most serious businesses of human life make but a sorry figure when they come to be recorded. Interesting to the individual, and for the moment, they awaken no general concern, and become to the parties themselves, when the moment is past, "trifles "light as air." The avidity with which fresh jour-

nals are read is a perfect contrast to the indifference with which they are treated on the second or the third day. Let a man sit down to write the history of his own life; let him be the busiest and most important of personages, and what has he got to relate? A meagre account of the miles he travelled, of the bargains he drove, of the spectacles he beheld, of the viands which covered his table, and of the guests who surrounded it. Into this little measure shrink the achievements of the great, the splendour, pomp, and pride of kings, as well as the short and "simple annals of the poor." When the pageant has passed by, it is as a vision of the night, it vanishes into air, it leaves no track behind. In vain is the monumental column reared. The hand of time erases the inscription, shakes the fabric, crumbles it into dust. In vain does History promise to save from oblivion, and to confer immortality. The author, his work, his subject, the very language in which he wrote, all perish.

Nevertheless there are illustrious exceptions. There have been persons whose names are dear to every succeeding generation, and who shall be had in everlasting remembrance; who were engaged in pursuits of endless utility, and producing events which shall never spend their force. And there is a record which survives the lapse of ages, the ravages of barbarism, the revolutions of empire, and which shall outlive the dissolution of worlds. There we contemplate the deathless glory of the venerable benefactors of mankind, "being dead yet speak,"

who were and are the light of the world. All those scattered rays of light are collected into one focal point, in the person of Jesus Christ. "To him "give all the prophets witness;"—"all the promises "of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the "glory of God;"—"the nations of them which are "saved walk in his light, and the kings of the earth "do bring their glory and honour into it."

In the busiest and most active life there are long and frequent intervals of repose. Much must be allowed to human infirmity both of body and mind; the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. One life alone displays an incessant progress in doing good; no word idly spoken, no moment unprofitably spent, no step unnecessarily taken. The night itself is made a season of devotion, the hour of social refreshment becomes an occasion of communicating useful knowledge, a walk into the corn-fields or by the shore of the sea, a journey from city to city, an ascent into the mountain, all are sacred to one commanding object, the glory of God and the good of mankind, the instruction of the ignorant, the pardon of the guilty, the relief of the miserable.

The solemnities of the passover being finished, Jesus, according to the wisdom which directed all his proceedings, thought it proper to retire from Jerusalem, and to return into Galilee. The road lay through Sámaria. The inhabitants of that country, though descended from the same stock

with the Jews, and once members together with them of the commonwealth of Israel, were now cordially hated and despised by them. But they possessed the same "lively oracles of God," they looked for the same Messiah promised to their common fathers, and they gladly received the word when it came unto them. The great Prophet whom they expected takes this opportunity of paying them a visit; they acknowledge him, and believe on his name. Having continued with them two days, sowing the precious seed, expounding from Moses and all the prophets, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself, and thus extended the boundaries of the kingdom of God, he pursued his journey to Galilee, and returned "to Cana, "where he made the water wine." Beside his general and leading object, to preach the gospel of the kingdom, he might intend, by revisiting that city, to express the affection of a kind relation to the new-married pair who resided there, to strengthen their union by his benediction, by his counsel, by participating in their domestic cares and comforts, and to confirm them and the other inhabitants of the place in the faith which they had professed.

It was so ordered of Providence that at the time of his return, a distinguished family in the neighbouring town of Capernaum was visited with a sore affliction. "There was a certain nobleman, whose "son was sick at Capernaum." The word translated *nobleman* signifies c[illegible]er, one employed near

the person, or in the service of a king. Herod was but a delegated and limited sovereign: "Tetrarch of "Galilee," that is, governor, under the Roman emperor, of the fourth part of a province. But he was permitted to assume the title and state of king, because it swelled the pride of the imperial despot to lord it over many subordinate and dependant thrones. Capernaum being within the limits of Herod's government, he no doubt occasionally resided in that city, and there probably at this time held his court; and the nobleman in question might either officially or from affection be in attendance upon his master. But the vicinity of a court, and the rank of nobility, are no security against the inroads of disease and death, for they too are tainted with sin. The danger of losing a child excites a thousand anxieties in the bosom of a parent, whatever be the station or condition. There are innumerable circumstances which level all distinctions. The honourable feelings of humanity are of this description, parental and filial affection, with the kindred charities of the human heart, sympathy with the distressed, and a desire to assist and relieve them; these constitute a dignity, a nobility, which God alone can bestow, and which the air of a court tends rather to blight than to cherish. This good man, however, has not sunk the father in the courtier. Anxiety about the life of his child suspends the pride of rank, the duties of office, the etiquette of nobility. "When he heard that Jesus was come "out of Judea into Galilee he went unto him, and

" besought him that he would come down and heal " his son: for he was at the point of death."

" A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." The fame of Jesus was now spread over the whole land. When he came back from Jerusalem to Galilee, " the Galileans received him, having seen all " the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: " for they also went unto the feast." The report which they made at home, of his mighty works, as well as of his condescension and benevolence, had reached the ears of the great, and excited attention. We fondly listen to what promises ease; we grasp the very shadows of probability, and frequently make experiments with little hope of success. All that medical skill could effect had, in this case, undoubtedly been attempted, but attempted in vain. It is one, and not the least of the evils attendant on poverty, to know of a remedy without the means of procuring it. The rich have at least this consolation in extremity, that every thing was done which influence could command, or money purchase. But the nobleman of Capernaum is not to be taxed with credulity for believing the report concerning Christ, or for building upon it the hope of a cure which medicine had been unable to effect. Instead of sending for him, as in the case of ordinary physicians, " he went to him." The distance between Capernaum and Cana was about a day's journey, as we may gather from verse 52. He was met on his way homeward, rejoicing in the belief of the power and grace of Christ the [illegible] after he had received

the assurance: "Yesterday," said the servants, "at "the seventh hour, the fever left him." Here then we have nobility descending from its stateliness, waving ceremony, assuming the form of a supplicant. Was it thereby degraded? No: to follow the honest impulse of nature, to submit to the obligations of propriety and decorum, to employ fair means to obtain a desirable end, is no degradation, even to a prince. Vice alone degrades, and exposes a man to shame, and lowers his dignity in the eyes of God, and of his fellow creatures.

Calamity brings down the loftiness of the human spirit. We have a noted instance of this in the history of Ben-hadad the king of Syria. In the pride of his heart, in girding on his harness, in the confidence of superiority, he sends this insulting message to the king of Israel: "Thus saith Ben-"hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives "also and thy children, even the goodliest, are "mine." Unmollified by submission, he assumes a still haughtier tone, and proceeds to take by violence what had been quietly yielded to him. But brought to himself by a total defeat of his formidable army, he lowers his tone and humbles himself to the man whom he had insulted: servants with sackcloth girded on their loins, and ropes upon their heads, "came to the king of Israel, and "said, Thy *servant* Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, "let me live," a confirmation of the truth of the wise man's observation: "Pride goeth before de-"struction: and an haghty spirit before a fall."

"and thrust my hand into his side, I will not "believe." The nobleman of Capernaum had probably expressed himself in similar terms, and thereby incurred this reproof of his incredulity, which seemed to convey a denial of his suit.

Parental affection perseveres in following up his request. He tacitly admits the justice of Christ's censure, but waves discussion, and in the anguish of his soul renews his supplication to him, to whom misery never applied in vain: "Sir, come down "ere my child die." Where the heart is deeply interested the "words are few," but O how forcible! The feelings of a parent are seen with approbation by the friend of mankind, who knows what is in man, and to whom nothing that affects humanity can be a matter of indifference. "Jesus saith unto "him, Go thy way; thy son liveth." That word, that one little word, has in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, reached Capernaum, has expelled a mortal distemper, has relieved a wretched father from a pressure under which he was sinking, and has inspired him with a confidence never more to be shaken. He receives his son as one alive from the dead; he learns to correct his false ideas of the power of Christ, and to submit implicitly to his decisions. "And the man believed the word that "Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way."

The sequel unfolds an amiable, interesting, and instructive view of domestic life. When the master left his home to go in quest of relief to his child, the servants of the family, some of them actually

slaves, entering into their lord's feelings, tend the sick bed of the young man with all the attention and solicitude of humble friends, not with the eye-service of mercenary or compelled drudges. They observe every symptom of the disorder, they watch over every motion of the patient, they outrun his wants and wishes, they tremble for the issue, they mark with transport the moment of convalescence, and, to spare the tender parent every unnecessary pang of painful apprehension, instead of waiting for his return, they send off a deputation of their number, the instant that the fever came to a crisis, to announce the welcome tidings to their beloved master. What honour does this reflect on all the parties! Human life consists of a reciprocation of kind affections, expressions, and actions, or their contraries. In vain does the unfeeling, insolent, tyrannical despot expect dutiful, cheerful, cordial attachment and submission from domestics and dependants. By failure in his own duty, he has set them the example of harshness, want of sympathy, and disrespect. The inferior almost always takes the tone from his superior. If you see obsequious, faithful, diligent servants, or attentive, dutiful, affectionate children, rest assured that the master and mistress of the family, that the parents of the children, are wise, gentle, and good. Most families in the metropolis, especially those of high rank, are uncomfortable, because mutual attachment subsists not between the rulers and the ruled.

It is a mere intercourse of accommodation and interest, in which neither the heart nor conscience hath any part. The paltry consideration of a month's wages settles the account on either side. In the remoter parts of the kingdom, the relation of master and servant is a tacit compact of unlimited duration. The servant is adopted into the family, and looks up to the heads of it with filial respect, gratitude, and confidence. No separate interest, no divided or contradictory views and pursuits, disturb domestic tranquillity. The family of this nobleman was not far from the kingdom of God, for the spirit of love was its governing principle, and God is love. "And as he was now going down his servants met "him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then "inquired he of them the hour when he began to "amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the "seventh hour the fever left him."

One of our highest mental pleasures consists in comparing object with object, in order to discover coincidence, similitude, difference, or contrast. This pleasure must have been enjoyed in singular purity on this joyful occasion. The distance of the two cities was well known. It employed a whole day, and the exertions of a man of rank and fortune, furnished with all the means of expeditious travelling, and under the stimulus of paternal affection, to go from Capernaum to Cana. How pleasant was it to compare that distance, and the usual rate of journeying, with the inconceivably rapid transition of the

word of Christ! What a contrast! Here then was a demonstration of the controlling power of Christ over space; it was not needful that he should go up or come down, that he should be on the same spot with the object of his beneficence, for the purpose of effecting a cure. The divine attribute of omnipresence was accordingly displayed. The measurements of time are equally well-known and understood; and there was a peculiarly powerful motive on both sides to mark the precise moment. Here an opportunity was afforded of instituting a second comparison, and lo, what a coincidence between the time of the father's observation and that of the servants, that is, when Jesus spake the word to the one, and when the others perceived a sensible change to the better, in their young master's health! If ever the relation of cause and effect existed, it was in this case. And here was a display of another divine attribute, time as well as space subdued to the will of him who filleth all space; whose existence was before time began to flow, and runneth through the whole extent of its duration; with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years; who measureth the lapse of moments and of ages by a standard unalterable as the ordinances of Heaven, and by a standard still more intelligible, sensible, interesting, and endearing, uninterrupted, unwearied acts of loving-kindness and tender mercy.

It would be ungenerous and unjust to ascribe the nobleman's minuteness of inquiry to doubt, or slow-

ness of belief, for the history expressly saith, "The "man believed the word that Jesus had spoken "unto him, and went his way," confiding entirely in the truth and faithfulness of that word, long before the evidence of it met him on the road. But that Jesus in whom he trusted graciously gave him this confirmation of his faith, that he might feel the solidity of the rock on which all his hope rested. Faith is faith, though but as a grain of mustard-seed; for that grain contains an immortal germ, pregnant with all the beauty and richness of a future harvest. The apostles themselves were sometimes weak, at other times strong in the faith: sensible of this they prayed unto the Lord that he would "increase" it. The principle is sound, it is vital: it may lie dormant, it may suffer depression, but it cannot expire. "So the father knew that it was at the same hour in "the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; "and himself believed, and his whole house."

The miracles of Christ always look farther than to their immediate object. Application is made for the removal of a bodily infirmity; the diseases of the mind are at the same time reached by the healing power of the Redeemer, and the spectators are made sensible of a divine energy. The blind man comes in hope of having his sight restored, he goes away seeing, and with the unspeakably greater blessing, the eyes of his understanding are opened. Behold that helpless paralytic, "borne *of* four," stretched motionless on his couch. At the word of Christ he recovers strength, arises, takes up his bed,

goes forth before them all, and departs to his house, not only with a body every whit whole, but with a soul relieved from the dreadful pressure of the guilt of sin: "Jesus said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, "thy sins be forgiven thee." Mark these ten lepers, outcasts from society, loathsome to themselves, an abomination to others, labouring under a malady which medicine could not reach; they stand afar off, they lift up their voices, they cry for mercy. As they went, at the command of Christ, to show themselves to the priests, they were cleansed. To nine of the ten it proved a mere temporary relief, a corporal purgation; the fatal leprosy of sin remained to defile the conscience. To the tenth, a stranger, a Samaritan, it proved at once the cure of bodily disease and of mental pollution: "And one of them, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and "with a loud voice glorified God; and fell down "on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and "he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the "nine? There are not found that return to give "glory to God, save this stranger. And he said "unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made "thee whole."

Illustrious to the same purpose is the history of the miracle under review. The nearer and more immediate object is a sick child at Capernaum, restored instantaneously from threatening indisposition to perfect soundness. But consider how many momentous circumstances are involved in that one

object. The father was a person of the very first distinction, connected with the higher powers of this world, at the head of a numerous and well-ordered household, a man of urbanity, understanding, and address. Converted himself to the faith of the Gospel, behold him disposed to employ the whole weight of his influence, of his authority, of his example, in promoting the cause which he himself had from conviction embraced. Incalculable is the effect which one man of character, talents, and virtue may produce in a court, a city, a kingdom, a world. No one can be solitarily either good or wicked. The contagion whether of virtue or vice is quickly caught and communicated, with this difference, that in the one case there is a repulsive faculty that guards the system against the admission of the gracious principle, and which therefore needs to be corrected, whereas in the other there is a predisposition to absorb the poison, which it requires no common skill and attention to prevent. Whatever might be the more remote or more extensive influence of this good man's faith and piety, the Evangelist informs us that it embraced at least the whole of his own family: "and himself believed, "and his whole house." Here was another province, by a strong hand rent from the empire of Satan, and added to the kingdom of the Messiah; "for he must "reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

We conclude with a few practical reflections suggested by this portion of our blessed Lord's history.

1. Events, to our apprehension, casual, ordinary,

merely things of course, are, in the purpose of the Eternal Mind, order, connexion, mutual dependance. Our eyes are too feeble to discern how delicately fine the hinges are on which the mighty machinery of heaven moves. The enterprises of man exhibit the noise and bustle of preparation, and violence of exertion, and lo, they come to nothing; they commence in a blaze, and presently issue in smoke. The designs of the Most High have, from imperceptible beginnings, made a silent, unnoticed progress, and have acquired strength irresistible before attention was excited; they issue from a dark cloud, and advance with growing lustre unto the perfect day. What more common than sickness in a numerous family? Uniform health, not occasional disease, is the wonder. The malady of a beloved child spreads a sable veil over an honourable house; it threatens to imbitter the future days of survivors: the hand of death is lifted up to strike the decisive blow. It is a critical moment. The Lord gives the word. The child lives, the parent believes, the whole house is converted unto the Lord; an impression favourable to Christianity is made on the public mind, the dominion of grace is extended, and the kingdom of glory opens to view. From such a hidden source, inaccessible as that of the Nile, issues the majestic river, destined to adorn and fertilize distant regions and the nations which inhabit them. This day salvation came to the house of that nobleman. It wore a lowering aspect, but it brightened as it went.

2. Mark the impartial regards of the great Lord of all to his creatures of every order and condition. With some men there is a strong prejudice in favour of nobility and affluence, as if they implied greatness, generosity, capacity. Others are actuated by a prejudice equally violent and unreasonable against them. Wisdom says, Look to the man and not to his circumstances. Goodness is the object of commendation and esteem, whether in the high or the low, the rich or the poor; and vice is odious whatever be the condition of life. A righteous judge considereth the cause, not the rank and character, of the parties. And lest there should be an improper bias to the side of poverty, as there sometimes is to the side of wealth, the law very wisely throws in this caution: "Neither shalt thou coun-"tenance a poor man in his cause." Our Lord sets the example of this impartiality. Nobility could be no recommendation to his favour, neither was it any bar in the way. The distress, the importunity, the parental affection of the man moved his compassion, the current of which could not be impeded by the consideration of his being a courtier. It is a melancholy reflection, "that not many wise men "after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, "are called;" but it is pleasing to reflect that the rule is not absolute and universal. The history of the Christian church, and the state of the world at this day, exhibit many glorious instances of the triumph of divine grace over the fascination of high rank, the deceitfulness of riches, and the pride of

life. As such persons had more to combat and to overcome than others, the combat and the conquest redound the more to the glory of God, in whose strength they overcome.

3. We have before us an example of high moral virtue, existing without a principle of saving faith. This nobleman adorned his exalted station by qualities estimable in whatever rank. He ruled well his own house. He was an affectionate parent, and a kind master. And when we behold a man fulfilling the duties of one relation reputably to himself and usefully to others, we are bound in charity to believe, that he acts worthily in the other relations of life. When an instance of this kind presents itself, it excites regret that such a one, though "not far from the kingdom of God," should nevertheless come short. It is religion that confers dignity on high birth, and that gives energy to virtue. If then this man were respectable and exemplary by his virtuous conduct, how much more so is he, when faith is added to virtue, now that a divine principle sanctifies, animates, ennobles every action, and renders ordinary employments not only a reasonable but a religious service. Morality, then, may exist without religion, but there can be no religion without morality. "Faith, if it hath not works, is "dead, being alone;" "for as the body without "the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead "also." If in his mere civil and moral capacity the nobleman of Capernaum administered his affairs so

wisely and so well, what must have been the ardour of natural affection, his discretion in the management of his household, the propriety of his personal deportment, now that his understanding is illuminated, and his heart warmed, and the path of his feet guided, by the sacred flame of religion! now that "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, "had appeared to him, teaching" him, as it does all its subjects, "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."

4. Do we feel parental solicitude about the bodily health, and the mental improvement, and the worldly prosperity of our children? What then ought to be the fervour of our spirits at a throne of grace, to obtain for them an interest in the favour of God, the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation, the spirit of sanctification, a right to an "inheri-"tance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth "not away?" From their relation to us they derive pollution, guilt, condemnation, and death: and shall we not be stimulated to repair the injury we have done them; and by nurture, by example, by prayer and supplication, become the instruments of making them "partakers of the divine nature," and of raising them to the rank of "heirs of God,

" and joint heirs with Christ." Woe unto them, and unto us, unless they are adopted into a nobler family, and exalted to higher privileges, than those to which the birth of nature entitles them; and unless they " receive the Spirit of adoption, where- " by they may cry, Abba, Father." What will it be to present ourselves, at length, and our offspring, whether after the flesh, or after the spirit, or both in one, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, saying, " Behold, I, and the children which God " hath given me!" Let this prospect direct our wishes, dictate our prayers, animate our exertions, till, with Israel, we have power with God and with men, and prevail.

5. Finally, In the presence of that God with whom we have to do, and of Jesus, " who is God " over all, and blessed for ever," all space shrinks into a span, all duration into a moment. " Am I a " God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar " off? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the " Lord?" Realize that awful omnipresence as a guard upon the heart, upon the tongue, upon the life; as a ground of hope and a source of joy in every dark and trying hour. " God is a very pre- " sent help in trouble." " Though I walk through " the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no " evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff " they comfort me." He is faithful who hath promised, to his Israel whom he hath created, whom he hath formed, whom he hath redeemed, whom he hath called by name, " When thou passest

" through the waters, I will be with thee; and " through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; " when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt " not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon " thee." Are " a thousand years in his sight but " as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in " the night? And do " we spend our years as a " tale that is told ?" " See then that ye walk cir- " cumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming " the time, because the days are evil." There is no commodity which men trifle with so sadly, when they have it at command, as time; and no one the loss of which they so bitterly deplore, when it is in their power no longer. Account every instant critical and decisive, for undoubtedly many are so. Remember that you are the disciples of him who saith of himself; " I must work the work " of him that sent me while it is day: the night " cometh, when no man can work."

LECTURE XXII.

MATTHEW VIII. 5—12, *and LUKE VII.* 1—10.

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it he marvelled, and said unto them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.—Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them. And when he

was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

THE various orders of men which exist in society are a demonstration that society is in a very imperfect and corrupt state. Restore everlasting and universal peace to a troubled world, and the profession of a soldier is at an end. There were then no "battle of the warrior with confused noise, and "garments rolled in blood." While injustice, violence, and cruelty, are in the world, there must be tribunals, and prisons, and scaffolds. The ravages of disease, and the thousand accidents to which human life is exposed, render necessary the interposition of the healing art. When the time of the restitution of all things shall come, the office of public instructor shall cease. "They shall not teach "every man his neighbour, and every man his bro-"ther, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know "me, from the least to the greatest." To this blessed consummation we are encouraged to look forward, when the spirit of love shall absorb the

flame of discord, and make the sword drop from the hand of the man of war; when the courts shall be shut, and the prison-doors thrown open, because fraud and violence are no more; when, in the beautifully figurative language of the prophet, "The "wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leo- "pard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, "and the young lion, and the fatling together, and "a little child shall lead them. And the cow and "the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie "down together: and the lion shall eat straw like "the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the "hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put "his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not "hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the "earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, "as the waters cover the sea."

Certain professions, it has been alleged, have in their very nature a corruptive quality. That of the military man is supposed to be of this number. The vulgar associate with it the ideas of insolence, ferocity, licentiousness, and of other hateful qualities. Like every other general censure, this too must be taken with many grains of allowance, and candour must admit that there are excellent men of every profession; and, in the case of illustrious exceptions from the generality of the stigmatized orders, higher praise is undoubtedly due to those who have the courage to resist, and strength to overcome, the temptations to which their manner of life, and the very means of earning their sub-

sistence expose them, than to persons who had no such difficulties to encounter. Of this description are the nobleman and the Roman centurion of Capernaum. The history of the former, as far as connected with that of our blessed Lord, was the subject of the last lecture, that of the latter is now to be the ground of our meditation. The two personages present a striking resemblance to each other, in their personal character, in their condition of life, in the circumstances which brought them acquainted with the Saviour of the world. They dwelt in the same city, perhaps in habits of intimacy, for the good naturally attract and associate with the good; the one a courtier, the other an officer of very considerable rank; both, men of humanity, of gentle manners, of amiable, of noble deportment; the one a suppliant in behalf of a darling child, labouring under an attack of the fever, the other in behalf of a favourite servant, attacked by a violent paralytic affection; both successful in their application, and both deeply impressed with the character of their great Benefactor. With so many marks of resemblance the two little histories display a lovely, affecting, and instructive variety, tending to unfold the various shades of the human mind, in the changing scenes of human life, and equally tending to illustrate the grace and power of Christ, ever ready to meet every case, adapted alike to the relief of the bodies and of the souls of men.

The person who applied to Jesus Christ on this occasion was a centurion, that is, as the word im-

ports, an officer in the Roman army who had a hundred men under his command. It corresponded nearly to the rank of captain in our military establishment. Judea was at this time a conquered province, in subjection to the authority of a Roman governor, and kept in awe by Roman soldiery. The Jews vainly boasted that they were "Abraham's "seed, and were never in bondage to any man:" whereas it was notorious to the whole world that from the days of Egyptian bondage, down to the despotism of Tiberius Cæsar, their intervals of liberty had been few, transient, and interrupted; and at that very moment they were murmuring under the pressure of a galling yoke, imposed on their neck, and kept there, by the strong hand of power; and Jesus Christ convicts them of being in subjection to a yoke still more galling and disgraceful: "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." But such are the self-delusions which men practise. Every Roman soldier who was seen, every Roman coin that circulated through the land, demonstrated that they were not a free people. Indeed they were not worthy to be so, for they never enjoyed liberty without abusing it. Happy was it for the district of Capernaum to be under a government so mild and moderate as that of this good centurion.

The two evangelists who have recorded this fact differ in some circumstances of their narration. In reading St. Matthew's account we are led to suppose that the centurion made personal application to Christ, for the cure of his servant, whereas in the

more circumstantial account of the transaction, transmitted to us by St. Luke, we find that the application was made, in the first instance, through the medium of "the elders of the Jews." But there is no real difference between the two historians. It was a maxim among the Jews, "a man's proxy "is the man himself," and it is still a rule among civilians, "What we do by another we are ad-"judged to have done ourselves." In a process of law, a party is said to come into court, and to have made such a representation, though he appeared only by his counsel or solicitor. Thus Jethro came to Moses first by a messenger, with these words in his mouth; "I thy father-in-law Jethro am come "unto thee, and thy wife, and her two children." On receiving this message, Moses went out to enjoy a personal interview with his family. Thus Solomon sent ambassadors to Hiram, who were to address him not in the plural number, but in the first person singular, as if Solomon himself had spoken the words face to face; "Behold, I purpose to build "an house unto the name of the Lord my God;" and Hiram fairly considers himself as "hearing the "words of Solomon." Thus the two sons of Zebedee came to Christ, with a petition, through the medium of their mother; and thus John Baptist, now shut up in a prison, addressed himself to Jesus by two of his disciples, saying, "Art thou he that "should come, or do we look for another." Matthew, in conformity to this mode of speech and thought, represents the centurion as coming in per-

son to Christ, though at first, through modesty and humility, he thought proper to employ the intercession of others.

We have here a singularly pleasant opening into a good mind. This man was accustomed to command, not to supplicate, to dictate, not to bend. But such is his veneration for the person and character of Christ, that he is awed at the thought of appearing in his presence; instead of resorting to the exercise of authority, he has recourse to entreaty, and hopes from the interposition of men better than himself what he dared not to ask on his own account. Does this bring his courage under suspicion? Is it likely that such a man would turn his back in the day of battle? No, surely. It is the coward that struts, and boasts, and threatens; the truly brave are modest, gentle, and unassuming; they speak by their actions, not by high swelling words of vanity. And yet this centurion had more than one plea of merit to advance. He had borne his faculties most meekly in his great office. He had not oppressed, he had not been guilty of extortion; and even this negative virtue merits some degree of commendation. On the contrary he cherished, encouraged, protected, the people whom he was sent to rule. Instead of restricting their religious liberty, or permitting their worship to be disturbed, he liberally contributed toward the maintenance of public worship, and most probably assisted at it. In a word, he was a public blessing. Men generally set the full value on the good actions which they

perform, and are frequently at pains to make an ostentatious display of them. He puts in no claim, exacts no acknowledgment, expects no return. The elders of the Jews feel themselves so much the more called upon to celebrate his good qualities, and to enumerate his benefits. "They came to Jesus, "and besought him instantly, saying, that he was "worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth "our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." If indeed he had become a proselyte to the Jewish religion, that is, a worshipper of the one living and true God, as from the whole history taken together there is little reason to doubt, a still higher degree of respectability attaches to his character. What obstacles had he not to surmount, what prejudices to overcome! The prejudice of education in the religion of polytheism, or a plurality of Gods; the prejudice of profession, which sometimes makes it a point of honour to be of no religion, sometimes to adhere to the first adopted: political prejudice, which would have tied him down to the religion of the imperial court, the source of all civil and military preferment: and more than all these, he had to encounter the formidable laugh of the world, the raillery of his fellow officers, the sneer of witlings. The courage that could meet and overcome such discouragements is indeed the courage of a hero.

It is now time to inquire into the object of this circuitous expostulation. What point is to be carried? what interest is at stake to warrant such earnestness and importunity? a servant sick of the

palsy, and ready to die. The word translated *servant*, through the whole of St. Matthew's narration, signifies *boy*, a term of ambiguous meaning, being employed to denote either *child* or *servant*, and it determines the age only, not the quality of the patient. But the Greek word used by St. Luke, except in one clause, is of unequivocal import, and indeed reduces the young man's condition lower than that of servant, for it means *slave*, and expresses the lowest condition of human wretchedness. This young person might have been either a prisoner of war, or purchased with money; and slaves of both descriptions were frequently endowed with rare accomplishments. As Providence permitted the boy to sink into this degraded state, it was some compensation, that he fell into the hands of a kind and affectionate master, a man of principle, a man of humanity. Where is now the ferociousness, the insensibility, the indifference of the soldier? All melts into sympathy with distress, and into a sense of mutual obligation. Thus it is that the God who made us, who "knoweth our frame, and who re-"membereth that we are dust," balances evil with good, and either finds a way to escape, or administers strength to support the calamity. Thus necessary to each other are the members in both the social and the natural body. "If the foot shall say, Be-"cause I am not the hand, I am not of the body; "is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear "shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of

"the body; is it therefore not of the body?" And "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need "of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no "need of you."

The case of the little slave was dangerous if not desperate. The palsy is a partial death of the limbs affected. Here it was a privation of motion, while acute sensibility remained, he was "grievously "tormented;" and this combination of pain and interrupted circulation threatened approaching dissolution. But the maxim is excellent both in medicine and in morals. "While there is life there "is hope," and religion advances a step farther, and says, "Even in death there is hope." Many a promising case has been lost through impatience and despair. Till Providence has decided, man is bound to persevere in the use of means. It is evident that the centurion expected every thing from the sovereign power, and not from the personal presence of Christ; and herein his faith soared much higher than that of the nobleman, who had no idea of a cure effected at a distance from the object. But how shall we account for the cold, repulsive reception given to the personal solicitation of the nobleman; "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not "believe:" and for the frank and cheerful compliance with the centurion's message, "I will come "and heal him?" Jesus will have his sovereignty felt and acknowledged in all things. Humility and self-abasement are the most powerful claims of a

suppliant, and the sublimer faith has the superior power with God and prevails.

Instead of being transported with joy at the thought of this proffered visit, the centurion shrinks from the approach of Christ. A sense of guilt and unworthiness stares him in the face. The presence of a personage so pure, so exalted, he feels himself unable to support, and deputes other friends to meet Jesus, to renew his suit, but to deprecate the degradation of his dignified character, by conversing with one so mean as himself, and by coming under a roof so unworthy to receive such a guest. Finding however that Jesus drew nigher and nigher, he at length assumes resolution, and goes forth himself to meet him, with a heart overwhelmed, overflowing, and a mouth filled with arguments. Never did imagination conceive, never did heart feel, never did tongue express a strain of reasoning more forcible, more affecting, more sublime. "The cen- "turion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy "that thou shouldest come under my roof: but "speak the word only, and my servant shall be "healed. For I am a man under authority, having "soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and "he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; "and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The knowledge which he had of his own profession is the foundation of his argument. In a military establishment, all must be cheerful subordination and prompt obedience. He himself was at once

under authority, and in authority. He had not the idea of disputing the commands of his superior, and he knew that his word, that his nod, was a law to his inferiors. Under this notion of military discipline he contemplates the supreme authority of Christ as extending to all persons, elements, and events. His own orders were obeyed, though his person were at a distance and unseen. What then should retard the execution of a will which all the powers of nature are unable to resist? "Speak the "word only, and my servant shall be healed." "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled," not as an ordinary man wonders at something new, striking, and uncommon. He knew what was in man. The marvellous faith which he graciously pleased to approve and to reward was the operation of his own Spirit; but he holds it up as a matter of wonder to all who were present, and as a subject of reproof to those of the house of Israel, who, with all their superior advantages, possessing as they did, "the "adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and "the giving of the law, and the service of God, "and the promises; and of whom, as concerning "the flesh, Christ came;" nevertheless received their promised, their expected Messiah coldly, doubtedly, reluctantly: and at length utterly rejected him, and put him to death. This leads our blessed Lord to unfold the approaching admission of the gentile nations into the church of God, by believing and embracing his Gospel, and the rejection of the pos-

terity of Abraham after the flesh, because of their unbelief; "And I say unto you, that many shall "come from the east, and west, and shall sit down "with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the "kingdom of heaven: but the children of the king-"dom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus delivers this all-important doctrine under the solemnity of an "I say unto you;" mark me well; "my "words are true and faithful, they are serious and "interesting, they concern every one among you, "they shall all have their accomplishment." The assembly to whom this was addressed, consisted of a great variety of persons. It was composed of the elders of the Jews, who had come to intercede in behalf of their benefactor, and who were waiting the issue; of the centurion himself, originally a Gentile and an idolater: of the friends whom he had dispatched to meet Jesus, who were likewise, in all probability, Roman soldiers, and of course heathens and idolaters; and of a mixed multitude who followed Christ wherever he went. The highest privilege which proselyted Gentiles could obtain from Jewish bigotry was permission to worship the true God in the outer court of the temple, which was appropriated to them, and called by their name. To them how grateful must have been the intimation of being made partakers of all the privileges of the sons of God! of rising to their full and equal rank in the great family of the common Father of all, of

being admitted into the society, and of enjoying the felicity, of the venerable founders of the Jewish church, a branch only of "the general assembly "and church of the first-born, which are written "in heaven!" The like precious faith which exalted the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to a place in the kingdom of God, was to be diffused in every direction, and to raise men "of all nations, "and kindreds, and people, and tongues," to the "inheritance of a kingdom prepared," for all the faithful, "from the foundation of the world." The Jews, on the other hand, valued themselves on their exclusive privileges. They scorned to have any dealings with even their neighbours and brethren the Samaritans. They held themselves contaminated by coming into contact with the impure heathen; they appropriated to themselves a right to the favour of God. To persons labouring under such prejudices, which had been instilled into them with their mother's milk, what an awful denunciation was it, that not only should the Gentile nations be received within the pale of the church, but received to their own exclusion? "Behold," exclaims the apostle, in contemplating this very object, "Behold the "goodness and severity of God."—"Of a truth we "perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh "righteousness, is accepted with him." But the singular imagery, and the very language by which this view of the Redeemer's kingdom is conveyed,

deserve a particular consideration. May they be deeply impressed upon our hearts and minds.

"*Many* shall come," says Christ, as he surveyed the gradual progress, and the unlimited extent, of his empire. The narrow spirit of Judaism is not peculiar to that people. It seems to be a general character of human nature. Abraham and Lot were under the necessity of separating, because "the land was not able to bear them, that they "might dwell together." How often has a well of water kindled a flame among brethren! Whence come pride and envy? whence come fraud and cunning? whence come wars and fightings? whence come monopolies and exclusions, but from the selfishness of an individual, or of a few, to appropriate to themselves what belongs to many? Were the operation of this spirit confined to the things of time, it might be accounted for. The desires of the human mind are unbounded, and the objects of pursuit are few and small. What another acquires seems to be so much taken away from me. Though in truth there is provision sufficiently ample for all; bread enough and to spare, room enough and to spare, were the real wants and the reasonable wishes of nature to settle the distribution. But that the kingdom of heaven should be subjected to a monopoly; that its keys should be seized by the bold hand of an usurping individual or of an arrogant party, would exceed belief, did not the history even of the Christian church establish the fact. The disciples of Christ themselves brought into his school all

the contractions of their Jewish education. Even the mild and affectionate John was tainted with it. "Master," said he, "we saw one casting out devils "in thy name; and we forbade him, because he "followeth not with us." They are for calling down fire from heaven to consume a whole village of Samaritans, in resentment of a mere piece of incivility. They must have the highest places when their Master should come to the throne. The kingdom must be restored to Israel, whatever might become of the rest of the world. This spirit, though frequently and severely reprobated by their benevolent Master, has unhappily been transmitted, and mutual anathemas and excommunications have been thundered by furious sectaries, who have one after another desolated the earth, to secure to themselves the undivided possession of a heaven which they are incapable of enjoying. If the Saviour of men says, "*many* shall come," who dares to limit the Holy One of Israel, and to say, "*few* shall be "saved?"

"Many shall come from the *east and west*." The other two cardinal points are specified in a corresponding passage of the Gospel according to St. Luke, chap. xiii. 29. The import of the expression is obvious. It denotes the attractive influence of Christianity over men of every region under heaven, and the universal paternal care and love of Him who "hath made of one blood all nations of "men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." The day of Pentecost exhibited the first-fruits of this

glorious harvest. When the apostles, "filled with "the Holy Ghost, spake with other tongues as the "Spirit gave them utterance,"—"there were dwell- "ing at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every "nation under heaven. Now, when this was "noised abroad, the multitude came together, and "were confounded, because that every man heard "them speak in his own language. And they were "all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? "and how hear we every man in his own tongue, "wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, "and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, "and in Judea, and in Cappadocia, in Pontus, and "Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in "the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers "of Rome, Jews and proselytes."—"And the same "day there was added unto them about three thou- "sand souls." Since that period, what have been the triumphs of the Prince of Peace! What myriads are now prostrate before Him who sitteth upon the throne, and before the Lamb, adoring the wonders of redeeming grace, looking with angels, into the great mystery of godliness, if haply they "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what "is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; "and to know the love of Christ, which passeth "knowledge!" And what still more glorious triumphs remain to be displayed, when "the *fulness* "of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all Israel "shall be saved," when "great voices in heaven"

shal say, "The kingdoms of this world are be-
"come the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;
"and he shall reign for ever and ever!"

The multitudes who shall thus flock to the Saviour, as doves to their windows, from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north, as they are partakers of the faith of the patriarchs, so they shall at length be made partakers of their joy; "they shall sit down with Abraham, "Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God." What an assemblage of delicious images! What prospects has the Gospel opened to the children of men! Those travellers into a far country have returned to their Father's house. They pursued various tracks, but all led homeward. They were strangers to each other in a strange land, but the prevailing family likeness now lets them see that they are brothers. They sometimes fell out by the way, but now there is perfect love. They had heard of the names of their venerable ancestors and respectable kindred, now they see, and know, and rejoice in them. Their pilgrimage is ended, their "warfare is accom-
"plished."

"They shall *sit* down." They were laid in the grave, they fell asleep, they saw corruption. Now they are children of the resurrection; refreshed by the sleep of death, they have acquired immortal vigour, they have put on incorruption. Sitting is the posture assumed for the enjoyment of social intercourse, and that is the idea here conveyed. The family is assembled, the banquet is prepared, per-

fect harmony reigns. When men return to the bosom of their friends from tedious and painful journeys, from perilous voyages, from destructive warfare, affection suggests many an inquiry, many a communication. Alas, how often do we fondly anticipate the communications of distant friends who are never to return? But of the expected guests, of the innumerable company invited to "the mar-"riage of the Lamb," not one shall be missing, no bitter recollection shall intrude, no painful apprehension shall arise. And with what subjects of conversation are they eternally supplied! With what enlarged views of those subjects do they discourse! The glories of nature are contemplated with new eyes, and excite emotions before unfelt. The mystery of Providence, once so intricate and inscrutable, is unravelled; the mighty plan, the minute parts, the universal and the individual interest, are found in perfect unison. The wonders of redeeming love, intermingling with the glories of creation and the mystery of Providence, communicating to them all their beauty, all their importance. What a theme for the whole company of the redeemed, for interchange of personal experience, for mutual congratulation and delight! What exalted employment, what inexhaustible source of joy, for the endless days of eternity!

"They shall sit down with *Abraham, and Isaac,* "*and Jacob.*" There is a natural desire in man to be in the company of the eminently great, and wise, and good. But this desire is tempered by a con-

sciousness of our own inferiority. We shrink from the penetrating eye of wisdom, we feel "how awful "goodness is," we blush inwardly at the thought of our own littleness. But those in-gathered outcasts from the east and west feel no uneasy apprehension on being introduced to society so dignified, for "there is no fear in love." They indeed feel their inferiority, but it excites no mortification. They are in their proper place, and they have their proper measure of glory. While time was, they pronounced those venerable names with awe, they accounted those persons happy who could claim kindred to men so highly distinguished, admission to the court of the Gentiles terminated their ambition, birth had excluded them for ever from the commonwealth of Israel. Now they find that they are the real posterity of Abraham, "born, not of blood, nor "of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but "of God." If any man hath not the spirit of Abraham, he is none of his. By the spirit they are related to the father of the faithful, and he joyfully acknowledges them as his children, and heirs with him of the promises.

"They shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, "and Jacob, *in the kingdom of heaven*." This implies a participation of all the privileges of saints on earth, communion and fellowship with one another, as members together of that body whereof Christ is the head, and joint "fellowship with the Father, "and with the son Jesus Christ." Such is the kingdom of God in this world, and such the pre-

paration for the inheritance of saints in light, for the kingdom which cannot be moved. Let us not presume to "darken counsel by words without know-"ledge." Let us not presume to draw aside the veil which separates a material world from the world of spirits, which interposes between time and eternity. Scripture itself, after exhausting every image, every idea of negative and of positive glory and felicity, as descriptive of "the kingdom of "heaven," refers us to a future revelation of that glory. Paul, "caught up to the third heaven, "caught up into paradise," admitted to the intercourse of celestial beings, and sent back to earth, finds himself incapable of describing the heavenly vision. The words which he heard were unspeakable, which it is not lawful, which it is not possible, for a man to utter. In this blessed, undefined, undescribed state we leave it: "It is writ-"ten, 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."

The contrast is dreadful: "But the children of "the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." By "the children of the kingdom," our Lord undoubtedly means to denote the posterity of Abraham after the flesh, the original heirs of the promises, the depositaries of the covenants, who, with all the advantages of birth, of education, of a revelation which they acknowledged to be divine, and of

which they made their boast, obstinately rejected the promised Messiah, to whom all their prophets give witness; who, valuing themselves upon, and vainly resting in, a mere natural descent from illustrious ancestors, without inheriting a particle of their spirit, wilfully excluded themselves from the kingdom of heaven. Their means of knowledge, their peculiar privileges, were a horrid aggravation of their guilt, and a full justification of their tremendous punishment. The blessedness of the righteous, in the heavenly world, is, in the preceding verse, represented under the well-known and familiar image of the banquet, or marriage feast, and various passages of the Gospel history throw light upon the allusion, particularly the parable of the ten virgins. Those solemnities were usually celebrated in the night-season. The apartments destined to the entertainment of the guests were superbly illuminated. The bridegroom and his train came to the banqueting house in magnificent procession, by lamp or torch light. The invited guests were admitted through the wicket, to prevent promiscuous intrusion. As soon as the nuptial band had entered the doors were shut. The careless and the tardy were of course excluded, and no after expostulation or entreaty could procure admittance; they were left in *outer* darkness, rendered more hideous by comparison with the splendour which reigned within; left, in the cold and damps of the night, to their own bitter reflections, dreadfully aggravated by the idea of a felicity to them

for ever inaccessible. By a representation so powerfully impressive, so easily understood, so awfully alarming, were the elders of the Jews admonished of the guilt, danger, and misery of rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, of refusing the testimony which God had given to his Son Christ Jesus.

After this very solemn digression, Jesus returns to the subject which had given rise to it, the servant's malady, and the master's marvellous faith. He bestows a present reward on the one, by instantly relieving the other. "And Jesus said unto the "centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, "so be it done unto thee. And his servant was "healed in the self-same hour." Here the Saviour condescends to be dictated to. He yields to the prayer of a faith so very extraordinary, he proceeds no farther on his way to the centurion's house. The petition runs, "Speak the word only, and my ser-"vant shall be healed;" he speaks the word, he wills the cure, and virtue goes out of him to perform it.

Neither of the Evangelists pursue the history of the centurion farther. But we have every thing to hope, every thing to believe, of a man who so eminently distinguished himself as an excellent soldier, a kind master, a moderate ruler, a pious worshipper of God, and an humble but firm believer in Jesus Christ. In his history the Christian world has to boast of another of the triumphs of the Captain of Salvation, of another successful invasion of Satan's

kingdom, of another display of divine perfection in the person of Jesus Christ. It is not unworthy of remark that various persons of the same rank and profession, that of centurion, stand with high marks of approbation on the sacred page. Next to this most respectable character, we find another employed on a very trying occasion. He, with the company under his command, was appointed to see the sentence of crucifixion executed, for soldiers are put upon many a painful service, and he was not an unconcerned spectator of that awful scene. "Now when the centurion, and they that were with "him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and "those things that were done, they feared greatly, "saying, Truly this was the Son of God." The name of Cornelius of Cesarea, the centurion of the Italian band, is renowned in all the churches of Christ, as "a devout man, and one that feared "God with all his house, which gave much alms "to the people, and prayed to God alway." He is farther honourably reported of by those of his own household, as, "a just man, and of good report "among all the nation of the Jews." The centurion who had charge of Paul and the other prisoners, on the disastrous voyage which terminated in shipwreck on the island of Melita, paid singular attention to the apostle, followed his advice, and spared the rest of the prisoners that he might preserve Paul's life. And upon their arrival at Rome, when this generous officer delivered over the rest of his charge to the captain of the guard, he had

sufficient credit and ability to express his friendship for our apostle, by procuring for him a greater enlargement of liberty: "Paul was suffered to dwell "by himself with a soldier that kept him."

From this interesting story let us learn,

1. To despise no man's person, feelings, opinions, profession, or country. His person is what God made it, and he makes nothing that is in itself contemptible. You are bound in equity to respect the feelings of another, for you wish that your own should not be handled rudely. It ill becomes one who has himself formed so many erroneous opinions, and veered about so frequently with the flitting gale, to prescribe a standard of opinion to other men. Unless a profession be radically, and in its own nature sinful, those who follow it ought not to be condemned in the lump: if it expose to peculiar temptations to act amiss, he who resists the temptation and overcomes himself is the more estimable. Over the place of his birth a man had no more power than over the height of his stature, or the colour of his skin. It is an object of neither praise nor blame. The apostle Peter received a severe and just rebuke on this head, by a vision from heaven. He was prepared, and he needed to be prepared, for the exercise of his ministry at Cesarea, and to the family and friends of the excellent Roman centurion already mentioned, and whom his Jewish pride had taught him to hold in contempt, by a thrice repeated mandate which he dared not to disobey: "What God hath cleansed,

"that call not thou common." Let us consider it as addressed to ourselves. "Why dost thou judge "thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy "brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment "seat of Christ."

2. The fearful doom denounced against unbelieving Jews ought to operate as a warning to still more highly privileged Christians, lest any man "fall after the same example of unbelief." "For "if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and "every transgression and disobedience received a "just recompense of reward; how shall we escape "if we neglect so great salvation; which at the "first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was "confirmed unto us by them that heard him." We sometimes express contempt for the pagan world, sometimes affect to pity the blinded nations, and without hesitation presume to pass a sentence of final condemnation upon them. The unhappy tribes of Africa, in particular, Christian Europe calmly reduces to the condition of beasts of burthen in this world, with hardly an effort to ameliorate it in the next. And yet they are men, they possess many virtues which ought to put their tyrants to the blush, and which will one day rise up in judgment against them. We despise the miserable Jews, and stigmatize them as infidels, as if all those who bear the name of Christ actually believed in him. "Boast "not against the broken-off branches;"—thou wilt say: The "branches were broken off, that I might "be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief, they

" were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be " not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not " the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare " not thee." I conclude with the solemn denunciation of Christ himself, respecting the men of his generation, and which is still in equal force. " The " men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this " generation, and shall condemn it: because they " repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, " a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the " south shall rise up in the judgment with this ge- " neration, and shall condemn it: for she came " from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the " wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than " Solomon is here."

LECTURE XXIII.

JOHN VI. 1—14.

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him, Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes, but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

THE course of nature is a standing miracle. To be an atheist is to cease from being a man. To think

of arguing with such a one is to undertake a labour as fruitless as attempting to reason the lunatic into a sound mind. A case like this ought to excite no emotion but compassion, mixed with gratitude to God that he has not reduced us to a condition so deplorable. Refinement in reasoning is, in general, both unprofitable and inconclusive. The man of plain common sense may advantageously observe and devoutly acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of the Great Supreme in the regular ebbing and flowing of the tide, though he cannot trace the process of the sun's action on the waters of the ocean, or of the wind, in conveying the fluid to the mountain's top; or of gravity, sending it down to water the plains beneath; or the supposed influence of the moon, or of the melting of the polar ices, producing an alternate and regular flux and reflux on our shores, or in our rivers. Of what importance is the theory of vegetation, compared to the simple but valuable labour and experience of the gardener and husbandman? The same observation applies to the religion of the Gospel. Here the learned have no advantage whatever over the illiterate. It consists of a few plain unadorned facts, authenticated by the testimony of a cloud of unsuspected witnesses; of a few simple, practical truths, level to the most ordinary capacity; and of a few precepts of self-evident importance, which it highly concerns every man to observe. Should it be alleged that these are blended with things hard to be understood, it is ad-

mitted. And here again the wise and prudent have no superiority over the vulgar, but both meet the God of grace as well as the God of nature exercising his divine prerogative, in ministering to the necessities, while he checks the pride and presumption, of man.

The miracles of our blessed Lord which have hitherto passed in review had a more limited object. Their design was to relieve individual, or domestic distress; they were an appeal, public indeed, to the understanding and senses of all who witnessed them, but slightly felt, imperfectly understood, and little improved, except by the parties more immediately interested in them. They were granted to importunity, and as a reward to the prayer of faith. That which is the subject of the passage now read, embraces a much wider range than any of these, and is the spontaneous effusion of his own divine benevolence and compassion. Ten thousand persons, at a moderate calculation, were at once the witnesses and the subjects of the miracle, and in a case wherein it was impossible they should be mistaken, for they had every sense, every faculty, exercised in ascertaining the truth. And here he waits not, as in other cases, till the cry of misery reaches his ear, but advances to meet it, to prevent it; he outruns expectation, and has a supply in readiness, before the pressure of want is felt.

The duration of Christ's public ministry, from his baptism to his passion, has been calculated from he number of passovers which he frequented. This,

as may be supposed, has occasioned considerable variety of opinion. The attentive reader will probably adopt that of our illustrious countryman Sir Isaac Newton, who reckons five of these annual festivals within the period. The first, that recorded in the 2d chapter of St. John's Gospel, at which he purged the temple, predicted his own death and resurrection, and performed sundry miracles. The second, according to that great chronologist, took place a few months after our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria, which he founds on that text, John iv. 35, "Say not ye, There are "yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Be- "hold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look "on the fields; for they are white already to har- "vest." The third, a few days prior to the sabbath on which the disciples walked out into the fields, and plucked the ears of corn, when he cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The fourth, that which was now approaching at the era of this miracle; and the fifth, that at which he suffered. The people were now therefore flocking from all parts of Galilee, on their way to Jerusalem to keep the passover: and this accounts for the very extraordinary number who at this time attended his preaching and miracles.

"After these things," says John. The other three Evangelists connect this scene, in respect of time, with a most memorable event in the history of Christianity, the decapitation of John Baptist in the prison. When these melancholy tidings were

told to Jesus, Matthew informs us, that "he de-
"parted thence by ship into a desert place apart;
"and when the people had heard thereof they fol-
"lowed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus
"went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was
"moved with compassion toward them, and he heal-
"ed their sick;" and then immediately follows the miracle of feeding the multitude, recorded with exactly the same circumstances in all the four Evangelists. Mark affixes an additional date. It was at the time when the disciples returned from the execution of their first commission, with an account of their success: "And the apostles gathered them-
"selves together unto Jesus, and told him all things,
"both what they had done, and what they had
"taught." On this Jesus proposed a temporary retirement from the public eye, for the conveniency of private conversation, of repose, and of the necessary refreshment of the body: "And he said unto
"them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert
"place, and rest awhile: for there were many
"coming and going, and they had no leisure so
"much as to eat. And they departed into a desert
"place by ship privately;" and this, as before, prepared for the miracle of the loaves and fishes. The self-same circumstances are minutely narrated in Luke's gospel. These mark the precise epoch when Christ went over the sea of Galilee, and retired with the twelve to a mountain in the desert of Bethsaida. But though he went by water, to escape for a season the multitudes which thronged

after him, the place of his destination is discovered, and thousands, filled with impatience, admiration, gratitude, hope, outstrip the speed of the vessel, by a circuitous journey along the shore of the lake. Their motives were various. The powerful principle of curiosity attracted many. A thirst of the word of life impelled others. "A great multitude "followed him, because they saw the miracles "which he did on them that were diseased," and many had themselves "need of healing." An affecting view is exhibited of Christ's benevolent character. As from the elevation of the mountain he beheld the people pressing forward by thousands to the spot where he was, all thoughts of food, of rest, of accommodation, lost in an appetite more dignified and pure, his bowels melted: "And Jesus, when "he came out, saw much people, and was moved "with compassion toward them, because they were "as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to "teach them many things." The sight of a great assembly of men, women, and children, must ever create a lively interest in every bosom alive to the feelings of humanity. The view of his mighty host melted Xerxes into tears, merely from reflection on their natural mortality. What then are the "bowels "and mercies" of the compassionate friend of mankind, on surveying innumerable myriads ready to perish everlastingly for lack of knowledge, dying in their sins! He feels even for their bodily wants, which, in the ardour of their spirits, they seem to have themselves forgotten, and a supply is provided

before the cravings of nature have found out that it was necessary. And thus a gracious Providence, in things both temporal and spiritual, outruns not only the supplications of the miserable, but their very hopes and desires.

"The day began to wear away," they were in a desert place, the multitude was prodigiously increased, they had fasted long, no provision of either victuals or lodging had been made, and the adjacent villages promised but a slender accommodation of either, even had there been money to purchase them. A case of truly aggravated distress! The forethought and sympathy of the disciples went no farther than to suggest the propriety of an immediate dismission of the assembly, while sufficient light remained to procure what was needful for exhausted nature. "When the day began to wear away then "came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the "multitude away, that they may go into the towns "and country round about, and lodge, and get "victuals: for we are here in a desert place." But their gracious Master looked much farther, and felt more tenderly. He addresses himself particularly to Philip, who was of the city of Bethsaida, and might be supposed to know the state of the country, and how much it could produce in an emergency of this kind, on the supposition that their stock of money was equal to the demand; "he saith unto "Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these "may eat?" Why the appeal was personally made to Philip, may be accounted for from some peculi-

arity in that disciple's character. He appears to have been one of those who slowly, suspiciously, reluctantly admitted the evidence of their Master's divine mission; for we find him, long after this, discovering a diffident, scrupulous, incredulous disposition; and his kind Master administering a just and seasonable rebuke: "Philip saith unto him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus "saith unto him, Have I been so long time with "you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He "that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how "sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Thus was it needful that the witnesses of the truth to others should have their own doubts completely removed. And thus, He, who knew what was in man, will bring out of the man himself what was in him; not with the insidious design of deceiving and exposing him, as men often act by each other, but of making him feel his own weight; of enabling him to form a just estimate of his wisdom and strength; of affording him a fresh and irresistible proof of his Master's supreme power, and divine intelligence. "This he said to prove him: for he knew "what he would do."

We have here a most sublime representation of the Redeemer's foreknowledge of the natural reasonings of the human mind, and of the existence and effect of second causes. That a thousand persons of as many different inclinations, pursuing as many different interests, with as many different capacities, should be brought to one point, should

co-operate in promoting the same purpose, should, unknown to each other, involuntarily enter into exactly one and the same pursuit, is not to be explained on the common principles of human sagacity, and can proceed only "from the Lord of "hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent "in working." Philip immediately has recourse to arithmetical calculation? he estimates the multitude at so many, he examines into the state of their finances, and finds them deplorably deficient: two "hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for "them, that every one of them may take a little." No, the difficulty was not to be thus resolved. Neither was the matter much mended to human apprehension, when Andrew, Simon's brother, brought information that there was a lad present who had five barley loaves and two small fishes to dispose of. He himself sets no great store by his intelligence; a single loaf to a thousand men appeared to him a mere nothing, an aggravation rather than an alleviation of the distress, "but what," says he despondingly, "are they among so many?" The case is thus brought to an extreme point. Five thousand men, beside a multitude of women and children, probably to an equal if not a greater number, feel the pressure of hunger, and of no one of our natural appetites are we more acutely sensible than of this; every one of this myriad, therefore, down to the youngest child, was a distinct and a competent witness upon the occasion, of the individual and of the general calamity, and of the total

want of an adequate supply. Providence thus frequently permits things to come to the very verge of woe, that man may feel his own weakness and insufficiency, feel his entire dependance, and learn to acknowledge and to adore the seasonable interposition of Heaven; that God may be seen as "our "refuge and our strength, a very present help in "trouble."

As if every preparation of human sagacity had been made, Jesus, with dignified composure, commands, saying, "Make the men sit down." The attention and sympathy of Christ are observable in minute circumstances. His guests had passed a day of uncommon fatigue; they were now overtaken with two great infirmities, want of food and want of rest. A standing meal, weary as they were, would have been an unspeakable benefit; or to have stretched out their exhausted limbs to repose, even with a slender provision, for the "sleep of a labouring "man is sweet, whether he eat little or much." He who careth for oxen, who feedeth the raven, who sustaineth the sparrow on the wing, "shall he "not much more" hear the cry of human wretchedness? Both the precious gifts of bread and rest are bestowed at once, and both unhoped for, both unasked. "Make the men sit down:" and it is remarked, "Now there was much grass in the place." What a delicious assemblage of natural and interesting beauties! it was the still evening of a day in spring; the fragrant fertile earth had spread an ample carpet, at once delightful to behold, pleasant

to the smell, and softened to the pressure of the faint. Twenty thousand eyes are turned in silent expectation to their common friend and benefactor. The very order of their arrangement embellishes the scene, and the subdivisions and straight lines of art set off the majestic irregularity of nature: a hundred rows of fifty men each. What compared to this, was the royal "feast which the king Ahasuerus made "unto all his princes, and his servants; the power "of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of "the provinces!" What compared to this, was the great, but impious feast, which "Belshazzar the "king made to a thousand of his lords!" These noisy and profane revels were quickly disturbed, and issued in sorrow. What a different spectacle did the mountain in the desert of Bethsaida present! All is calmness and harmony, all is peace and joy. The great Master of the feast surveys his vast family with complacency and delight! they behold in him their condescending teacher, their merciful physician, their liberal *provider*, their almighty Lord, in whom all fulness was pleased to dwell.

"And Jesus took the loaves." He miraculously supported his own body for forty days in the wilderness, without eating or drinking; and the same divine power could undoubtedly have refreshed and sustained this great multitude, for a night, without bread, as easily as by a supernatural multiplication of it. But this would have been less sensible and convincing; and natural vigour of constitution might have been supposed equal to the load. In the

method of relief which our Lord was pleased to employ, every man had the witness within himself, and could bear a clear testimony concerning all around him, that not the powers of nature, but the God of grace, had ministered to their common necessities. "And, when he had given thanks:" Two different words are employed by the Evangelists to describe this action of our Saviour. The first three say, "he "blessed" the loaves, pronounced upon them a solemn and powerful benediction, in virtue of which they became prolific, and multiplied far beyond the extent of the demand. Our Evangelist represents him as "giving thanks," ascribing to God his heavenly Father the glory of every gift of an indulgent Providence, whether bestowed in the order of natural increase, or produced by an extraordinary interposition. The form of words employed by Christ on this occasion, most probably, blended both ideas, as indeed they cannot be easily separated. To give thanks for what God has given is a devout acknowledgment of dependance upon him, a tacit expression of hope in his goodness for the time to come, and the most likely means of increasing our store. He acted as the great pattern of his disciples, teaching them in difficulty to look up to Heaven for direction and assistance, to improve the blessings of Providence by referring them to their great Author, and to cast every future care on him who hath helped hitherto. Man cannot pronounce a benediction capable of communicating efficacious virtue, but what is equivalent to it, he can "in every thing, by

" prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let his " request be made known unto God;" and time employed in devotion is not loss, but unspeakably great gain.

" He distributed to the disciples, and the dis- " ciples to them that were set down; and likewise " of the fishes as much as they would." The fare was ordinary, barley bread, and dried fish. " The " full soul loatheth an honey-comb; but to the " hungry every bitter thing is sweet." Mark, the quality of the food is not changed, the quantity only is increased, for the object of the miracle was not to pamper luxury, but to satisfy hunger. The disciples had nothing to give but what they first received. And what must have been their astonishment, their satisfaction, as they walked from rank to rank, to behold the food not diminish, but multiply to the mouth of the eater! No murmuring could arise on account of a partial distribution, for all had enough and to spare. No doubt could arise respecting the fountain of supply, for every ear heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; every eye beheld his face lifted up to heaven, and his hands extended to diffuse plenty. The body and the mind were refreshed together, with food convenient for them. Thus seasonable, thus suitable, thus satisfying, are the good and perfect gifts which come down immediately from the Father of lights. The self-same miracle, my friends, is repeated day by day, through a different process, and we observe it not, we feel it not. An unseen

hand "causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, "and herb for the service of man;" it "bringeth "forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh "glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face "to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's "heart." "O that men would praise the Lord for "his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the "children of men!"

"When they were filled, he said unto his disci- "ples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that "nothing be lost." There is a criminal forethought about to-morrow which the Gospel condemns, because it implies distrust of the care, wisdom, and goodness of Providence, and because it mars the enjoyment, and encroaches upon the duties, of to-day. But there is likewise a prudent and pious forethought, which both reason and religion highly approve and powerfully recommend, because it is the co-operation of human sagacity with the benignity of Providence; and the happiest and most honourable condition of man is exertion, as if no supernatural aid were to be expected, and reliance on God, as if human efforts amounted to nothing. "Gather up the fragments," was the command of him who had the power of multiplying without end, but who would lay himself under no obligation to exert a miraculous energy to repair the profusion, or supply the negligence, of thoughtless man. What occasions the present dearth of every necessary of life? Not the unkindness of Heaven, for the earth has yielded her increase, and our garners are full;

but cruel oppression on the one hand, and abominable waste on the other. The precious fruits of the ground are, contrary to nature, hoarded up in expectation of glutting avarice with a higher return, till they corrupt; or they are vilely cast away by the minions of opulence and grandeur, who care not what they destroy, because the master's fortune is able to support the expenditure. It is one and not the least of the evils of war, that of the provision necessary to the maintenance of fleets and armies, one half at least goes to loss, through dishonesty, carelessness, and wilful prodigality. This profusion is often found in company with a hard and stony heart. It appears to have constituted great part of the criminality of the rich man in the Gospel. He "was clothed in purple and fine linen, "and fared sumptuously every day." But this was not in itself sinful, nor is it charged upon him as guilt. The offal of his table was not wisely used. While detestable luxury reigned within doors, the cry of misery at the gate was disregarded. The beggar Lazarus desired, but desired in vain, "to "be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich "man's table." It is in every man's power to reduce the price of provisions. Let him purchase no more than what is needful, and let him be careful to look after the fragments which remain. The opulent man is responsible for the inhumanity, the extravagance, the criminal neglect of his domestics, and to no purpose does he exclaim against the rapacity of combinations to engross and enhance, while he is

fostering the mischief by the wretched economy of his own household. "Let nothing be lost" is the economy of nature, the maxim of true wisdom, and a precept of Christianity.

"Therefore they gathered them together, and "filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the "five barley loaves, which remained over and above "unto them that had eaten." Thus the miracle was complete: ample provision was made for the moment, and a lesson of prudence given for all generations. The bodies of thousands were refreshed by homely but wholesome food, and the sacred impress of divine truth was applied to the human heart. Thus transitory things are rendered permanent, and provision made for supporting the body is converted into food for the immortal soul.

The conviction produced was perfectly natural, and it operated uniformly on the minds of the whole assembly: "Then those men, when they had seen "the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth "that Prophet that should come into the world." There was therefore, it is evident, a generally prevailing expectation of the appearance of the august personage whom the prophets had announced; and what proof of a divine mission more illustrious could be displayed, than that which had just reached the understanding through all the avenues of sense? But it is truly humbling to observe the perpetual intrusion of a worldly spirit. *That* prophet whom all ranks looked unto and waited for, all ranks

thought proper to invest with temporal power and splendour. The idea of raising him to kingly supremacy is immediately entertained. What quality could a prince possess that led more certainly to success than that of subsisting his armies, without the expense and incumbrance of magazines? Under this impulse the multitude are disposed instantly to rear his standard, and to enlist in his service. And when a man faithfully examines himself, he will find that the world, in some form or another, is lurking in his heart. He will find time, and sense, and self, blending with his purest, most generous, most exalted views, and directing his most seemingly disinterested exertions. Jesus demonstrates that he is much more than a king, by withdrawing from popular applause and proffered royalty. "When he perceived that they would come and "take him by force, to make him a king, he de-"parted again into a mountain himself alone." He meets and relieves their real necessities, but retires from their projects of power and ambition. To the demand of Pilate, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" this was his modest reply: "My kingdom is not "of this world. If my kingdom were of this "world, then would my servants fight, that I should "not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my king-"dom not from hence."

We conclude with a few practical reflections.

1. The law of man's nature is a stated religious monitor to him. Every day he hungers, he thirsts, he waxes faint, he must lie down and go to sleep.

He is as often admonished of his frailty, of his dependance, of his obligations. Let the animal functions be ever so little deranged or suspended, and the whole man, spirit as well as body, pines and languishes. An eye which never slumbers nor sleeps watches him by night and by day. An unseen hand spreads his board, fills his cup, feedeth him with food convenient for him. A careless spirit overlooks common mercies, lightly esteems them, wastes, perverts, abuses them. And where the hand of God is not seen, felt, and acknowledged, there can be no enjoyment superior to that which the beasts of the field have in common with the rational creation. The devout spirit refers all to Deity, and thereby a relish is communicated to the simplest and most ordinary things. "A dinner of herbs "where love is, a dry morsel, and quietness there-"with," far exceed the luxury of the "stalled ox," and of "a house full of sacrifices." Herein the poor have infinitely the superiority over the rich and great. Hunger seasons the poor man's food, thirst sweetens his cup, labour softens his couch. He beholds his daily supply coming from the bounty of a Father in heaven, he gives God thanks. Thus meditates the Psalmist in contemplating the providential care exercised over all creatures, especially those of the human race: "Man goeth forth unto "his work, and to his labour, until the evening. O "Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom "hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy

" riches: so is this great and wide sea, wherein are " things creeping innumerable, both small and great " beasts. There go the ships: there is that levia- " than, whom thou hast made to play therein. " These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give " them their meat in due season. That thou givest " them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they " are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they " are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they " die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth " thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest " the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord " shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in " his works." Thus is the eye of man, from day to day, alternately directed to the ground out of which he himself was taken, to behold the support of his life likewise springing up out of it, and to heaven, toward " the Father of lights," for " every " good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above." God, in his great mercy, has not entrusted to human reason the preservation of the body, but constantly warns him by an animal instinct of what his frame requires, and renders that savoury to sense which he knows to be necessary to life; and thus pleasure and duty, as they ever ought, go hand in hand. " O that men would praise the Lord for his " goodness, and for his wonderful works to the " children of men; for he satisfieth the longing soul, " and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

2. If God is pleased to humble man, and to suffer him to hunger, it is to " make him know

"that man doth not live by bread only, but by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of "the Lord doth man live." In the animal part of his nature he is reduced to the level of the beasts that perish; in his spirit he rises to the rank of angels, he draws supplies immediately from the Father of spirits, he feeds on immortal food, he drinks of the "pure river of water of life, pro- "ceeding out of the throne of God and of the "Lamb." The Christian, like his divine Master, has meat to eat which the world knows not of. "My meat," says he, "is to do the will of him "that sent me, and to finish his work:" and, speaking of his doctrine, in contrast to the support and refreshment of the natural life, "Whosoever drinketh "of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever "drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall "never thirst; but the water that I shall give him "shall be in him a well of water springing up into "everlasting life;" and again, under the same image of necessary food; "My Father giveth you the "true bread from heaven. For the bread of God "is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth "life unto the world. And Jesus said unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall "never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall "never thirst." "Blessed are they which do hunger "and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be "filled." "For the kingdom of God is not meat "and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy "in the Holy Ghost." The believer's feast is thus

described by one who was a liberal partaker of it: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, "through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom "also we have access by faith into this grace "wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the "glory of God. And not only so, but we glory "in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation "worketh patience; and patience, experience; "and experience, hope: and hope maketh not "ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad "in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given "unto us;" and in another place, "I know whom "I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is "able to keep that which I have committed unto "him against that day." "I am now ready to be "offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. "I have fought a good fight, I have 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."

3. In proportion as this spiritual appetite increases, attachment to the world will diminish. Nature, says the proverb, is satisfied with little, and grace with still less. The disciple of Jesus knows and feels that he has here no continuing city, and therefore seeks one to come. He "coveteth no "man's silver, or gold, or apparel." While the rich worldling is pulling down his barns and building greater, in which to bestow his fruits

and his goods, laying up treasure for himself without being rich towards God, the follower of Christ is employed in laying up "treasures in "heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. "and where thieves do not break through nor steal." He desires "a better country, that is, an heavenly:" he looks for "a city which hath foundations, whose "builder and maker is God." His master has taught him, when he prays, to say not, "Give me much "goods to be laid up for many years," but "give us "this day our daily bread:" "my heavenly Father "knoweth what things I really need." He knows that the day of the Lord cometh, "in the which "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, "and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, "the earth also, and the works that are therein, "shall be burnt up." He, according to the promise of God, who cannot lie, "looks for new heavens "and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Hence he learns "in whatever state" Providence may be pleased to put him, "therewith to be con-"tent." "I know," says Paul, "both how to be "abased, and I know how to abound: every where, "and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full "and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer "need. I can do all things through Christ which "strengtheneth me." "Brethren, the time is "short; it remaineth, that they who weep be as "they who weep not; and they that rejoice, as "though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, "as though they possessed not; and they that use

" this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of " this world passeth away." —

4. Let the ministers of Christ remember that they are " stewards of the mysteries of God," and that " it is required in stewards, that a man be found " faithful." That which they deliver to others, they themselves received from the Lord. There is one and the same fare provided for them, and for their fellow servants, and the provision is at once excellent and abundant. Every one is entitled to the portion most suitable to him, and in the proper season. " New born babes," in Christ, " desire the " sincere milk of the word, that they may grow " thereby." " But strong meat belongeth to them " that are of full age, even those who, by reason of " use, have their senses exercised to discern both " good and evil." In various ways may a steward be found unfaithful to his trust. He may be negligent, and then the household runs into confusion and every evil work; every one does that which is right in his own eyes, and of consequence every thing goes wrong. He may withhold what is due, and the family starves. The food may be improperly mixed, and thereby changed into poison. He may be injudicious, and the aliment of the healthy and vigorous is administered to the puny and feeble, while the delicate nourishment that suits sickliness and imbecility is presented to maturity and strength. He may be deliberately wicked, and betray the trust which he was appointed to guard. As a contrast to this melancholy picture, turn your eyes to

the portrait of that faithful steward, and able minister of the New Testament, the apostle of the Gentiles, in the solemn appeal which he makes to the elders of Ephesus, on bidding them a final farewell; "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, "after what manner I have been with you at all "seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of "mind, and with many tears and temptations "which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; "and how I kept back nothing that was profitable "unto you, but have showed you, and have taught "you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our "Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound "in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the "things that shall befall me there: save that the "Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that "bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these "things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with "joy, and the ministry which I have received of "the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the "grace of God." "I take you to record this "day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; "for I have not shunned to declare unto you the "whole counsel of God—remember, that, by the "space of three years, I ceased not to warn every "one night and day with tears.—I have showed you "all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of

" the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed " to give than to receive." But there is an appeal still more solemn and affecting, and in circumstances infinitely more interesting, that of the chief Shepherd himself, addressed to his heavenly Father, in the near prospect " of his decease which he should " accomplish at Jerusalem." " I have glorified thee " on the earth: I have finished the work which thou " gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify " thou me with thine own self, with the glory which " I had with thee before the world was. I have " manifested thy name unto the men which thou " gavest me out of the world; thine they were, " and thou gavest them me; and they have kept " thy word. Now they have known that all things, " whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee: for I " have given unto them the words which thou " gavest me; and they have received them, and " have known surely that I came out from thee, " and they have believed that thou didst send me." " Holy Father, keep through thine own name those " whom thou hast given me, that they may be one " as we are."

5. Let not the constant and regular operations of Deity, in the course of nature and providence, be overlooked. Like the people who did eat of " the " loaves and were filled," we take and enjoy the repast, but discern not the miracle which produced it. The naturalist traces the progress of vegetation as an amusement, as a branch of science. The husbandman pursues it as his destined occupation,

he casts seed into the ground, leaves it there and goes to sleep, observes it day after day springing and growing up, he knoweth not how; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear; but his eye and his heart are all the while set on the time of putting in the sickle, when the harvest is come. The eager merchant too watches the process, as a commercial speculation, as favourable or unfavourable to his plans of buying and selling, and getting gain. With what a different eye does a devotional spirit contemplate Deity spreading a table for every thing that lives! The Christian considers the fare upon his own board, whether simple or sumptuous, flowing in whatever channel, coming from the east or from the west, from the south or from the north, as a supply immediately furnished by the hand of his heavenly Father, as children's bread, as a foretaste of the rich provision of his Father's house above. This communicates to ordinary things a relish unknown to the banquets of the luxurious and the proud. With the five thousand he beholds his God in person feeding him. He passes from the table which he calls his own, and at which his divine Master sat as a guest, though invisible, to that which Jesus emphatically calls his, and he finds it replenished "with all the fulness of "God." He eats and is satisfied, he goes on his way rejoicing, he advances from strength to strength, he mounts up as on eagles' wings, he runs and is not weary, he walks and faints not. Thus may

every one of us in the Zion that is above appear before God." "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and the love of God, and the communion of the "Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

THE END.

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