

AN

ILLUSTRATION AND DEFENSE

OF

UNIVERSALISM AS AN IDEA,

IN

A SERIES

OF

PHILOSOPHICAL AND SCRIPTURAL DISCOURSES.

BY

✓
S. B. BRITTAN.

Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth
your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.

ISAIAH XLI. 21.

ALBANY.

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THIS VOLUME
IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO
GEORGE E. WARRING, Esq.
STAMFORD, CONN.,
AS
A TOKEN OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THIS work is not devoted to a discussion of the several points of doctrine held by Universalists; but is designed to elucidate the ONE GREAT IDEA—that which comprehends the immortal destiny of the human spirit. Compared with this subject, all others are unimportant in their bearing upon the interest and happiness of man. Owing to the wide diversity in the mental and moral constitution of men it becomes necessary to reason from different premises, that the propriety of the general conclusion may be apparent to every mind. The Author has, therefore, drawn his illustrations and arguments from Nature and the constitution of things, as well as from the Scriptures; believing this to be the only sure way to commend the truth to every man's conscience.

These Discourses were prepared for the pulpit. They are respectfully presented to the public in this form, at the earnest solicitation of many who listened to them as they were originally delivered. The writer ventures to indulge the hope that this humble effort may subserve the interests of the Truth it is intended to illustrate and enforce.

ALBANY, May 18, 1847.

DISCOURSE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Come, now, and let us reason together.—ISAIAH I. 18.

REASON is the highest faculty of the mind. It is that especially which distinguishes humanity from the inferior creation. And yet men in their ignorance labor to prevent its perfect development and appropriate exercise. Many yield to the influence of passion and prejudice, and become the ministers of desolation to themselves, kindling within, a strange fire, to scathe that which is most beautiful, and to blight and consume the blossoms of the Spirit.

In the wide field of physical science, man has been comparatively free. He has reared monuments of truth and wisdom that will stand forever, bearing witness to the distant ages, of his progress and his power. But men too often enter the department of *revealed truth*, with doubt and irresolution. Here, many imagine that they are on forbidden ground, and every step is with fear and trembling. So long have men been taught to believe that the exercise of human reason is incompatible with the interests of religion, and dangerous to the soul, that they dare not prosecute their inquiries on rational grounds. In

their judgment, it is safe to remain where they are—to live on in ignorance of what God has revealed, and to wonder at His ways, which are past finding out. With all the evidences of progress in man and the world around, they dare not venture beyond the circumscribed sphere of present acquirements. Whatever is without the limits already defined, is treated with as much caution and reserve, as though it were a magazine of curses, containing the elements of the soul's destruction. I know that some will move when truth finds an utterance from mortal lips ; others wait for an angel to

“ stir their stagnant souls.”

Those who have been the first to submit to the authority of tradition, and the last to relinquish their confidence in the absurd and improbable speculations of visionary minds, have been most alarmed for the safety of the bold free spirit that dared to scan the Creator's works, and the record of His word. Some men impose a most effectual restraint upon their reason, while they leave the imagination to wander uncontrolled in the regions of conjecture. The religion of such persons is a species of fanaticism that serves to obscure the interior vision, and to prevent an accurate perception of things. Under this influence, they readily believe the wildest chimeras of heathen poets, while they reject the sublime results of reason and analogy.

If we look at the theology of the church, we shall hardly fail to observe the traces of a corrupt and

speculative philosophy—of dark mysteries and unfounded superstitions, long blended with the precepts of heavenly wisdom. The increasing light and knowledge of our time is rapidly disclosing these errors to the world. A veil that has long covered a multitude of sins is torn away. Many of the church dogmas are found to be mere phantoms. One after another, like shells, they explode, and the people are alarmed when the danger is past. Men cling to their errors with a firmness and resolution only equalled by the force of their early prepossessions. Still, it must be acknowledged there are many indications of reform. It is true that men are beginning to entertain a higher regard for whatever is consistent and reasonable, even in religion. There are some intrepid spirits who will no more be driven from this field of inquiry. They will venture to examine the doctrinal superstructure of the church, and if it consist of “wood, hay and stubble,” it will be given to the flames, and consumed with the multitude of human devices. What though the whole be cast into the fire? The truth has nothing to fear. Christianity has nothing to lose. Like the fine gold, it will only shine with a purer lustre, when separated from the commingling elements of ignorance and superstition. We regard it as a part of our mission on earth, to assist in removing these errors and corruptions. The truth long buried beneath the superincumbent mass, must be exhumed. We must seek for it as for a hidden treasure. We desire

to follow Truth, though it lead amidst cloud and flame, or through the unyielding earth. This shall be the object of our pursuit, for the experience of every day evinces that nothing but *truth* can pass the ordeal which is to try every man's work.

There is a power employed that is rapidly changing the faith of the church, and the opinions of the world. We live at a period in which the mere dictum of arbitrary men is not mistaken for the oracle of God. The *ipse dixit* of the priest, is not the foundation of faith. *Evidence* is necessary to produce conviction, and nothing short of this will command our assent.

There are many Christians who are disposed to subject the doctrines of the church to the test of a rigid examination. He reasons falsely who is led to suppose that this characteristic of the age indicates a growing spirit of irreligion: on the contrary, I regard it as the surest evidence that man is beginning to feel a deep and abiding concern in the investigation of revealed truth.

I have observed that there are, in the doctrines of the church, evident traces of the Pagan Theology. The heathen believed in a vast number of Deities, who were armed with the elements, and prepared for the work of destruction. He saw their angry frowns in the darkened sky, and heard their voices in the deep thunders, and the raging floods! These he worshipped in order to appease their wrath, and to conciliate their favor. Thus far there is one particular, that may serve to distinguish the Pagan from the Christian,

The latter *worships but one God*, but that one he has made, infinitely more terrible, than all that were dreamed of in the Pagan Philosophy.

As to the nature and object of religious worship among Christians, it is not unfrequently the same as in pagan lands. Much of it is propitiatory. The Christian is too often influenced by the same motives that actuate the heathen in their devotions. It is their chief design to pacify the supposed wrath of their capricious divinities—they would make the gods more compassionate. These ideas are none the less Pagan in their origin, because they have been baptized in the name of Christ.

The heathen had also his *tartarean gulf*, corresponding to the hell of modern Christians. There may be this essential difference between them:—Possibly the horrors of the Christian hell exceed the conceptions of the most benighted heathen. I have no disposition to speak of the results contemplated by the system of partial theology—the picture would shock the virtuous sensibilities. Great abominations have been cherished and defended, under the insulted name of Christianity. Many pretended followers of Christ have been ignorant of the Father. They have worshipped the tyrant—a being begotten of their follies and their fears; and as destitute of compassion, as the stone at which the heathen bows. These are some of the ideas of the Church. That they were conceived in ignorance, brought forth in iniquity, and nursed in the lap of

the dark ages, is now a matter of history. A formal refutation of these gross absurdities would do violence to our ideas of propriety, and be a poor compliment to your intelligence. That they are the monstrous offspring of the human mind in its far distant wanderings from God and heavenly things, must be evident to the rational mind.

Let no one imagine, that in the present course of Lectures, we design to carry on a direct warfare against existing modes of faith. We have a higher object and aim ; the illustration and defence of our own. But it was necessary to glance at some specimens of the so-called Evangelical ideas and doctrines, in order to direct your attention to their influence and results as developed in the condition of society. What, then, has the popular theology accomplished in the great work of removing the existing evils ? What have all the old theories in morals and religion done to refine the nature and improve the condition of man ? Have they been instrumental in working out a higher destiny for the race, or is the world become more debased in morals, and in the circumstances of its social condition, with each succeeding generation ? It is our privilege to press this question. If you had a friend sick, you would have an undoubted right, not only to inquire into the nature of the remedial agents employed in his case, but also to witness their operation. If he continued to grow worse, or the disease to assume a more aggravated form ; or if he failed to

recover under the peculiar mode of treatment adopted, you would naturally conclude that the physician did not understand his case, or that his prescriptions were not adapted to the condition and wants of the patient. In such a case, you would most certainly resort to other remedies. But this mode of illustration will equally well apply to universal humanity. That there is derangement and disease in the great body will not be questioned. But that there is any proper adaptation of the treatment to the nature of the case, is not sufficiently evident. If the world is possessed of an evil spirit, will you send forth legions of like spirits to cast him out? If the involuntary motion of the great system is irregular—if the whole body is fearfully convulsed—is it likely that any galvanic process, such as the ordinary religious excitements, will restore a proper action? If some of the members are greatly inflamed, will you expose them to the action of fire to reduce the inflammation? If the patient exhibit symptoms of madness, will you persuade him out of his reason? I know that this is the characteristic treatment of the Church, and thus its doctors have tried for ages to cure the world; and what is the result? Is there any improvement? Is the system generally in a better condition? Why, those who feel the patient's pulse, affirm that there is but little hope—that the world is waxing worse continually. Many think that the one true faith is in danger from the influence of a vain philosophy, that is closely allied

to infidelity. Indeed, if the world be half as vile as some would have us believe, surely the poet hath described it well:

“ Good men are here and there, I know ; but then—
 * * * * *
 * * * * * —the world,
 Like a black block of marble, jagged with white,
 As with a vein of lightning petrified,
 Looks blacker than without such”——

But *we* are not without faith in man. We are not prepared to relinquish our confidence in God. We believe that the world is advancing—that the general tendency of things is upward. In our judgment, the past history and present condition of society indicate, at least, a gradual improvement. Whether this is to be placed to the credit of popular theological influences, or whether it is the result of other causes, we shall not stop to inquire. But if it be true, that the present tendency is downward—that the general movement is retrogressive, we desire to know who is to be held accountable for the results. How can the advocates of the received theology escape from this responsibility? They have had every opportunity to direct the course of the world, and to remove the existing causes of evil. They have opened the channel in which the current of human affairs is rolling on from age to age; they have explained the duty of man, and determined his destiny; they have fixed the standard of faith, and defined the limits, beyond which there is no hope. Around the domestic fireside, and in the schools, where the young mind receives its first and

most enduring impressions—in religion and morals—in all the departments of business—indeed, in every field of thought and action, they have wielded a controlling power. For centuries they have guided the church and state. The voice from the altar has found a response in the hearts of millions, while the influence that has gone out from the throne has been felt by the remotest subject of the empire. In their hands is lodged the power which has ruled the world. Their authority is so extensive—so generally acknowledged, even now, that *truth* itself, will only pass current when under seal of the Church; and virtue to practice on her own account, must have a license.

In this country, they have had a period of two hundred years, to make an experiment in morals. They have framed the institutions, and formed the character of a great nation—they have occupied the seats of learning, and controlled the legislation. It may almost be said that they have made society what it is, and moulded the minds and manners of the people at pleasure. I would not admit, even by implication, that all the master spirits of our country have entertained the popular opinions in theology. I know that a Washington, a Jefferson and a Franklin—that the Nation's Father—that the chief of the Apostle's of Liberty, and he who took the thunderbolts from the armory of heaven—that many of the illustrious dead, have secretly cherished a better faith; a faith not so much like firmness, but closely allied to

that CHARITY that never faileth. Give to these men all the influence they have possessed and exercised, and still it is true that the power of the church has been felt in all the departments of government, and in every walk of life. And yet, with all these means and opportunities at command, instead of performing a great work for humanity, they have, according to their own confession, accomplished nothing. If any one is disposed to question the entire correctness of this remark, let him listen to the communications from the pulpit, and read the popular religious journals. The great theme is the manifest declension in morals and the general apathy in religion. The priests apprehend that the church is in danger, and as for the world, it is about to experience a relapse, alike fatal to its present happiness and future salvation. If there is any ground for these apprehensions, we may repeat the question, on whom is this fearful responsibility to rest? If society is in a bad condition, why have they not made it better? If the standard of morals is low, it is well to raise it up. They have the power, and they have had ample time and opportunity to exercise it. A period of centuries is quite sufficient to give any system a fair trial. If their principles have been preached and practised thus long, and still the condition of society is in no way improved, it is surely high time for the doctors to take their own nostrums, and for the world to test the efficacy of other means. There must be something intrinsically weak in a

system that is productive of no better results. Is it the part of wisdom to attempt to renovate the world by means and instruments so long employed in vain? An illustration in this place, will enable the hearer to form an intelligent judgment. Suppose you were ill, and in a condition to require the professional services of a physician;—let it be supposed that his first prescription is *calomel*:—the second day, being no better, you are directed to continue the same;—the third day, finding that you are still worse, and the symptoms more alarming, he deals out double the number of grains of calomel, and orders the same prescription continued every day for one year. If you were alive at the end of that time you would doubtless think it advisable to change the treatment. Now the world has long been ill. There is a diseased moral action, that affects the whole body. The church has applied its remedies to check the disease. With little variation it has pursued the same mode of treatment from year to year, through a long succession of ages, and what is the result? Is the world any better? Why, the doctors being judges, it is in the condition of the woman who came to Jesus:—She “had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” I therefore submit to the judgment and common sense of the hearer, whether it is not time to give up the patient. Let others try their skill—for every century of the past, give them only

ten years, and if, in the period thus allotted, they do not effect a great and happy change in the physical, the intellectual, the social, moral and religious condition of mankind;—why, let them also resign, and spend the remnant of their days in penance.

But before the people will acknowledge the justice of our claims, and apply our principles in the affairs of life and the government of the world, they must be satisfied that they are founded in truth. It is our privilege to furnish the evidence, and it becomes our appropriate duty to show that our faith is in harmony with Reason and Nature—that it corresponds to the essential constitution and philosophy of all things, and is sanctioned by Revelation. Trusting in God for His blessing, and in your kind indulgence, I will undertake to discharge this duty.

We regret that the acknowledged faith and opinions have done no more to elevate the affections, and improve the condition of man. They have utterly failed to correct the heart or the life. They have disturbed his present peace and darkened his prospects for the future. Thousands of the young and innocent have been induced to relinquish whatever is most beautiful in life—to give up all that renders religion attractive and divine, for a miserable superstition, which, like the Upas, fills the very atmosphere with death. I am reminded that this dark theology, like a great Idol, has been rolling its ponderous car over the world for ages—I follow its desolating track, by the

wreck of noble minds—by the fearful wail of the lost spirit, and the crushed hopes and affections of those I love! Oh! when I look at this picture, drawn with the pencil of reality, in all its deep shadows and startling colors, the brain is oppressed, and the heart is sick; and while I would stifle the inquiry, it finds an utterance:—In the name of reason, of humanity and heaven, is there no hope for man!

It is with no unkind feelings that we expose the errors of the world; whether they have their existence in opinion or practice, in the theories of men, or in actual life, we must be allowed to speak with all boldness, and without fear or favor. We love to tell plain truths in a plain way; they are better understood. We cannot charm the ear with the essence of all language; give us leave to speak an honest mind—listen while we speak, and we ask no more. “Come now, and let us reason together.” It has been said that he who will not reason is a bigot, that he who cannot is a fool, and that he who dare not is a slave. I trust that those whom I address are not wanting in the disposition, the ability or the courage. Let us approach this subject with the consciousness that the mind was made to be free; that it is our high prerogative to think for ourselves, and our duty to speak and act for humanity. May I not hope that you will all feel a deep interest in the subject of our investigations? Is it not well to inquire whether the millions of trembling spirits inhabiting this earth, may not

all rejoice in hope of the glory of God? We cannot be indifferent to the subject, if we heed the cries or regard the claims of humanity. To live like rational and immortal beings, we must be all attention and action. We should labor with a willing and a loving spirit, to correct the errors of men and to remove the evils of the world. To live truly, we must live in generous feelings—in holy thoughts and illustrious actions. The poet has given our idea of life.

“ We live in deeds, not years ; in thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

* * * He most lives,

Who thinks most—feels the noblest—acts the best.”

Hoping that our present labors may aid in some small degree to promote this higher life, we invite you to go with us through the course of illustration and argument. Our invitation is to all—“ COME NOW AND LET US REASON TOGETHER.”

DISCOURSE II.

THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Our God is the God of salvation.—PSALM LXVIII. 20.

ALL Christians and Theists admit the essential attributes of the Divine Being. We shall not therefore stop to prove what no one will pretend to deny ; but proceed at once to reason from the nature of God to the certain results of His government.

In reasoning from the attributes, we shall find that they severally lead to the same conclusion.

I begin with the DIVINE OMNIPRESENCE.

God is present with all His creatures. It is true, we read of those who shall be banished “from the presence of the Lord ;” but we are not to understand that the Divine Presence is, in reality, restricted to certain persons or places. The Hebrews entertained the opinion that the Spirit of Jehovah was confined to the temple ;—that the sanctuary was His dwelling place, in which alone the symbol of His presence was to be seen. When, therefore, they are represented as being “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the

glory of His power,"¹ we understand that at the destruction of their temple, they were to be driven away from the holy place, no more to enjoy the special manifestation of His glorious presence in the sanctuary.

From what we know of the Divine nature, we are assured, that God is in all places alike ; and that His presence extends to every creature He has made. " Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."² It is impossible for any creature of God to be separated from His presence. The Lord is in every place, beholding the evil and the good :—The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him : He is here—He is everywhere, and we may say, in the language of the Psalmist, " Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee ; but the night shineth as the day ; the light and the darkness are both alike to thee."³ Now whatever may be the conclusions drawn from this

1. II. Thess. i. 9.

2. Isa. lvii. 15.

3. Ps. cxxxix. 7—12.

discussion of the Divine Attributes, God is now—He always will be—present with all His creatures. To say that He can withdraw His Divine presence from a single soul, is to deny this essential attribute of His nature, and render Him forever imperfect. Be it remembered, therefore, that God is necessarily and essentially present with all His creatures, in every place; above, beneath and around, the Universe is full of His Being.

II. GOD IS OMNISCIENT.—He is able to comprehend all things. The Scriptures ascribe this wisdom to the Creator:—"Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world."⁴ "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in *wisdom* hast thou made them all."⁵ Indeed, reason, philosophy and Revelation, all represent the Supreme Being as knowing and "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."⁶ It follows, therefore, that all beings, circumstances and events, whether they belong to the past, present, or the future, are ever before Him, and subject to His inspection.

" Did He o'erlook the least of His concerns,
(Since from the least the greatest oft originate.)
Then unforeseen contingency might alarm Him,
And disturb the smooth and equal course of His affairs."

But since nothing great or small, whether past, present or to come, can for one moment escape His

4. Acts xv. 18.

5. Ps. civ. 24.

6. Isa. xlvi. 10.

all-seeing eye; it follows, of necessity, that there can be no unforeseen contingences with God—no fortuitous events under His administration; nor can there be any circumstances or changes in the moral character and condition of His creatures, which He did not clearly foresee, and fully comprehend. From the dawn of creation He beheld the final issue. The vast chain of being was complete before Him, and with a perfect knowledge of the life, character and destiny of all His creatures, He gave them being; and with reference to each, it may be said in truth, He determined “the end from the beginning.” It is true therefore, that the final destiny of man *cannot* be different from the original design, purpose or knowledge of God.

As God is infinitely wise, there can be no possible mistake or imperfection in His purpose and plan, concerning His creatures. If you were to pass judgment on any work of art, you would determine it to be wise or unwise, in proportion as it possessed certain characteristics essential to its perfection. If it manifested a benevolent design, and if there was such an adaptation of the means employed as inevitably to secure the intended result, you would pronounce the work to be a wise one. But if the design was not good, or if there was not such a subserviency of the means as would accomplish the end in view, then, in either case, as one essential characteristic was wanting, you would determine the work to be *unwise*.

It may be well to present some illustrations of this principle. Some time since, we read an account of an *infernal machine* constructed in Paris. If we mistake not, the manifest design in this case was, to destroy the life of the French King. Now we may suppose there was no want of mechanical skill perceptible in the construction of this terrible engine. The several parts may have been well finished and ingeniously put together. But the perfect adaptation of means to the accomplishment of the object intended, was not sufficient to render the work a wise one. It was evidently wanting in the first essential characteristic of wisdom. *The design was not good*, and hence the work was *unwise*.

Again :—An individual resolves to make an instrument that will indicate the progress of time. He begins by forming wheels and springs of different sizes and curious workmanship. At length, these are severally completed, but in putting the whole together, it is found that there is not such an adaptation of the various parts as was necessary to secure the intended object. The purpose was to produce an instrument to measure time. The design was good, but *there is a mistake in the use of the means*, which renders the instrument altogether useless. It follows that this work is devoid of *wisdom*.

Once more :—It is proposed to erect a Christian temple. The object in this case is, to provide a place to be devoted to the worship of God, and the purposes

of moral and religious instruction. The design is good. It only remains to make a judicious use and application of the requisite means, so that the end is accomplished. Wherever there is a good design, and the subserviency of the means is plainly discernible, we must of necessity conclude that the work is founded in wisdom.

Let us apply the argument. The works of God are wise, not merely because they are His; but because they possess the prerequisites I have mentioned. They manifest a good design, and in every instance where we are able to form an intelligent judgment, there is such an arrangement of means as uniformly leads to the intended result. Now unless these two essential characteristics are united in everything that God has created, it cannot be said, in truth, that in wisdom He has made all His works. We would apply this infallible test to a variety of objects in the various departments of the Creator's works, but time will not permit. We must therefore restrict its application to man. Suppose that the design of God in the creation of man was to place him here for a few fleeting moments, and then to annihilate him forever. You would not call that a good design. If the inventor of a complicated machine should make a large number only to break them in pieces with his own hands, the question in your minds would not relate so much to the goodness or wisdom of the man, as to his *sanity*. Indeed, you would naturally infer that he had lost his

reason. We conclude, therefore, that if it was the purpose of God in the creation of man to destroy His own work, the design was not good, and the work is unwise.

Again:—Suppose it to have been the purpose of God to render man endlessly miserable. Every individual of common sense and discernment will readily discover that this was not a good design. The work does not even possess the first characteristic necessary to render it wise. If we admit that there has been a fatal application of means to this fearful end, this is but another evidence that the whole work is forever opposed to all the dictates of wisdom. If you say that the purpose of God in the work of creation was a benevolent one;—that He *did design* the happiness of all, but that all *will not* finally be happy; then, you virtually assume that He has failed in adapting the means to the end, which is an impeachment of His wisdom.

When we affirm that the purpose of God was benevolent—that He designed to render His creatures happy; we only respond to the united voices of Reason, of Nature, and of Revelation. These, all proclaim, in a language that steals through the silent chambers of the soul, like the music of angel voices, to remind us that God is supremely good, and that the plan by which He will accomplish His mighty purpose, is the best which Infinite Wisdom could devise.

Will it be said, that it was the original purpose of God to save all men, but many are impenitent and

will not be saved? This objection has not the merit of a sophism. If you say that the *original* purpose of God was to save all, I affirm that to be His *present* purpose. We shall see from this discussion of the attributes, that God is *unchangeable*; so that His original purpose must be His *final purpose*. If there is one lost on account of the depth of his turpitude, this will be a failure in suiting the means to the end designed. It avails nothing to say that man is desperately wicked. He who knew all things, knew when He created him what his life and character would be. If you still say that man is obstinate, and will not be saved, I reply that God who has power to see and determine the end from the beginning, has declared that He "will have *all men to be saved*." We may, however, inquire further, whether God has the power to accomplish His purpose. And here we are presented with another attribute of the Divine nature.

III. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT.—He is therefore able, and will accomplish His purpose. We read that "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand."⁷ If Omnipotency be one of the Divine attributes, it must follow of necessity that no power in the Universe can successfully oppose Him. As He is the Great First Cause of all things, it is reasonable to infer that everything in the Universe must in some way, derive its existence

7. Dan. iv. 35.

from Him. Nothing can continue to exist in opposition to His will. He is able to subdue all things. All seemingly opposite powers must, therefore, exist by permission, and be subject to His control. He is Almighty. No existing principles—no train of circumstances or events—no combination of men or demons, can resist His power, or pervert the accomplishment of His purpose. To deny this position, is to rob the Great Positive Mind of this essential attribute—to question His right to the Sovereignty of the Universe. All agree, that God is infinite in power—to be consistent, they must admit that “He will do all His pleasure.” Let us briefly recapitulate the several points in the argument :

1. The purpose of God in the creation of Man, was to render him happy.

2. God is infinitely wise ; consequently He can, with unerring precision, adapt the means to the end.

3. God is infinite in power ; and will, therefore, accomplish His purpose. “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia ; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth !”⁸

IV. GOD IS IMPARTIAL.—All are alike the objects of His care, and the subjects of His government. “The Lord is good to all.” “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on

the just and on the unjust.”⁹ The earth and its increase—the light of heaven—the pure air and sparkling waters, are all impartially bestowed. From all we know of His nature, we are satisfied that God must ever regard all His children with the same favorable purpose. They all derive their existence from Him—He is the Father of all—all possess a similar nature, and we may rest assured that He will so adapt the means to the end—so overrule all circumstances and events, as to secure to all at last a glorious destiny. As God is impartial, He certainly did not create some men for immortal joys, and others for endless pains. To assert that He did, is to dispute the Divine Impartiality. The wisdom which teaches this sentiment is from beneath—is “earthly, sensual, devilish.” But we read of another kind of wisdom which is from above. That is “pure”—it is “full of mercy and good fruits.” It is “*without partiality.*”¹⁰ Thus far, this examination of the different attributes seems tending to one conclusion, which may be expressed in the words of the Psalmist: “Our God is the God of salvation.”

There are several essential attributes of the Divine nature yet remaining to be improved in this discussion.

V. GOD IS MERCIFUL.—When the Lord revealed Himself to Moses from the cloud at Sinai, we read that He passed before him and proclaimed, . . . “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and

9. Matth. v. 45.

10. James iii. 15, 17.

abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.”¹¹ When the people continued obstinately to trespass against Him, He still remembered them in mercy. If, for a little season, He visited “their iniquity with stripes,”¹² it was for a wise and gracious purpose. If He concealed His face “for a moment,” He still determined “with everlasting kindness” to have mercy on them.¹³ If mercy is one of the attributes of Deity, it must be eternal as His own nature. To suppose that a time will come in which this attribute of the Divine Mind will no longer be exercised, is quite as absurd as to suppose that God can cease to exist altogether. Unto the “Lord belongeth mercy;” and that “His mercy endureth forever,” is distinctly affirmed more than fifty times in the Scriptures. You readily apprehend, perhaps more fully than I can explain, the nature of this attribute. I know of no word in our language exactly synonymous with mercy. We may however, if necessary, define the term with sufficient accuracy for our present purpose. Mercy implies pity, or compassion for those who suffer, united with a disposition to relieve them. It implies clemency—a spirit of forgiveness towards offenders, with a desire to do them good. It requires benevolence, tenderness and good will to all. The mercy of God is defined to be that essential perfection of His nature, whereby

11. Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

12. Ps. lxxxix. 12

13. Isa. liv. 8.

He pities the offender, and relieves the miseries of His creatures. Now, with reference to the great question of man's destiny, what is the logical inference to be drawn from the nature of this attribute? Suppose we say that some men will be doomed to endless pain. Such a result can never be reconciled with the Divine Mercy. "The mercy of the Lord endureth forever;"—it is the nature of mercy to pity and forgive the offender, and to relieve the sufferer. As His mercy is invested with infinite power to act and accomplish its purpose, it follows that the offender will be forgiven, and the last sufferer will find relief. "With everlasting kindness I will have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." It must be evident that no partial scheme of salvation can be made to harmonize with the infinite mercy of God. If you say that God will finally withdraw His mercy from a part of his creatures, you must prove that He will withdraw His all-pervading presence from a part of the Universe. If you assert that His forgiving mercy will cease to be exercised towards the sinner, you virtually assume that He will cease to be God—"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

We have seen that endless suffering is not compatible with the Divine mercy. But the fatherly correction with which God is pleased to visit His children, is not by any means opposed to His mercy. Hence the Psalmist speaks of the administration of justice, and the punishment of offenders, as an evidence of

God's mercy to them :—'Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy ; for thou renderest to every man according to his works.'¹⁴ Here we are presented with another attribute of the Divine nature.

VI. GOD IS JUST.—Justice is defined to be that essential perfection in God, which renders Him infinitely righteous, both in His nature, and in all His proceedings with His creatures.

Justice requires that the guilty should be punished, and any system of government which fails to secure this end, is manifestly unjust. The common idea of the Divine government, which removes the consequences of sin into the future state, is thus opposed to justice. It proceeds upon the assumption that the sinner may escape deserved punishment, by means of a simple act of repentance, when God 'will by no means clear the guilty.'

Again :—Justice demands that the infliction should be *according to the works of men*—that one should be graduated by the other. In other words, the degree of punishment should correspond to the magnitude of the offence. But the system that dooms half the world to endless pains, has not the slightest reference to this proportion. It is, therefore, opposed to the plainest principles of equity, and utterly indefensible. Between the sins of this world and the supposed torments of hell, there is the same disproportion that distinguishes time from eternity, and the finite from the infinite. To say that sin is an infinite evil, (so

14. Psalms lxii. 12.

far from removing,) only increases the difficulty. It supposes that a finite being can perform an action infinite in its nature, and the magnitude of its consequences, which is impossible. It observes no just distinction, but renders all offences equal—it destroys all degrees of turpitude ; thus, making the little child who is conscious of a single fault, as guilty as the fabled fiend of darkness. If the stream cannot rise above the fountain—if the effect cannot be greater than the cause—surely, a finite being whose powers, and volitions are circumscribed to the passing moment, can never produce an infinite evil. If one sin does not deserve an infinite punishment, it follows of necessity, that all the sins of all men cannot require such an infliction, because no possible number of offences, of a finite character, can equal in magnitude an infinite penalty. Now, as the punishment, to be just, must be in proportion to the offence, it follows that endless punishment is opposed to justice. We read that God will “render to every man according to his works.” Endless misery is not according to our works ; therefore, God will not render that measure of punishment to any man.

Once more ;—I observe that the justice God requires the perfect obedience of all men. INFINITE JUSTICE DEMANDS UNIVERSAL RIGHT. It admits of no punishment that is not wise in its administration, benevolent in its object, and salutary in its influence. In this view of the subject, justice is not opposed to mercy :

they are but different modifications of the Divine goodness—one administers punishment when it is required, and the other withholds it when wisdom determines its infliction to be unnecessary. Thus we see that these attributes of the Divine Mind, are all harmonious in their spirit and operation; and God, instead of being divided against Himself, is of one mind.

The idea, that endless sin and suffering is necessary to satisfy the claims of Justice, is too absurd to be cherished for a moment. Would Divine Justice place the offender in a situation where he would continue to violate its requirements forever? Think you, that Justice would be satisfied with the sufferings of the guilty, without reference to any good as the result? Such a punishment would be unmerciful; and be assured, there is no Justice in earth or heaven, where there is no mercy. But we must leave this point. Let it never be forgotten, that the justice of God demands the perfect rectitude of man. The conclusion is therefore inevitable—the claims of Justice will only be satisfied by *universal obedience and righteousness, which is, UNIVERSAL SALVATION.*

It matters not which of these attributes we employ as the ground of the argument, they severally lead to the same happy conclusion. When all are combined, they constitute the Divine nature, which is LOVE. When the apostle says that "GOD IS LOVE," he comprehends all His attributes, and gives us a most perfect description of His whole nature. Finally, I observe,

GOD IS IMMUTABLE.—His nature is not susceptible of any change. With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. As God is unchangeable, He will always remain what He now is. If, in the beginning, He was good to all, He will be equally so in the end. If His original purpose was to render all men happy; that, certainly, will be His ultimate purpose. Hence we must conclude, that no soul will be lost. It matters not where the creature may be placed in heaven, earth, or hell—God is with him. If I ascend up into heaven, He is there—if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, God is there—if I make my bed in hell, behold, He is there.¹⁵ Indeed, we can never go beyond His presence,

“Where universal love smiles not around.”

He is in all places alike—His centre is everywhere, and no creature of His power will ever find the circumference of His being. Suppose man banished from heaven, and shut up in hell;—God is there—He will be with him—His wisdom is there to comprehend his condition—His mercy is there to pity and forgive, and relieve the sufferer—His justice is there to secure obedience and righteousness; and verily, these, armed with Almighty power, will save his soul from death. It is with peculiar propriety that we appropriate to ourselves the sentiment of the motto—**OUR GOD IS THE GOD OF SALVATION.**

15. Psalms cxxxix. 8, 9.

DISCOURSE III.

THE WORKS OF NATURE.

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”—ROM. I. 20.

It was not the design of God, in the work of Revelation, to make man a religious being. This end was secured in His creation. From the beginning he possessed religious faculties and capacities, which depend upon no system for their manifestation. There is a principle *in man* that prompts him to reverence a higher power. This has given rise to the numerous systems of faith and worship. Various causes have operated in giving the religious sentiment its direction; but the principle itself has a place in every human soul. It is not the result of second causes. Some other agency may mark out the course, prepare a channel, and give direction to the stream, but the spring is in man, and it flows out as naturally as the current of his life. It is not, therefore, the true and proper design of religion to change the nature of man, or to confer any new powers upon him; but simply to guide and govern him in the exercise of those he possesses. Hence, it follows, that a religious system will promote the happiness of man; and is

valuable to him, only so far as it tends to the proper development of the religious sentiment.

The religion of nature would be sufficient, if its dictates were attentively observed and faithfully obeyed, to prevent those flagrant abuses of this principle, which mark the history of man in almost every age. God has nowhere left His creatures in total darkness. Some rays of the light Divine, penetrate the veil that is spread over the nations of the earth. The heathen sees around him glimmerings of the Eternal Spirit. The Almighty speaks to man in the voices of Nature, and

—“the poor Indian sees God in clouds, and hears him in the wind.”

Indeed, wherever man exists, under whatever circumstances he may be placed, and however limited may be the developments of his intellect and the powers of his comprehension, he has nevertheless some idea of a Supreme Intelligence. The rude and uncivilized will not, of course, possess elevated and comprehensive views of His existence and perfections. Their conceptions will be low and grovelling. Still, it is not alone in christian lands that Deity has made Himself known. His law is written in the hearts of men, and even the light of Nature, if faithfully improved, would guide them aright. This may be inferred from the language of the apostle:—“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:—Which shew the work

of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one another,"¹

In the text and its connection, the idea is plainly set forth, that man may acquire a general knowledge of the existence, unity and wisdom of the Divine Being, from the contemplation of His works.

The works of art convey to the mind the idea of mental agency. In all of these, from the simplest to the most intricate, wherever we discover a subserviency of means to certain ends, we regard it as incontestable evidence of intelligence. The operation of mind and the proofs of design are so plainly discernible here, as to satisfy even the *Atheist*, that they are the product of human ingenuity. What if some of these works have existed for ages? So long indeed that no tradition remains respecting their origin? This fact can never invalidate the conclusion. The antiquarian gathers the remains of art from among the ruins of ancient cities—the traveller gazes with astonishment at the lofty pyramids, but we never doubt that these are all the work of man, though we were not present to witness their construction, nor yet, because they belong to a period in which history had no voice. The evidence here is sufficient to enable us to reason philosophically. In most of the works of art, there is a manifest design—the adaptation of means to the end is clearly seen, and hence it

1. Romans ii. 14, 15.

is impossible to err in the conclusion. Now, the Atheist himself would reject, with utter contempt, the idea that any law of Nature, or any principle of order, independent of the intelligence and industry of man, was sufficient to account for the existence of these things.

But let this reasoning be applied to the works of nature. These are vast beyond conception, and infinitely more complicated. The evidences of design are no less apparent here. The proofs of intelligence discoverable in the works of creation as far surpass those we have considered, as Nature transcends in the magnitude and sublimity of her operations the feeble efforts of art. If the simple structures reared by man, convey to our minds the idea of mental agency, who will suppose that the vast frame work of creation is not the plan of Infinite Wisdom, and the handiwork of Omnipotent Power. If we associate the idea of intelligence with the comparatively insignificant creations of art, he must possess a mind diseased, who can look out upon the wide world around him, and contemplate the order and harmony which mark the stupendous operations of Nature, and ascribe the whole to accident, to chance, to the inherent principles of gross matter, or any other blind and unintelligent cause.

In the application of the argument, let us select for our purpose, the sphere we inhabit. Though a mere speck, scarcely discernible on the map of the Universe,

it is nevertheless the theatre of all human operations. To be a fit residence for man, it was necessary that the different portions of the earth's surface should be alternately warmed by the solar rays. In order to expose the different quarters of the globe in reciprocal succession to the light and heat of the sun, the earth has a rotary motion. This motion is not essential to its existence; yet if suspended, vegetation would cease and animal life would become extinct. In this case, one half of the earth being constantly exposed to the solar rays, would be consumed with the ever increasing heat, while the other, chained with the eternal frosts, would be consigned to everlasting night. The annual revolution around the sun was equally necessary to constitute the earth the abode of man. To secure this end, the earth must receive an impetus which would exactly balance the sun's attractive power. If the momentum was insufficient, the earth would proceed to the sun; if too great, it would be driven from its orbit, and become the angel of destruction to the distant worlds! The equilibrium is nicely adjusted, and the earth moves on as it has ever moved, since first the morning sun threw his bright beams athwart the gloom profound! Are there no manifestations of design in all this?—no proofs of a far-seeing Intelligence, having the power to grasp immensity? Look at the great moving scene around! Examine the complex and curious mechanism of Nature, and tell me if the visible Universe does not

reveal the existence of an invisible Being, who performs His wonders above, beneath and around—who “doeth His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.”²

Again:—It was necessary that the earth should be watered. Without the gentle dews that moisten and fertilize the soil, it would soon become barren as the burning sands of the desert. To secure this important end, so essential to the continuance of vegetable and animal life, a great process is constantly going on in nature, by means of which water is raised in the form of vapor into the upper regions, where it is condensed, and from which it descends in refreshing showers to renovate the earth. Any derangement in this order of things, would be attended with the most disastrous consequences. The countless myriads of living creatures that exist in the air, the earth and the fountains of waters, would perish. I ask you to examine the evidences of wisdom, so plainly perceptible in Nature’s works. Observe with what perfect uniformity these stupendous operations are carried on from age to age; and reflect that the existence, arrangement, and movements of this system, all tend to one great end, which is, LIFE AND HAPPINESS.

If it is affirmed that all this results from the operation of natural laws, my reply is, a law presupposes an intelligent *actor*, who chooses this method to accomplish his designs. The law itself proves the

2. Dan’el iv. 35.

existence of the legislator; for it is the peculiar method according to which he proceeds. By this means, order is preserved, and the ends of government are secured. It would be in vain for me to maintain that any principle of law or order is sufficient to account for the existence of the temple in which we meet and worship—then,

“ Go to that fane most catholic and solemn,
 Which God hath planned.
 To that cathedral, boundless as our wonder,
 Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply;
 Its choir, the winds and waves—its organ, thunder—
 Its dome, the sky !”

And tell me if this mighty fabric, with all its beauty and grandeur, is not the plan of the Infinite Mind. Fix your eye upon those luminous orbs which shed their light on the far-distant worlds:—They are the gems that glitter on the lofty brow of Creation. Long ages have rolled away—empires, kingdoms and states have fallen to arise no more!—Yet still they shine, as first they shone,

“ In the young morning of Creation’s light.”

The voice of Revelation is heard, saying, “ The heaven’s declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.”³ Nature, with her ten thousand tongues, confirms the truth, that these are the workmanship of Him “ who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span.”⁴

3. Psalm xix. 1.

4 Isaiah xl. 12.

It is not sufficient for us to be satisfied that God is. We wish to know something of His nature and purposes, and to this subject we invite your attention. As man is at the disposal of his Creator, it follows that this inquiry has an important bearing upon his future prospects; and it is from this circumstance that the subject considered with reference to man, derives its chief importance.

Suppose an individual to live under the form of government termed an absolute monarchy—he would certainly derive no satisfaction from the mere consideration that there was one who had power to dispose of him as he pleased, without reference to his interest or wishes. Indeed, it is quite probable that this, instead of contributing in any degree to his happiness, would have the effect to render him miserable. Being profoundly ignorant of the disposition and character of his royal master, he would not know whether to anticipate good or evil at his hands. The future would be left to conjecture. The sovereign might exercise his authority in such a manner as to promote the best interests of his subjects, and he might not. There would at least exist the apprehension in the mind of the subject, of being torn from friends and home—cast into prison, and left to drag out his weary days and nights in solitude, darkness and chains. The bare possibility of being thus disposed of, would be sufficient to disturb his peace and fill the mind with gloomy

forebodings. Need I remind you that God is the Sovereign of the world, and that the case I have supposed presents a fair representation of the condition of that man who is ignorant of the Divine nature? Such an one knows not whether he shall exist at all in the future. Whether he is destined to dwell with beatified spirits, or with howling demons—in the abodes of light, or the prison house of despair—is to him a matter of doubt and uncertainty. It will be perceived, therefore, that the subject of the present inquiry is an important one.

It will not of course be expected, nor is it necessary to satisfy the mind, that we should be able to explain all the phenomena of nature, in such a manner as to harmonize with the infinite benevolence of Deity. The light of science is insufficient, and the perceptive powers of man too feeble, to enable him to understand all the secret and mysterious operations that are going on around him. The machinery of nature is so exceedingly complicated, and its movements so profoundly intricate, as to perplex the wisest philosopher. If, however, it is made to appear from our examination, that happiness instead of misery is the result of the present order of things, it will be sufficiently evident that the arrangement is founded in wisdom, and proves the benevolence of its Author.

Life is a blessing. The existence God has conferred on His creatures is productive of happiness. All who have examined the book of Nature with care, have found the evidence on this point full and convincing.

Indeed, the earth, the air, and the fountains of waters—the wilderness and the solitary place—the fountains of the great deep and the burning sands of the desert, are all full of life. They are peopled with their respective inhabitants. Each is wisely adapted to its own element, and fitted for the peculiar situation in which it is placed. This is true of every living thing—of the creatures which seek the protection of man, as well as those that dwell amid the deep solitudes of Nature's wild retreats. It is true of the little insect, frail as the gossamer that floats on the summer's breeze, no less than of the bold eagle who maketh his aerie where the storms gather, and the thunders smite the everlasting rocks! Each is happy in its sphere, and to the full extent of its capacity.

It is equally true of man, that pleasure, though unsought, is nevertheless the natural result of the proper exercise of his powers. His senses are doubtless more perfect than those of inferior creatures, and the pleasure he derives from this source is more refined and exquisite. He views with delight whatever is bright and beautiful. He who designed the happiness of man, has made everything necessary to his enjoyment. Even the vestments of nature are of a color most grateful to his eye. For him, the flowers impart their fragrance to the passing breeze:—the groves of spices and the delicious fruits of autumn are for his gratification:—for him, the earth is filled

with music, and he goes forth to listen to the soft tones that come

“From every tree, and hill, and mountain side.”

But man has higher powers, and on the culture and exercise of these, the measure of his happiness is made to depend. The intellectual faculties constitute in man, the spring of more refined and elevated enjoyment. Though this is not ordinarily, if indeed it be ever, the object by which man is led to exercise the powers of his mind ; still, it is true that happiness is the result of proper mental as well as physical action. The pleasure derived from this source, is usually in proportion to the intellectual refinement and moral purity of the recipient. As the higher faculties are developed and improved, the capacity for enjoyment is enlarged and the measure of happiness is increased.

But I am reminded that this world does not, by any means, present a scene of uninterrupted enjoyment. In the picture of human life as it exists, there are many deep shades of woe. Man is not always happy ; yet, after all that has been said of the miseries of this life, they are slight when compared with the vast amount of happiness everywhere diffused and enjoyed. We have had occasion to remark, that the proper exercise of our powers, whether of body or mind, is productive of pleasure instead of pain. It is when these are abused—when the Creator’s laws, either moral, physical or organic, are violated, that derange-

ment in the economy of Nature ensues, and man is made to suffer. The infliction is wise and just; nor is the *goodness* of God displayed alone in what we enjoy. It is equally manifest in the wise arrangement by which we are made to suffer. It requires but a superficial examination of the subject, to satisfy an unprejudiced mind that punishment, under the Divine administration, is *corrective* in its nature. In other words, the pain has a tendency to remove the evil, or to prevent its recurrence. I will endeavor to elucidate this point. There are certain immutable laws, essential to life and happiness. Man is endowed with faculties which enable him to perceive and obey the institutions of Nature; and all experience proves, that pleasure is the invariable result of obedience to their requirements. This being the case, it would be preposterous indeed, to question either the wisdom or benevolence of the Being who instituted these laws, because pain is the result of an infringement. Indeed, this one fact must prove, beyond all reasonable controversy, that they are founded in wisdom, and evince the goodness of their Author. We will take as an example, the law by which the fluids of organic bodies may be congealed and dissipated. It is well known that extreme cold or heat will produce these results; and you are aware that in either case, the consequence is, the destruction of the vital principle. It is true, that many persons have suffered death from exposure to the cold. Vast numbers have experienced much pain from this cause; but even this fact, so far

from furnishing a valid objection to our reasoning, may be claimed as evidence of the Divine benignity. If it were otherwise—if the pain, necessary to remind us of our danger, was removed, we should be incapable of self-preservation. The inhabitants of cold climates would be in constant danger of losing their lives from this cause. As it is, Nature is not regardless of her children—they are kindly admonished. Pain is to them an angel of mercy, sent to indicate the proximity of danger, and to warn them to flee from the impending destruction. The child that has once put its hand in the fire and experienced the painful consequences, will not designedly expose itself a second time to the action of this element. Thus we see, in this case also, the pain has a tendency to correct, or rather to *prevent*, the evil. It does more to preserve the child from destruction, than even the mother's watchful care.

Man cannot plead ignorance of these laws. Whether in savage or civilized life, he has the ability to guard against the danger, and to preserve his life and limbs. Even in infancy and early childhood, we become acquainted with their operation. Let me instance another example:—It shall be the law of gravity, as applied to the child in its first attempt to walk. Its steps are incautious and uncertain; it falls, and the accident occasions severe pain. Now, I call your attention to the fact, that the child has already become acquainted with the existence of this great essential law of Nature. To be satisfied of this, you

have only to observe its future movements. The next effort is far more guarded, and thus by repeated trials and the exercise of great caution, it acquires the free use of its limbs. Let us suppose the child so constituted, that a wound in the flesh, or the fracture of a bone, will produce no pain. In this case, it would fail to discover the necessity of adapting its movements to the existing law. Insensible to pain, it would use no precaution to guard against repeated violations. And thus, by a total indifference to this all-pervading principle, the most complicated and beautiful of the Creator's works would be mutilated and destroyed.

These illustrations are sufficient to show that the goodness of God is as much displayed in what we suffer, as in what we enjoy. Then, let not man question the Divine benevolence because pain is the consequence of his disobedience. In leaving this department of the Creator's works, I cannot forbear the remark, that man need not be ignorant of his Maker. The existence—the infinite wisdom, and the boundless benevolence of God—these are written out in all His works and ways. “The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”

The doctrine of the text is, that man may learn the character and disposition of the Divine Being, from the phenomena of Nature and the visible objects of creation. From which of these am I to learn that God is angry, “after the manner of men?” Am I to look at the great deep,

“ When the storm
Comes o’er the sky, and lashes up the waves
To deeds of vengeance ?”

Think you that in wrath,

“ He takes the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
With deafening clamors, on the slippery clouds !”

Is this the semblance of His terrible majesty ? Does the wild ocean’s wave present the deep impress of His Almighty ire ? Will the Christian say that this scene of fierce commotion indicates the disposition of his God ? Nay. It is thus the heathen in his blindness beholds the Deity. When the billows rush in wild tumult to the shore, and Nature’s awful bass shakes the deep caverns of the sea, he trembles to think the gods are angry ! But *we* have not read the book of Nature thus. The tempest and the storm, no less than the succeeding calm, demonstrate to our minds, the goodness of God. When He uttereth His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens ; and He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth ; He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures.”⁵ These are among the means by which His blessings are diffused. With His lightnings, He rends the fountains of the sky, and pours their treasures on the thirsty earth. The storm is but the *pencil* with which the great Artist restores the fading colors on Nature’s canvass, and paints the landscape with a more vivid

beauty. The noxious vapors are dissipated, and the atmosphere is purified by the war of elements. The earth is rendered lovely by the descending shower. It smiles anew, and hope revives, when the heavens weep. Then let man, as he goes forth with new life and vigor, to inhale the pure air and the rich fragrance of the opening flowers, remember the Author of all his blessings. Let him "praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works;" for His mercy tempers the winds, and His wisdom guides the storm. His love is reflected from every blue wave—it whispers in each passing breeze, and shines amid the dark waters, and the thick clouds He maketh His pavilion!

The wisdom of this world teaches that God is a *partial Being*—that while some of His children will forever enjoy the smiles of His love, others will be consigned to darkness and chains, and cursed with an existence of unmingled wretchedness. Now we learn that "the invisible things of God are plainly seen, being understood by the things that are made." Where, then, amid the works of creation, shall we find the proofs of this sentiment? The sun shines with equal splendor upon the evil and the good, and the rain descends alike on the just and the unjust. Does this teach the lesson that God is a partial, malevolent and vindictive Being? Is this the enduring record of His terrible vengeance? Nay. But these are "confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ," that He is good to all; that His tender

mercies are over all, and that He will ever bless and curse not. The Saviour read the book of Nature aright. He discovered therein the living evidences of the Father's love for all His children. He pointed His hearers to the sun and the rain as proofs of the universality of the Divine benevolence. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that 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.*"⁶ He would prove from this, that the Father's love is impartial as the light of heaven and the refreshing showers that descend and beautify the earth. He would have us learn from these, His works, that God is kind and merciful, even to the unthankful and the evil, and that in proportion as we love our enemies and render blessing for cursing, we shall resemble Him who is the standard of all perfection. The wisdom which teaches that God is a partial Being, is "from beneath," and is founded in ignorance and selfishness. The idea is utterly opposed to the revelations of God in Nature. The earth is bright and beautiful—on the heavens above, the GREAT INVISIBLE has inscribed in characters of light, the evidences of His impartial love. The sun that shines alike for all, whose diffusive rays are felt over the wide earth, is the semblance of His peerless glory; and you will remember that

we are to learn from these visible objects of creation the character of the invisible Creator. The works of Nature so far as man has been permitted to extend his observations, teach but one lesson—*the infinite wisdom and the boundless benevolence of their Author*. In this conclusion we must rest, and not till the sun shines for the benefit of a few, and the dews of heaven descend to fertilize the fields of the just only, shall we believe that God is a partial Being, and that the righteous alone are the objects of His care, and the recipients of His love.

Who cannot see that the narrow and partial theology of the times, is opposed to the character of God and the principles of His government, as revealed in Nature? The systems of men which limit the illimitable goodness of God, and confine the choicest of heaven's blessings to the few, owe their origin to the blindness and selfishness of man. They rob the Great Central Spirit of all that is supremely excellent in His nature. They darken the brightness of His ineffable glory, and ascribe to Him a character black as the deep shadows of Erebus! But in the works of creation—in the Universe—we behold Him in His beauty and majesty.

“ He sits enthroned amidst the spheres,
And glory, like a garment, wears:”—

His wisdom and goodness are displayed in every department of His works. “He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.” The earth and the waters, the lofty summits and the green isles of the

sea, are beautiful, and the heavens above are radiant with His smile.

It matters not to what extent the Christian philosopher may extend his researches, he must leave this field unexplored, for it is one to which the mental eye can descry no bounds. Brief and imperfect as our discussion of this great theme has been, we cannot but regard the argument as conclusive in support of our position, that the works of Creation prove the existence of an Infinite Intelligence, prompted by Divine Love, and guided by unerring Wisdom in the production of sentient beings.

The great volume of Nature is open before us. It contains the hand-writing of God! He who reads its instructive page aright, will learn that when the delusive theories and the idle speculations of man are swept away, the philosophy of the text will remain, and the sublime teachings of Nature will be understood.

“O may the understanding ever read
 This glorious volume which thy wisdom made!
 May sea and land, and earth and heav'n be join'd,
 To bring th' Eternal Author to my mind!

* * * * *

When earth's in bloom, or planets proudly shine,
 Adore, my heart, the majesty Divine!”

We have labored (possibly with some degree of success,) to illustrate and enforce the principle recognized in the text, that the attributes of the Deity and His disposition and purposes, may be known and understood from the nature of His works. If our

examination tend to strengthen the conviction that goodness appears in all the works and ways of God—if we are enabled to discern more clearly the perfection of His wisdom—if amid the storms and conflicts of time, we can trust more fully in His parental tenderness and love; and finally, if we are led to cherish a deeper gratitude to Him for His unnumbered blessings, our labor will not have been in vain.

To secure our individual happiness, the best interests of the race and the approbation of God, we must seek an acquaintance with the Divine institutions—study the principles of His government, and yield obedience to His laws. Let this be the great object of our pursuit, and the tendency of our labors will be to hasten the happy time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth. When from the distant isles—from the ocean's waves—from every hill, and valley, and mountain top—from every creature that is in heaven and on earth, and such as are in the sea, shall go up the everlasting anthem of His praise.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF GOOD AND EVIL.

“ I form the light and create darkness : I make peace and create evil : I the Lord do all these things.”—ISAIAH XLV. 7.

THE ancient religion of Persia, and other Oriental nations, maintained the existence of two opposite eternal principles—*Good* and *Evil*. Light was deemed the most appropriate symbol of the good principle or Deity, and hence he was worshipped by fire: whereas, Darkness was viewed as the proper representative of evil. From these two co-eternal and independent causes, all things were supposed to emanate. This system was modified, and perhaps essentially improved, by Zoroaster, who taught the supremacy of one independent Being, and the existence of two subordinate deities—one the Angel of Light and Goodness, and the other of all Darkness and Evil. One of these antagonist powers was supposed to preside over the region of Light and Happiness, and the other over the realm of Darkness and Misery. These were represented as engaged in a perpetual struggle for the mastery, without, perhaps, the certain prospect that either would effectually subdue the other. According to this system, man was left to yield to the

direction and submit to the government of either one or the other of these principles. Those who followed the Good, were to be blessed with perpetual enjoyment in the world of Light—while the votaries of the opposite principle were destined to remain under the dominion of Evil ; and as a certain consequence to be miserable forever. It appears that the philosophers who were converted from the religion of Zoroaster to Christianity, attempted, with some degree of success, to blend the two systems into one. Thus the religion of Jesus Christ was rendered corrupt, by those who had been indoctrinated in the schools of the Magi.

In the text, there is a manifest allusion to the Oriental Philosophy. The idea of two independent causes, engaged in the production of good and evil, is expressly denied. God asserts His absolute supremacy, and declares by His prophet, that He is the sole Creator of all.

There can be but one Great First Cause of all things. The very idea of a Supreme Being forbids the existence of any other power, which is not inferior to, and dependant upon, His own. The supreme power is the highest power. It admits no equal, but controls and governs all others. All agree in ascribing infinite power to God. If He is indeed Omnipotent, it must follow of necessity, that no other being in the Universe can possess this power. Omnipotency is power without limitation, and can only be ascribed to the Supreme Deity. But if we admit the possibility

of an opposite principle or power, possessing an independent existence, with the ability to oppose the authority and to defeat the purposes of Jehovah, then, as we fix a limit to the power of God, we deny this essential attribute of His nature.

If two powers or principles were exactly equal, it would be improper to say that one was greater or higher than the other. That which admits of *no equal*, which is superior to *all others*, and that only, is the supreme power. If God is the Great First Cause, then this independent power must belong to Him. It follows, therefore, that every other power in the Universe—all other beings and principles, must derive their existence from Him, and be subject to His control. Thus we trace all things to the same original cause; and we say with Dr. Clarke, “that those powers whom the Persians held to be the original authors of good and evil to mankind, representing them by *Light* and *Darkness*, as their proper emblems, are no other than creatures of God, the instruments which He employs in His government of the world, ordained or permitted by Him in order to execute His wise and just decrees; and there is no power, either of good or evil, independent of the one Supreme God, infinite in power and in goodness.”¹ God Himself (the prophet being the witness,) has sanctioned this doctrine, and it is taught in the most significant terms in the language of the text. “I

1. Commentary on the text.

form the light and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things."

We are now to inquire into the nature of Good and Evil, and from these to argue the result of the Divine government and the destiny of man.

Jesus said, "there is none good but one, that is God." The goodness of God may be defined to be that essential excellence of His nature which consists in the infinite perfection of all His attributes. This is peculiar to the Supreme Being, and must be eternal as the Divine existence. If goodness belong essentially to God, and if all His attributes and perfections are infinite and eternal, it is certain that He will, in the end, overcome and remove everything inconsistent with His own nature.

But while *Good* in the highest possible sense appertains to the being of God, *Evil* is, and must of necessity be restricted to inferior natures. It does not affect the Divine Being ;—it cannot mar the beauty and harmony of His nature, or tarnish the glory of His name. It is certain, therefore, that nothing which we denominate Evil, can possibly exist in God. On the contrary, Evil of every name and form, is only an imperfect condition of His creatures. Evil is either natural or moral. Natural evil is an *imperfect natural condition*. Moral evil is an *imperfect moral condition*. Or in other words, moral evil implies that imperfect condition of man in which His volitions and His actions are opposed to the Divine requirements.

I would be distinctly understood in the premises. When I speak of Good and Evil in contradistinction, I mean by the one a *positive principle*, which, from its Divine origin, must be strictly *eternal*. By the other, (*i. e.*, Evil,) I understand a *peculiar condition*, which, from its very nature, must be *temporary*. If this definition be correct, you perceive that the difference between good and evil is not restricted to moral qualities; but while one is an indestructible and immutable principle, the other is a mere *condition*, susceptible of modification, and may be wholly removed or destroyed. The first proposition may be definitely stated thus:—Good, in the most exalted sense, is not an effect, but a cause. It does not, therefore, consist in kind words, actions or dispositions, but it is the Divine principle—the invisible Spirit, of which these are the external manifestations. This peculiar excellence is of God, and will exist forever, because His nature is eternal. This must be sufficiently evident. The second proposition relates to the nature of evil, and will require further elucidation. We will first endeavor to account for the existence of Evil, natural and moral, and then proceed to a more particular illustration of its nature. Here it may be necessary to make another distinction, and to speak of what we may denominate the Evil of *Imperfection*.

Absolute perfection is the peculiar characteristic of Deity. No being can be absolutely perfect that does not possess an independent existence. Man does not.

exist of himself. His being and all his faculties are derived from another. He is therefore dependent, and consequently imperfect. It is true, we sometimes speak of men and frequently of inanimate objects, as being perfect; but the term, when thus applied, is always used in a relative sense. One of a species may be distinguished for superior qualities; another may be greatly inferior—comparing one with the other, this term may be applied. But to say that a creature may possess *absolute perfection*, involves a contradiction. It is virtually assuming that one may be created, and yet self-existent—that he may derive all the powers of his being from another, and at the same time be independent, which is impossible. It is not in the power of the Creator to produce such a being, for the plain and obvious reason, that no one can possess the powers and attributes of both the finite and the Infinite. We ascribe infinite power to Jehovah; but we are not to understand that he can do that which is contrary to Himself, or incompatible with the principles of His government. For example, God cannot do wrong, because this would be opposed to His nature. He cannot invest one of His earthly creatures with His own attributes, in all their original greatness and glory, because this is impossible in the nature of things. We conclude, therefore, that the most perfect man on earth is, from the constitution of his nature, separated by an infinite distance from that absolute perfection which we ascribe alone to God.

Thus we see that man was originally and necessarily imperfect. *Imperfection is an evil*—and as it is an essential characteristic of created being, it follows that this form of Evil must exist, or there could be no creation.

We are now to speak briefly, of *the origin of moral evil*. On a subject which has so long engaged the attention of the christian philosopher, it becomes every man to be modest in the expression of his opinion. We must, however, speak with that confidence which springs from an honest conviction.

We have had occasion to observe, that absolute perfection, is the great characteristic of the Divine Being—that the creature was, of necessity, imperfect from the beginning. Man was therefore liable to fall from his integrity, in consequence of this original imperfection of his nature. It can hardly be necessary to argue this point for a single moment. Indeed, the simple fact that man is a transgressor, proves his original liability to sin. The evidence of the truth of this position may be drawn from the present condition of the whole race. Every sinner on earth, is a living witness, that man was not originally free from all tendency to evil—that the evil of imperfection existed in, and was inseparable from his nature. In a comprehensive sense, Evil is any derangement in the general economy. Its distinctive character is to be determined by the immediate cause that operates in its production. When pain or temporary derangement is the result of natural causes, it is termed

natural Evil. If it proceed from wrong volitions, it is moral Evil. These are closely identified, and both are consequent upon the original Evil of imperfection. There are many cases in which the connection between natural and moral Evil is plainly discernible. The pain occasioned by hunger, thirst and cold, is included in the train of natural Evils. This may prompt an individual to take unlawful possession of his neighbor's goods, and appropriate them to his own use. Thus the existence, or the apprehension of natural Evil, may lead to actual transgression, which is moral Evil. We may therefore conclude that all Evil, whether natural or moral, is the legitimate consequence of that original imperfection, which was inseparable from the nature of man. While we view it as the immediate result of second causes, we must of necessity, trace the whole vast chain of causation, and the entire system of things, to one original and independent cause—even to GOD. He is the sovereign Author of all things—of Good and Evil—of the darkness which is the habitation of His throne; and the light that is inaccessible, and full of glory. This conclusion is confirmed by the high sanction of His word.

“I am JEHOVAH, and none else,
Forming light, and creating darkness;
Making peace, and creating evil:

I JEHOVAH am the Author of all these things.”²

Evil, natural or moral, considered as an *end*, would

2. Dr. Clark's translation. See Commentary.

furnish an objection to the Divine goodness. But if it be necessarily temporary and restricted to the sphere of our present existence, it may be overruled for wise and benevolent purposes. We should remember that with reference to man, the present existence is not the ultimate design. That remains to be developed in the future. Could we comprehend the whole plan of the Divine government, we should find it in harmony with the infinite wisdom and benevolence of God. We should trace each dark and bending line to the great centre of His love. See Him bringing light out of darkness :

“ Out of seeming evil, still educing good,
And better still, in infinite progression.”

Having spoken of the origin of Evil, we will now proceed to a further illustration of its nature. Let the proposition be distinctly understood. When we speak of Good and Evil, we intend by one a Divine principle which, from its nature, must exist forever. The other term we employ, not to represent an opposite principle, but merely the *absence of the first*. It implies only a negative state, or an imperfect condition, which, in the nature of things, must come to an end. The correctness of this position will be evident on a moment's reflection. Good, in the highest possible sense, is not a condition of man—it is the nature of God. It is not a peculiar state of a moral agent with reference to the Divine requirements—but it is an eternal principle—it is not an *effect*, which is seen only in the earth—in this little corner

of the Universe, but it is the GREAT FIRST CAUSE, and it exists through all space and in all worlds.

Evil, is only an effect produced by the operation of secondary causes. It does not exist in God. It is not a constituent principle or element of His Nature; but only an imperfect condition of His creatures. With this view of the nature of Good and Evil, it can hardly be a question with a rational man, which of the two will triumph. One is of God—it fills immensity and must exist forever. The other appertains to man and is circumscribed by the narrow sphere of his present existence. One contains that which is essential to perpetuity of being, while the other is in its nature, *self-destructive*. The idea that evil contains the elements of its own destruction may require further elucidation. The arguments and illustrations which might be employed in the discussion of this point, are numerous and conclusive. The subversion of governments and the fall of empires, kingdoms and states, furnish many striking proofs of the self-destructive power of Evil. The voice of History and the lessons of experience prove that the national existence can never long survive the national virtue. When the powers of government are made subservient to a corrupt and unhallowed ambition, the sceptre is easily broken. When a moral poison is transfused through every vein and artery of the great heart, and corruption like an insidious disease fastens upon the vitals of the nation; then, when the evil has gained its greatest magnitude, it is invariably

destroyed by the dissolution of the system. If the government be corrupt, it will—*it must*—be dissolved, and thus the corruptions of the system end with the system itself.

It must be evident, that while these evils waste the energies of a people and destroy the nation, they have also a *self*-destructive power. The national evils can exist no longer than the nation. They perish together, and are buried in a common sepulchre.

We have discovered a law which is by no means restricted to the political world. We may trace its operations in the empire of Nature. If the germ of the plant be defective, it will speedily wither and die. When the vine is no longer beautiful and fruitful by reason of the omniverous worm at its root, it is decomposed, and enters into other and more perfect forms of vegetable life. If the mountain oak be unsound, it will fall—the progress of dissolution may be slow, but just in proportion as the evil prevails, the elements which sustain it are diminished. When the whole is resolved into its original elements, the work of decay is of necessity arrested—the pre-existing evil is at an end, and new forms of life and beauty spring up out of the dust.

If we turn our attention to the animal kingdom, we shall find additional confirmation of the truth of our position. The proofs of the self-destructive nature of Evil, which may be drawn from this source, are if possible, more convincing than those already noticed. Let us briefly consider some of these:—

The want of food may occasion severe pain. This pain is an evil, but it can only exist for a very brief period. If not otherwise relieved, it will soon terminate in the dissolution of the body. Thus the evil destroys itself. Extreme heat and cold produce suffering. When pain is the result of these, or indeed of any other natural cause, it is termed *natural evil*. It is true that pain, in itself considered, is always an evil; yet it is easy to see that in these and all similar cases, it is employed for a benevolent purpose. Man, when deprived of sufficient sustenance, exposed to the frost, the fire, and the various forms of disease to which the human system is liable, would be utterly incapable of self-preservation. But pain, like a trusty sentinel, gives the alarm at the approach of the enemy. It never ceases to warn us of the danger while there is a hope of escape. When it is no longer possible to resist the foe, it destroys the citadel, and dies amid the ruins. The pain occasioned by the ravages of disease, when not alleviated by remedial agents, is usually of short continuance. When the evil becomes intolerable, it ends in the destruction of the vital principle. When life is extinct, there can be no more pain; hence the evil is effectually destroyed. When the animal economy is injured beyond the possibility of recovery, death comes to put an end to the evil, by a dissolution of the system. Whether from accident, disease or the infirmities of age, the organic structure is rendered too imperfect to answer a benevolent design, it is reduced

to its constituent elements. This is certainly a wise and merciful arrangement. The evil destroys itself, and removes the bodies that are diseased and mutilated, only to repeople the earth with forms of youth and beauty.

Not only is natural evil self-destructive ; but every modification of evil of which it is possible to conceive, tends to the same ultimate. The difference between natural and moral evils is confined to the separate causes which operate in their production. In their nature and effects, they are substantially the same. They all have their origin and their end in the earth, and in no case can they extend beyond the bounds of time, or survive the present constitution of things.

Thus we see that Evil invariably carries with it, a self-destructive power. If the body of earth be destroyed, it is that we may inherit the immortal—it terminates the present imperfect mode of being, only that we may enter on a higher life and a more exalted destiny.

These views of the nature of Good and Evil, leave no room to doubt the final issue, as it relates to the destiny of man. While one is the GREAT POSITIVE PRINCIPLE from which all things proceed, and to which they are all tending at last, the other is a *mere condition* of some of those things in the incipient stages of their progress, when not sufficiently unfolded to disclose the ultimate design. The objects to which we ascribe Evil, will in their progressive development, arrive at a more perfect condition, in which this characteristic

will no longer exist. Evil, then, is only that condition of things, in which the good is not yet perceptible. It is the absence of that higher excellence, which is not only to pervade the Universe, but to exalt and dignify every child of God. As in the natural world darkness is merely the absence of light; so in this case—moral darkness, or *Evil*, is only the absence of that higher light which reveals the perfections of God and the deep things of the Spirit. When the light of the sun is diffused abroad over the face of creation, the shadows of night are no longer perceptible; even so, when the superior light of the spiritual world shall shine every where, and in all hearts—when *God shall "be all in all,"*³ moral darkness, or evil, will no longer exist. Let it be remembered, that good is the perfection of Deity—that which is *evil* is the present *imperfection* of His creatures. God is essentially eternal in all His attributes and perfections, while all that pertains to the present condition of man is transient and momentary. As, therefore, the unalterable nature of Jehovah will outlive the fleeting forms and phases of earthly being; so true it is, that Good will triumph over Evil.

As the good is destined to prevail—to be all in all—it follows, of necessity, that the darkness and slavery of evil will be brought to a final close; and the creation will be delivered into the glorious light and “liberty of the children of God.”

DISCOURSE V.

THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN.

“What is man?”—PSALMS VIII. 4.

If we adopt the sentiment, that the proper study of mankind is Man, we may venture to hope that the present inquiry will be interesting and profitable.

When we endeavor to conceive of the majesty and glory of God—when we consider the magnitude and sublimity of His works, and look at Nature in her most stupendous operations, we are startled with a sense of our own insignificance, and almost fear that we shall be lost amid the immensity of Creation! The Psalmist felt his own littleness when engaged in these sublime contemplations; and surely every one who has a mind thus employed, must sympathise with the Hebrew poet, in the sentiment he has so beautifully expressed:—“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars that thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” It is true that man, with all his boasted powers, is, from the comparative insignificance of his nature, lost when we contemplate the Divine majesty.

and glory, yet we have no reason to fear that we shall be overlooked amid the immensity of the Creator's works. If we remember that God is essentially present in all places—that His Omniscience enables Him to discern and comprehend all things, the minute and feeble, as well as the great and the mighty, we shall banish the unwelcome thought, that man can be neglected or forgotten by the Author of his being.

It is a pleasing reflection that God is mindful of all His creatures—that His watchful care and supervision extends to everything He has made—the small as well as the great—the meanest no less than the noblest—are the objects of His benevolent regard, and the constant recipients of His blessing. He hears the young ravens when they cry. He feeds the fowls of the air, and not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge. He maketh the lilies more beautiful than regal vestments; and “if God so clothe the grass of the field”—if every tender plant and fragrant flower,

“Is born beneath His kindling eye,”

surely, man will be remembered. God will be gracious and crown him with a higher life and a glory that fadeth not away. This assurance is sufficient to suppress every doubt and fear, and to awaken in the heart a grateful sense of the infinite condescension of Jehovah. If God be mindful of His earthly children, He will not suffer them to wander forever. He will lead them home to Himself. As the father went out to meet the prodigal, when he was yet a

great way off, so our Heavenly Father will not wait for His children to return; though far away, he will remember them in mercy, and visit them with the tokens of His love.

We are now to consider the Nature of Man—the expansive powers of the human mind, and his capacity to receive an enlarged and ever-increasing measure of knowledge and happiness; and from these we are to argue his exalted and glorious destiny.

The universal desire of man, that hope which springs immortal in the human breast, we must regard as presumptive evidence of the life to come. This is by no means peculiar to the enlightened Christian worshipper. The heathen nations and the savage tribes of the earth cherish this desire. Indeed, so universal is this earnest expectation of the spirit, that we may view it as an inherent characteristic of man—as a law of his nature, written by the finger of God in the human heart. The pure desires and the immortal hopes which spring up and flourish in the soul, are not to be satisfied with the world and its grosser elements. Man requires something more and better than these. His temporal wants may all be gratified. He may be deeply versed in the wisdom of the world. He may be loved and honored, and surrounded by all the pleasures which wealth, and power, and royalty, can bestow; but he is still looking forward to some more enduring good—to a higher life—to *immortality*! What is this but the voice of God speaking from the inner sanctuary of the heart?

“ 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us ;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man.”

It is worthy of remark, that the Creator has made an ample provision for the numerous wants of all His creatures. This is true in its application to the whole animal creation. Though the earth, the air and the waters, are all full of life, yet for every living thing there is a suitable provision. Indeed, if you were to follow the chain of being from man down to the meanest insect that creeps on the earth, you would not find a single exception to this wise and benevolent arrangement. The wants of all are known to God ; and for every desire, He has implanted in the nature of His creatures, He has provided a full and sufficient satisfaction. This is very plainly expressed by the Psalmist :—“ The Lord is good to all ; . . . the eyes of all wait upon thee ; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” If the desire we so fondly cherish—the pleasing hope to which we cling, even to the last moment of mortal being, is to be regarded as presumptive evidence of a future life ; we cannot deny that it is in favor of a happy immortality for the whole race. If we admit the validity of the argument, as derived from this source, we must adopt the conclusion. The desire to live is not more universal, than the desire to be happy. We only hope to exist hereafter, because we believe that the future life will be one of rest and joy.

But we may arrive at the truth in this matter, by a course of reasoning, which if not absolutely infallible is, at least, sufficiently convincing, to satisfy the mind. If God be mindful of our present condition—if, so far as we are enabled to pursue the examination, there is an ample provision for all the wants of all His earthly creatures, the evidence is conclusive, and we may deduce the universal truth, from the numerous examples that lie within the sphere of our observation. Now, if you can find a single instance, where there is no provision for the wants of the creature; this will render the argument unsound. But it is impossible to find such an example. There is not one in all animated nature. The provisions God has made, are as extensive and multifarious as the number and nature, and the diversified wants and circumstances of His creatures. As there are no exceptions to this wise and merciful arrangement; it follows, that the argument, in its application to man, is conclusive. God has made an ample provision for all the wants of inferior natures. Here we discover a rule of action in the Divine economy which, so far as our knowledge extends, has all the force of an *invariable law*. It is, therefore, safe to conclude, that since He has been mindful of every other want, He will not disappoint the earnest expectation of the spirit. He will remember Man. The highest and the holiest desire of the noblest of His earthly creatures, will be satisfied with the glory that shall be revealed.

But we may argue the higher dignity and glory

of man, from his progressive nature. The law of progress is not restricted to man; nor, indeed, to animated existence. We may trace its operations far and wide throughout the empire of Nature. Especially is it discernible in the growth and development of organic bodies. The seed does not become a plant, nor the embryo a perfectly organized being, in a moment. It is by a progress almost imperceptible, that the acorn becomes an oak; and by a process not less gradual, Nature unfolds the animal economy. Intimately connected with this idea of progress, is the fact that through the operations of this law, that which is imperfect is brought to *perfection*. This is true of the various products of the vegetable world. The mountain oak that has braved the fury of many a wintry blast—that is vigorous from length of years, at last arrives at its maturity. The grain springs forth from the earth in its season, and when harvest comes on it is fit for the reapers. The same is true of the animal creation. The lower order of animals arrive at the highest degree of perfection of which their nature is susceptible. In a few years, at most, they reach the point beyond which all efforts to improve their instinctive faculties are utterly abortive. Were it possible to prolong life for a thousand years, with the same organism, there would be no advancement, because they are essentially incapable of further progression.

But the progress of man is not thus limited. It is true that the animal nature arrives at its maturity, and

like other organic bodies, is subject to decay and dissolution. But an endless life and an imperishable glory are the inheritance of the spirit. We need not stop to prove that the higher nature of man is progressive. This is sufficiently evident already. You have only to consider him in his childhood and his manhood, and reflect a moment upon his mighty achievements. Think of Sir Isaac Newton in the infancy of his being. Again, conceive of him a few years after, when he was prepared to explore the great arcana of Nature, and to solve her profoundest problems. Follow him from his cradle to the lofty eminence where the shadows of oblivion never fall. This is only the first stage of his progress. It is but the beginning of that interminable career in which man is destined to equal the angels in their glory.

We have had occasion to observe, that through the operations of this law, that which is imperfect is brought to comparative *perfection*. Everything in its order moves on toward the maturity of its being—to the most perfect state of which its nature is susceptible. All inferior creatures soon reach this final condition. But in the present mode of being, man can only enter upon the career that is before him. The ultimatum of his progress is far away in the sublime distance of infinitude. He may comprehend the laws that govern the Universe, and explain the various phenomena of Nature. He may measure the distances and calculate the solid contents of other

worlds. Imagine him, if you please, to possess a knowledge of all arts, sciences and languages. He would then only be prepared for still higher attainments. The spirit would find some region unexplored. Man would still be far from the perfection of his nature. To say that his higher faculties will never be properly exercised and developed, is virtually to deny the progressive nature of man, and repudiate the whole argument derived from reason and analogy. If every other creature is rendered complete according to its nature, the general truth is sufficiently established, and we may safely infer that *man* will go on to perfection. If you are not prepared to sanction this conclusion, you must prove that man is an exception to the general law. If the doctrine of progress is admitted to be true, the result as it relates to the destiny of man must be inevitable. He may be imperfect and sinful at present, but he will, *he must*, from the very constitution of his nature, advance to a more perfect condition. It is very certain that man, in his present state, is a progressive being. The development of the faculties is always gradual, and truth is unfolded by degrees, in proportion as he is prepared to receive it. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that the transition to another state, which takes place at death, will disturb this essential constitution. The dissolution of the body will but destroy the inclination to evil, and separate Man from those influences, which now render his progress slow

and difficult. When these obstacles, the world and the flesh are removed; there will be nothing to counteract the moral momentum, and man will, of necessity, go on with accelerated progress, to higher, and still higher degrees of perfection; even reaching forward, and mounting upward, to the more excellent glory.

Now, I only ask you to admit what no one can rationally deny; that from the very constitution of his nature, man is, here and hereafter, a progressive being. If this be denied, it remains to be proved, that the destruction of the body will entirely reverse the laws that govern the development of the human spirit. If you acknowledge this idea of progression, you must also admit the conclusion, to which it inevitably leads—the future exaltation and the immortal happiness of man. If Man, by a law of his nature, is to continue his progress in the future life, he will certainly arrive at a more perfect condition; because, comparative perfection is the natural result of progression. Thus, by a course of analogical and inductive reasoning, as convincing as it is natural and philosophical, we are led to the conclusion that the ultimate destiny of Man will be one of glory, honor, and immortality.

The present imperfection of man is no objection to the argument, because he is not always to remain in his present condition; or, to continue forever precisely what he is at any particular stage of his progress. He is ever onward toward the perfection of his being.

The lessons of Nature, are beautiful as they are instructive. Go out into the fields in the spring time, when the grain is beginning to vegetate—only a tender blade is seen. The dews of heaven descend upon it. The sun warms it into more abundant and enlarged life ; and when the proper season arrives, the fields are white already for the harvest. Now to form a judgment from the feeble beginnings of vegetable life ; to decide that there will be no harvest—that the grain will never be fitted for the garner, is not more unreasonable and absurd than to say, that because man is now imperfect, he will not go on to perfection, and thus be prepared for happiness and heaven.

It is important to remember, that the *present condition* of things may be very different from the *ultimate design*. I have seen the rose, when only the thorn appeared. The careless traveller was wounded as he passed that way. When I saw it again, there was a sweet flower, that loaded the passing breeze with its precious odors. I love to think it is so with man. That what is most beautiful in his nature is not, at present, discernible. It is not yet unfolded to the view ; or, to use the language of an apostle, “ it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Man may now appear to be a *thorn* in the moral vineyard ; yet there is, in his nature, a germ that is destined to unfold itself in a more genial clime. As the plant must necessarily pass through the successive stages of previous development, before it blossoms in the sun

light ; so the interior faculties of the spirit must be progressively unfolded, until the soul blooms in the garden of God, filling the atmosphere with immortal fragrance !

The next ground of argument, which I propose for your consideration, is the perfect adaptation of every creature to its appropriate sphere. The reptile crawls on the surface, or in the bosom of the earth—the beast is found among the hills and valleys, and the dark solitudes of the wilderness—the bird wings its way through the upper air, and the fish sports in the liquid element. Each of these, and every living thing, is wisely adapted to the element in which it lives, and to all the circumstances of its being. The same wisdom and benevolence is manifest in the creation of man. Nothing can be more admirable, than the perfect adaptation of his physical nature, to the sphere of his present existence, and the circumstances of his outward condition.

But man has a spiritual nature ; this is adapted to a higher sphere. To complete the chain of being, and bring heaven and earth into fellowship, it became necessary that one should exist, in whom the earthly and the spiritual natures might be united. Man is that being ; he is the connecting link between earth and heaven. The temporal and the eternal—the material and the spiritual, meet and centre in him ; and there is one unbroken chain of being, from *man* down to the little insect that flits away the brief moment of its existence on the earth ; and far away, upward, to

the highest seraph before the throne of God. Such is Man—the creature of a moment, and yet destined to an endless life—an animal, yet an ANGEL! This idea of man is beautifully expressed in the language of the Russian Poet, in his address to the Deity.

“Thou art! directing, guiding all, thou art!
 Direct my understanding, then, to thee;
 Control my spirit, guide my wandering heart:
 Though but an atom midst immensity,
 Still I am something, fashioned by thy hand!
 I hold a middle rank ’twixt heaven and earth,
 On the last verge of mortal being stand,
 Close to the realms where angels have their birth,
 Just on the boundaries of the Spirit-land!

“The chain of being is complete in me;
 In me is matter’s last gradation lost,
 And the next step is Spirit—Deity!
 I can command the lightning, and am dust!
 A monarch and a slave; a worm, a god!”

The organic structure of man is not more perfectly adapted to the earth, than is the spiritual nature to a higher world. These bodies, much as we prize them, are only the fleeting forms of life. The invisible spirit that animates the clod, is the Divine reality. This is not confined to earth—the Universe is its dwelling place! Chains and dungeons cannot bind it. It is free as the wind, that bloweth where it listeth. It is here—it is there—it is yonder—it is—gone! The Spirit that quickens that mass of clay—that which has power to think—to reason and investigate, may quick as thought, visit the four quarters of the earth. It is here in this earthly sanctuary. The next moment it is among the stars! and anon, like

the angel in the vision, it descends to stand on the sea and the land! Surely, the spirit is not adapted to the earth and its passing forms and shadows. It claims a more exalted and glorious destiny. It belongs to the heavenly world, and when this earthly mission is ended, will seek its appropriate sphere.

It is worthy of lasting remembrance, that nothing short of immortal life and happiness for all, will satisfy the best desires and the holiest aspirations of the soul. I conclude, therefore, that such a state is exactly adapted to the spiritual nature of man. That which will satisfy the natural desires, must be suited to the nature. If God has made a full provision for all the wants of all His creatures—if He has prepared a suitable sphere for every being, and a being for every sphere, so as to preserve the essential harmony of His creation, the conclusion is inevitable, and there is a higher life for man.

Finally, I observe that there is implanted in the spiritual nature, an inherent aversion to that which is evil; and from this we may argue the ultimate holiness and happiness of all. We have seen that the earthly and the heavenly are united in the nature of man. These in a certain sense are antagonistic. The inclination to evil is peculiar to the animal nature. It exists only in the flesh; while the tendency of the spirit is heavenward. We are not disposed to claim originality in this view of the subject, for we remember that the Apostle has the same idea:—"This I

say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other."¹ "For I delight in the law of God, after the *inward* man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."² This testimony of Paul is confirmed by universal observation and experience. The truth is rendered evident from the fact, that whenever the spirit has the ascendancy in the government of the man, he turns away from his sins with disgust. The very moment he begins to follow the dictates of the inward man, his aversion to evil is manifest. He shrinks with loathing and horror from the guilt and contamination of sin. The mists of darkness are left behind and beneath him forever. He leaves in their appropriate sphere, all the mean and beggarly elements of the world, and obedient to a Divine momentum, moves onward and upward.

The apostle enumerates many of the dark deeds of which man is guilty, and he informs us that these, and all of like character, are the works of the flesh. He then presents, in striking contrast, the fruits of the Spirit, which are, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."³ Now, it is manifest that so far as we follow the teachings of the Spirit, we shall escape condem-

1. Gal. v. 16, 17.

2. Rom. vii. 22, 23.

3. Gal. v. 19—23.

nation. If we listen to the voice of God speaking in the soul—if we are governed by the pure and heavenly desires of the inward man, we shall advance in knowledge and holiness—we shall live for happiness and heaven.

I desire to enforce the idea that there is in the spiritual man, an innate aversion to evil. The apostle plainly intimates, that sin is not the natural element of the soul, when he represents it as a *captivity*, to which the spirit will never submit without a struggle for its liberty. The spirit, by a law of its nature, inclines to the good and the true. Obedience to its heavenly desires and aspirations, is freedom from sin and condemnation. Here, again, we have the authority of the apostle—"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."⁴ From this we draw our conclusion. Men suffer condemnation only because they obey the lusts of the flesh; and the argument of Paul is designed to show that whenever they cease to do evil, and the spirit asserts its power, they are no longer subject to this condemnation. We are reminded, that the spirit alone will exist beyond the grave. Flesh and blood cannot inherit that world. These we leave behind, when we come to pass the confines of the spirit land. As the flesh cannot exist there, it follows, that no one can be influenced by its unholy desires. Hence, there can be no

4. Romans viii. 1.

such thing as positive misery in the world to come. While the measure of happiness will doubtless vary according to the capacity, all will be led by the spirit, and may drink from the fountain of immortal joys.

Thus we have endeavored to prove from the nature of man, that his ultimate condition will be glorious. I may venture to hope, that the present discussion will give us more enlarged and comprehensive views of our own nature, and of the wisdom and goodness of God, who maketh all things to praise Him. Well may we suppose that God will remember man. He has made him but "a little lower than the angels," and "crowned him with glory and honor."⁵ The Father cannot forget the child that bears His image. He will watch over him in all his wanderings, and a Father's blessing will descend upon His children, when they are far from their heavenly home.

These views of Man, of his nature and destiny, remind us that our duties and obligations are solemn and momentous. It becomes us to be reverent and thoughtful—faithful in our adherence to the right and the true, and active in every work which God will approve and bless. Let us cherish every holy desire, and leaving the first principles, or rudiments of the Christian faith and life, go on to higher attainments. Cease to do evil and learn to do well. Before you consent to that which is wrong—prostitute the noblest powers God has given you to base and unholy purposes,

will you pause and reflect a moment upon the dignity of your own nature? You are but a little lower than the angels. From your rank in the scale of being, you are allied to the whole spiritual world—to angels and archangels. You may even claim kindred with God Himself, for His awful image is impressed upon you! Then be not irreverent, profane or thoughtless. Walk according to the spirit. Live for truth and virtue—for humanity and heaven. “I beseech you, brethren, that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

The first part of the document discusses the general principles of the proposed system. It is intended to provide a clear and concise summary of the main points. The second part of the document contains a detailed description of the proposed system. It is intended to provide a clear and concise summary of the main points. The third part of the document contains a detailed description of the proposed system. It is intended to provide a clear and concise summary of the main points.

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DISCOURSE VI.

THE DIVINE PATERNITY.

“ Have we not all one Father ? ” — MALACHI II. 10.

GOD is the Creator of all things, and He is as truly the Father of all intelligent beings, as He is the author of their existence. If He is the former of our bodies — if this curious organism — this mysterious union, by which humanity is allied to the Divinity, is the effort of His wisdom, will He not regard us with parental affection ? If He has so wisely adapted the physical nature of man to the circumstances of his outward condition, that everything around him is made to minister to his improvement or gratification ; if he has given us those exalted powers of thought and feeling which qualify us for the most elevated and refined enjoyment ; then, indeed, has He manifested more than a parent’s love. In short, if God has made us what we are — if our minds are but the offspring of His Infinite Mind — if he has stamped His own Divine Image on the powers of our inmost being, and the vital energies of His life-giving Spirit are essential to our continued existence, then is He, in the highest sense, the Father of His rational off-

spring. Have we not all one Father? Do we not derive our existence from God, with all the faculties and gifts we possess? If in Him we live, and move, and have our being, then surely the relation we sustain to the Father of the spirits of all flesh, is of the most endearing nature; and this connection is even more perfect and sacred than that which binds earthly parents to their children.

As God is the Universal Father, it follows that all are alike the objects of His parental care and the recipients of His blessing. The selfish votary of the law may deny that God is the Father of all—he may restrict the Divine Paternity to himself and his nation—but this will not affect the truth—it will not change the Divine character, or destroy the high and holy relation God will ever sustain to his creatures. We may still claim, on the authority of the prophet, that “though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, yet God is our Father and our Redeemer.”

If God be the Father of all, it follows of necessity, that the existence of the relation does not in any way depend upon the character of the creature. But it is sometimes contended, that God is not the Father of the wicked; that He sustains this most endearing relation only to those who are obedient to His requirements; and that all others are, from their nature and character, the children of the devil. I remember the words of Christ to the Jews, “Ye are of your father

the devil ;” but we must not understand Jesus to deny the universal Paternity of God. He evidently intended no more than to represent the Jews, as under the influence of those evil desires and passions, of which the devil was the personified embodiment. They were not, in *spirit*, the children of God. They did not resemble Him in their character—His image and likeness was not manifest in them. In these several particulars, they might be called the children of the devil, because they were subject to evil ; just as we now say, a man is the child of darkness who is ignorant and depraved. Wicked men may, therefore, be called the children of the devil, the children of darkness, and the children of destruction, to represent the disposition and character they possess, or to indicate the nature and consequences of their doings. But we are by no means to understand from this, that the wicked are not, in a more important sense, the children of God. Indeed, we may as well infer that they are not the offspring of human parents, or that Peter and Judas were not men, because one was called *Satan*, and the other a *Devil*. It is still true, that as one God hath created us, so we are all His children, and He is “*Father of the spirits of all flesh.*”

It follows, therefore, that neither the existence or the nature of this relation is made to depend on the character of the creature. The prodigal son was not without a father because he had wandered far away, and was spending his substance in riotous living.

His ingratitude and waywardness could not affect the relation. That has its existence in the nature of things. No change of character in the moral conduct of the child, can dissolve this connection, or for one moment release the parent from his obligation. I desire you to keep this point in mind. As we proceed with the illustration of the subject, I trust you will not lose sight of the nature of this relation. The child may wander far away from his father's house—he may close his ears to the voice of admonition, that calls to him in the mild accents of parental tenderness and affection. His deep ingratitude and degeneracy may fill the parent's heart with anguish, but still this most interesting relation remains unchanged. That wayward boy has still a father, though he may reject his counsels and deny his name. Now we have "*all one Father,*" for our God hath created us. He has made all nations of men that dwell on the earth, and determined the bounds of their habitation. For this reason He is the Father of all, irrespective of their character or condition.

That God is the universal Father, is confirmed by the plain and positive teachings of His word. When Christ came to instruct the people, He taught them to know and to reverence God as their Father—to approach Him with filial confidence and affection, and to call Him by that endearing name. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." That sinners were thus to address the Most Holy One, is rendered certain by further refer-

ence to our Lord's prayer, in which He instructs them to pray for forgiveness of sins. But the interrogatory of the text has a direct and unequivocal answer in the language of the apostle to the Ephesians:—"THERE IS ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS ABOVE ALL, AND THROUGH ALL, AND IN ALL."

We may, then, consider this point established. Inasmuch as we all derive our existence from the same Divine Original, so we have all one Father. God, the great source of all life and being, and the "Father of the spirits of all flesh," does, and ever will, continue to sustain this relation to all His intelligent creation.

Having shown that God is the universal Father, and that no possible circumstances or changes in the moral state and condition of His children, can affect His paternal character; we may now speak of the duties and obligations which belong to, and are inseparable from the nature of this relation.

And first, I observe, it is the duty of the parent to make a suitable provision for the necessities of his child. He must not only provide for all his temporal wants, but it is his especial business to see that those things which are essential to the health and life of his offspring are wisely employed. The child may be ignorant of his real necessities, or he may be wanting in the ability or the disposition to make a judicious improvement of these blessings. The superior wisdom of the parent must provide for this or any other possible contingency that may arise. Nothing short of this

would be deemed a full discharge of the duty and obligation which binds the parent to provide for his own. The child may be of a perverse and reckless disposition, but this will not release the parent from his obligation. *His* duty is not made to depend upon the disposition and character of the child, but it necessarily belongs to the nature of that relation which neither time nor circumstances can destroy.

God sustains this most endearing relation to all his intelligent creatures. He is not only the "Father of the spirits of all flesh," but He has made an ample provision for all the spiritual wants of His great family. Not one has been neglected. There are fountains of life and joy—there are well-springs of hope and salvation alike for every child of God. In the fulness of His love, He has remembered the weak and the unworthy. He has not left us without the strong evidence that He is kind to the evil and the unthankful, in that "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. You will observe that the bestowment of these blessings is never made to depend upon the worthiness of those who receive them. Besides, it is worthy of remark, that in the end, they always accomplish the benevolent design of the Giver. Whatever may be the character of the husbandman, one thing is certain—the dews and showers never fail to moisten and fertilize the fields, rendering them beautiful and fruitful. So shall it be with the spiritual blessings which God in His mercy will shower down

upon His disobedient and ungrateful children. As the rain that cometh down from heaven will not immediately restore the burning desert—as a single shower will not cover the barren waste with fruits and flowers—so the Divine word, distilling like the dew, or descending as the small rain and the refreshing showers, may not at once restore the desert of the heart, and clothe the moral wilderness with new life and beauty. Yet these spiritual blessings are not bestowed in vain. The benevolent purpose of God will be accomplished, for He has declared by the mouth of His prophet, that “As the rain cometh down from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.”¹ Thus we have the plain, positive assurance, that as the descending rains never fail to renovate the earth and make it fruitful, so the dews and showers of Divine grace will renew the heart. Their genial influence will render the moral wilderness and solitary place beautiful as the bowers of paradise. The virtues and graces which adorn the heart and life, will spring up and flourish like living plants beside the still waters, bearing the fruits of immortal peace and joy. Thus we see that our heavenly Father not only bestows His blessings on all

1. Isa lv. 10, 11.

His children, whether obedient or disobedient ; but He has wisely ordered that these shall be the messengers of His will, to rebuke the selfishness of the human heart, and to teach the earthly parent his duty to his offspring.

Again, I remark, it is the duty of the parent to love his child, and as far as possible, to shield him from all harm. This is not merely a governing principle of human nature. The love of offspring is not peculiar to man. It is an invariable law that extends to, and exerts its power over the whole animal creation. Even the vulture, the prowling wolf, and the forest king, whose awful voice carries terror to the inhabitants of the wilderness ; these, all love their own. They are uniformly obedient to the requirements of this law. When danger approaches, they are ever ready to succor their young. Not one of these will abandon its own. They are faithful to the last, and will die in defence of their offspring. This is a beautiful characteristic of all animated nature, and if it were possible for man to be so devoid of "natural affection" as to disregard this law, he might learn a lesson of duty from savage beasts.

But man cannot resist this common impulse of his nature. He cannot oppose the natural operations of this universal law. Whether in savage or civilized society, the parent is not insensible to the eternal obligation that binds him to love and protect his offspring. In this case as in the other, the duty of the parent is not dependent upon any fortuitous cir-

cumstances of *disposition or character* peculiar to the child. The obligation is forever the same, and nothing within the sphere of human observation and experience—no disobedience or ingratitude on the part of the child, however protracted and obstinate, can ever absolve the parent from its claims.

These important duties and obligations, the father is bound to observe. No benevolent parent will neglect or forget them. The child may be disobedient and unthankful; he may despise the counsels of his father, and turn a deaf ear to the earnest entreaties of maternal affection. He may wander far from the ways of wisdom, and the sweet home of innocence and love. His very breath may cause the flowers of hope to wither and die, and his own hand may weave a crown of thorns for his best friend; yet, all this will not separate him from the parent's love. The father will watch over him with anxious care, and amid all his wanderings the mother will cling to her wayward boy. Her love does not depend upon his obedience. It springs spontaneously from the heart—a pure flame which the waters cannot quench, nor the floods drown. Such is the deep and undying affection of a good earthly parent. It is not checked by the follies of childhood, or the ingratitude and alienation of after-life. The parent never waits for the child. His love is first manifested, and it is the last to cling to its object. When others pass by with cold indifference, the parent will pause to weep over the woes of his offspring. Others may speak to the wanderer in tones

of threatening and violence ; but the kind father and the anxious mother, will yet breathe in his ear the mild accents of sympathy and affection. If the parent is faithful to his most sacred duties and obligations, he will never cease to love the child, and to treat him with tenderness and compassion. When the prodigal would return to his father's house, he was not required to beg for mercy, before he could be received into favor. The parent did not even wait the return of his child ; "but when he was yet a great way off, the father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." His love was unchanged, and he forgot the errors and follies of his child. The son, about to offer his humble confession, is interrupted. The parent calls for the best robe, and the prodigal is received with the sign of honor and the token of affection. There is music and gladness in the father's mansion, and all remembrance of the past ingratitude of his child, is lost in the excess of his present joy.²

Thus will the universal Father receive all His wandering children. Like the prodigal, they may tarry long in a strange land, feeding on the husks of sin and error, yet when they return they will find the Father's love unchanged. When far away, He will have compassion on them. He will gladly receive them, and their sins and their iniquities will He remember no more.³

2. Luke, xv. 11—32.

3. Heb. viii. 12.

We have a forcible and pathetic illustration of our subject in the history of David and his rebellious son. Absalom headed a conspiracy against the government of Israel. For some time, he had employed every means in his power to seduce the people from their allegiance to his father. At length, under pretence of paying a vow, he obtained leave of the king to go to Hebron. He then sent out his emissaries in order to prepare the people for a general revolt. Absalom was proclaimed king at Hebron, and thousands flocked to his standard. David and his friends were obliged to seek safety in flight. He, however, succeeded in raising an army of several thousand men, and appointing the proper officers, sent them to subdue the rebels. But here the father's love for his reckless child was impressively displayed in his charge to those who were intrusted with the expedition—“*Deal gently for my sake, with the young man, even with Absalom.*”⁴ His affectionate solicitude for the safety of his son rose superior to every other feeling. The king was still the father. Notwithstanding the base ingratitude and extreme degeneracy of that wayward youth, the parent could not give him up. With mingled emotions of tenderness and apprehension, he waited for intelligence from the camp of Israel. When the messengers arrived, he did not ask if the rebels were conquered and destroyed. His anxious inquiry was not for the security of his throne and the safety of his

4. II Sam. xviii. 5.

kingdom. The all-important question with him did not relate to the possession of the crown and the sceptre. These were all forgotten in his anxiety for his child:—" *Is the young man Absalom safe?*" And when the king heard the tidings of his fate, he was greatly moved and went to his chamber to weep. The victory of that day was turned into mourning, and as David retired the people heard the voice of his pathetic lamentation, as he exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul, " My son Absalom ! O my son, my son Absalom ! O that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son !"⁵ The parent could not resist the deep impulse of his nature. The father was true to the law written in his heart. He loved his child with a pure and unalterable affection, superior to all feelings of resentment, and which no excess of wickedness could diminish or destroy. Thus earthly parents love their offspring. The flame is not extinguished when sin and remorse, like a flood of dark waters, deluge the soul. Friends may prove faithless, but the parent's love burns with a steady light amid the darkness of adversity, and the scorn and bitterness of the world. Shame and infamy, like a mantle, may cover the child ; but the light of a parent's love will shine on his pathway,

———" with a lustre unchanging and bright,
Like a radiant star on the brow of night."

Now if the love of an earthly parent is thus deep and lasting, what may we not expect from Him who

is the Fountain of *all love*, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh ?

But it may be said that the love of an earthly parent is unlike that of our heavenly Father. I am aware that there is this important difference. One is but a feeble emanation from the other—it is only a drop compared to the boundless deep ! The difference then relates to the *degree* in which this love exists, and the peculiar *manner* in which it is exemplified, and not to the nature of the principle itself. In this respect there is no diversity. If the love and compassion of God were altogether unlike that of an earthly parent, the appellation of Father as applied to Him, would be a means of *deception*, as it would convey to our minds no correct idea of His relation and disposition to man. But the loving kindness and compassion of God, and that which earthly parents cherish for their children are not dissimilar in nature. So for, we are authorized to conclude, there is no essential difference. “As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”⁶ But the love of our heavenly Father for His children must be as far superior in degree, to all which earthly parents have ever manifested for their offspring, as His nature is more perfect and glorious. We are not, therefore, in danger of forming too high an estimate of the Divine love. This is not possible. Our finite powers can never grasp the fulness of that LOVE

which is above all. Who among you is able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of that which passeth knowledge?

“ Its highest point what eye can find,
Or to its lowest depths descend ?”

Then when we speak of the love of our heavenly Father for His children, we may place the standard as high as it is possible for men or angels to conceive, and still it will be infinitely short of the Divine reality.

But man is imperfect. As he is liable to a change of disposition and purpose, his love may grow cold. It is perhaps possible for an earthly father to forsake his child. He may cease to regard him with parental affection. The mother may cast him off, and leave him to perish. But the loving kindness of our *heavenly Father* is ever the same. *He* will not suffer His faithfulness to fail. Let us trust in Him, and if we are denied an earthly parent's fostering care, we may still say in the confident language of the Psalmist—
“ When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.”⁷

As our heavenly Father is unchangeable, He will never cease to regard all His children with a perfect love. If there is one poor erring child of humanity who is forgotten and forsaken by all the world, we may be consoled by the reflection that God in His mercy will remember him. He will take the sufferer up and bless him in the fulness of His love.

7. Psalms xxvii. 10.

God ever deals with man as His child. In His punishments, this relation is recognized, and His language is, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness."⁸

It is thus that God in wisdom is pleased to correct His children. His chastisements are all tempered by His love. I am aware that this is opposed to the common idea of punishment. Indeed, no partial system of salvation can be made to harmonize with the paternal character and government of God. Will you call Him by that endearing name? Can you love Him as your Father, while you cherish the horrid suspicion that He will be the endless and merciless tormentor of His own offspring? I fear you cannot. Consider the nature of the paternal relation, and in view of the great love of God for the world, will you not trust Him for all that is to come? There is one Father of all—He loves all His children with a perfect love. He can never cease to love no

8. Heb. xii. 5—7, 9, 10.

more than He can cease to exist. How, then, can a single member of His great family be lost forever? Suppose that one poor erring child should find his way down to the burning pit: can you believe that our heavenly Father would leave him to perish forever? Can an earthly parent witness the death of his child and feel no thrill of anguish? Can the fond mother resist the cries of her helpless offspring? Oh, no! she would rush into the scorching flames. You may talk to her of heaven and all its glory, but what are these to a childless mother? If her loved one must go down to the pit, she would rather make her bed in hell, and pillow the lost spirit on her agonized bosom! David would leave a crown of immortal glory to suffer for his wayward boy, or heaven would be filled with the voice of his lamentation. Much more, then, will our heavenly Father, preserve His children. When the prodigal is afar off He will have compassion on him. If he be fallen, the Father will put forth the strength of His Almighty arm, and lift him up again. He will clothe him with the best robe, and receive him into everlasting mansions.

DISCOURSE VII.

THE MISSION OF CHRIST.

“His rest shall be glorious.”—ISAIAH XI. 10.

THE Prophet is describing the reign of the Messiah ; and by an assemblage of the most beautiful images, he represents the extent of His dominion, and the great peace, and happiness, and glory of His kingdom. To illustrate the various characteristics and offices of the Messiah, figures are drawn from every department of Nature—from the arts and sciences, and the forms and customs of society. In the immediate connection, he is represented by a striking and appropriate figure, which it may be interesting to notice. “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people ; to it shall the Gentiles seek ; and his rest shall be glorious.” The figure in this case is drawn from military life, nor is it less appropriate and instructive. Ensigns are trophies of victory, monuments or warlike banners. When the ancient generals, or chiefs of the tribes, desired the people to assemble for war, to celebrate a victory, or for any other important purpose, an ensign was raised on some lofty eminence, where

it could be seen at a great distance. The people seeing this from afar, came from all directions and gathered around the standard. You see the propriety of this figure in its application to the Messiah. The true meaning of the passage evidently is, that through the diffusion of his truth, and the glory of his example and character, he will become a visible Ensign to all who are afar off; to which not only the Jews, but the whole Gentile world—all nations, kindreds and tongues—will finally gather, to celebrate the triumphs of his grace. Jesus, in allusion to the figure of the ensign by which he is represented, and at the same time referring to the manner of his death, and the universal gathering of his people, confirms the point in question by his own positive declaration: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”¹ Christ, the great spiritual Ensign, has been lifted up, literally, at his crucifixion, and in an eminent and spiritual sense, by the proclamation of his Gospel. He will, therefore, draw all men unto himself. Every soul shall enlist in his service, and the whole rational creation, rejoicing in his presence, shall celebrate the victory of his cross. Unto him shall the gathering of the people be, “and his rest shall be glorious.”

Having explained the use of the figure, I trust in such a manner as to afford some idea of its sacred significance, we will next proceed in a more particular

1. John xii. 32.

manner, to dispose of the several points involved in our present discussion, viz :—The *Nature, Object* and *End*, of the Saviour's mission.

All will agree that the mission of Christ had its origin in the Divine goodness, and that it presents to the world a beautiful illustration of love and wisdom. If I may receive this as an evidence of the Divine mercy, then as all His attributes are infinite and unchangeable as His own being, I may rationally conclude that nothing can ever restrict the exercise of this essential attribute of His nature. The mercy manifested in the Gospel must be everlasting; and hence neither time, circumstances nor events can ever place a single creature of God beyond its redeeming power. Many suppose that the strongest proofs of the impartial love of God for all His creatures, is the mission of Christ. If the opinion be founded in truth, I claim this as the sure evidence that He will never cease to regard all mankind with the same love which was manifested in the gift of His Son. If, in the mission of Christ, we have an evidence that God is infinitely good, then it must of necessity secure the greatest blessing to the greatest number—even the salvation and highest happiness of all. We conclude, therefore, that the mercy of God, which endureth forever, and His love, which is impartial, are eminently displayed in the mission of Christ, and that these sufficiently indicate its nature and character.

We may now direct our attention to the second point of inquiry. What was the great object of the Messiah's mission? We might here introduce a great number of texts from the New Testament writers, any one of which would afford a sufficient answer to this question; but we prefer the simple declaration of the Master himself, as it comprehends the whole truth, and may be understood by every capacity:—"For the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which was lost."²

To indicate the alienation of man the Scriptures represent him as out of the way—as *lost* and wandering blindly on, while destruction is before him. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."³ According to the Prophet, "the flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."⁴ Such was the condition of man—a benighted wanderer in a wilderness, toiling along a dark and rugged way, beset with snares and pitfalls, where doubts and fears arise like grim spectres in a world of gloom and a land of shadows. He was as a child far away from the mansion of his father and the joys of his home. In this unhappy situation, he needed some one to lead him out from the barren wilderness into the green pastures and the flowery fields, where he might find immortal fruits and the sweet waters of life and salvation. Christ came to seek after and to watch

2. Luke xix. 10.

3. Isaiah liii. 6.

4. Ezekiel xxxiv. 6.

over him—to guide the lost wanderer into a region of light and a world of beauty—to lead the child of disobedience back to the pleasures of his home and the smiles of his Father.

We have the object of Christ's mission so clearly defined in his own words, that no one can possibly misapprehend the subject. Many of the parables of the great Teacher are beautiful and forcible illustrations of our idea. The Gospel is compared to "leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."⁵ As leaven operates on the mass in which it is concealed, imparting to the whole its own properties, so it is the design and tendency of the Gospel, to conform the human mind and heart to itself. You will observe that, in the parable, the leaven was concealed in the mass till *the whole* was leavened. In like manner, the Gospel of Jesus Christ will extend its influence farther and wider, until all hearts shall feel its power, and be transformed into its own moral likeness. This is the great reality—the universal truth so clearly taught in the language of the parable. The expression, "till the whole was leavened," is fatal to any partial interpretation.

In the parable of the lost piece of silver,⁶ we have another evidence of the great truth to be developed in the final result. In this parable, the woman is represented as seeking diligently *till she finds* the lost piece, and then she calls her friends together to rejoice

5. Matth. xiii. 33.

6. Luke xv. 8, 9.

with her. The solicitude of the woman on account of the lost piece of silver, is intended to indicate the deep interest of the Saviour in his appropriate work. As she did not relinquish the search until she had found the lost piece, we are authorized to conclude that Christ will only rest from his labors, when his purpose is accomplished—when the lost is found, and all have received the benefit of his mission.

We have a further illustration of this truth in the parable of the lost sheep. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing; and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."⁷ Christ here represents the manner in which he will seek after the wandering children of earth and bring them back to the fold of righteousness. Because some men have wandered far away, it does not thence follow that Christ will leave them to destruction. Surely we have a very different view in this most instructive lesson. The man in the parable did not give up in despair and relinquish his appro-

7. Luke xv. 4—7.

priate work, because the lost one had strayed so far from the fold. But his conduct, which beautifully illustrates the certainty that Christ will restore the lost wanderer, is clearly indicated by the expressive language of the parable: "And when he hath *found it*, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." Now "all we like sheep have gone astray."⁸ Christ is the good Shepherd. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion . . . because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."⁹ It is the appropriate business of the good shepherd to find the lost ones and gather all into one fold. He will leave no one to perish, an outcast forever. The Lord is our shepherd, and we have the word of the prophet that He will bring the wanderers home. "As the shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. . . . I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."¹⁰

Christ describes the character of an unfaithful shepherd:—"He that is a hireling. . . whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because

8. Isa. liii. 6.

9. Matt. ix. 36.

10. Ezek. xxxiv. 12—16.

he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”¹¹ Now Christ, the good Shepherd, has been entrusted with the care of a great flock—the human family. But we hear that there is a being infinitely more terrible than the wolf, who designs to scatter this flock, and devour all who are driven from the fold. But will the Shepherd suffer this? Will he flee when danger approaches, and leave his flock to destruction? Will this infernal wolf put the great Shepherd to flight? Is he to scatter the sheep forever, or drag them away to his gloomy cavern? Do you believe that Christ will thus leave a single member of his flock to perish? Then you forever deny to him the character he has assumed of the Good Shepherd, which “giveth his life for the sheep;”¹² and you ascribe to him the treacherous and dastardly character of the *hireling*, who “*careth not for the sheep.*”

But it may be said that Christ has faithfully warned the members of his flock—that he has pointed out their danger, and kindly invited them to return, and that, having performed his part, he may properly leave them to destruction. This is a great mistake. The man in the parable did not stand at a distance and repeatedly call the sheep, and then, because it had not the ability or the inclination to return, leave it to the merciless wolf. This would be acting the part of the hireling. But “he layeth it on his shoulders

11. John x. 12, 13.

12. John x. 11.

rejoicing," and on his return, he calls others to rejoice with him, that the lost one is found and saved.

Some one may be inclined to the opinion that sinners do not properly belong to Christ's flock. But it is worthy of remark, that the piece of silver and the sheep were no less valuable because they were lost; nor were they any less the property of their respective owners. So man is no less precious in the sight of Heaven because he is a sinner; nor does he cease to belong to Him who hath the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.

Besides, Christ says, "I am the good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Now for whom did Christ die? Why, for the world—for every man—for *sinners*. Then sinners are his sheep. They are the scattered members of his flock, which he has come to seek and to save. He has promised to gather them into his fold:—" *Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD.*"¹³

Now, imagine a human being as deeply wretched as it is possible to conceive—shut out the last ray of Divine light from his mind; place him where you will—here or hereafter—in this world or in any other—cover his body with irons, and shackle all the faculties of the soul; cast him into a deep pit—if you please, into *hell*—and what then? Oh, say you, he

13. John x. 15.

is lost forever! Nay. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." We are authorized to say, that Christ is in pursuit of *that man*, and unless he finds him and lifts him from the horrible pit, his work is unfinished forever. Let the Good Shepherd speak: "What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit . . . will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much more then is a man better than a sheep?"¹⁴ Now Christ would teach us this lesson. If *we* have so much compassion, and if a stray sheep is so valuable that we seek after it and lift it out of the pit, then much more will the Good Shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep, deliver his own in the day of his power."

O what love! what unexampled compassion and tenderness has he not manifested for the erring children of men! All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. In the language of the prophet,—“The flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.” It was then that the Good Shepherd came in the fulness of his love, to gather the wanderers to his fold. He will not fail in this work. It shall prosper in his hand. He “will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.” He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry

14. Matthew xii. 11, 12.

them in his bosom. He is our Shepherd—we shall not want. He will lead his flock into green pastures and beside the still waters.

If Christ was competent to define the object of his own mission—if he understood the nature of his work—if his parables were suitable illustrations of the subject—then we have not reasoned falsely nor in vain. If he came to seek and to save that which was lost, and all were in this condition, then his work will not be finished until the last wandering child of humanity is redeemed from his sins, reconciled to God, and brought home to heaven. Christ can never rest until his work is accomplished. If there is even *one* gone, he will leave all else, and like the man in the parable, “go after that which is lost *until he find it.*” If he is not found, Christ will seek forever. He will explore all earth and the dungeons of endless night, in pursuit of the wanderer, and if he is not found at last, then Christ will never rest.

Men may cavil forever if they will, but it is impossible to resist this conclusion. We all doubtless agree in our views of the Divine purpose in the mission of Christ—that the object was to restore that which was lost—to *save the world.* If you admit this, and yet deny that all will be saved, you have no faith in God—you have no confidence in His ability to accomplish His purpose—you restrict His power—you limit His redeeming grace, and His all-conquering truth and love—you set bounds to His dominions—you have not

put on Christ—you have no hope that he will finish his work—you deny the efficacy of all the means and instruments which God has employed—and what is your religion? What, but infidelity baptized, lurking beneath the livery of heaven, and wearing the Gospel as a mask? Will you profess to be a Christian, and yet harbor the suspicion that the Messiah will yield his inheritance to the prince of darkness? Will you have the irreverence to suppose that the weakness of humanity will defeat the purpose of God, and baffle the might of the Redeemer? Did he enter upon his work without counting the cost, and will he fail at last? If so, he is like the man who began to build, and was not able to finish. You make him obnoxious to his own reproofs. I grant that if man were engaged in this work, it would fail. When he goes forth to battle with his fellow-man—when Greek meets Greek in the tug of war, there may be much of doubt and uncertainty hanging over the issue of the contest. But when Truth and Error meet and mingle in the conflict—when light pours a flood of glory upon the darkness—when the Power of the immortal God lays hold of the wickedness and weakness of man, it will not admit of a doubt on which side the victory will be declared.

Let the doubting Christian, who has no faith in the ultimate triumph of the Redeemer, think of these things, and remember that the integrity of heaven is pledged for the salvation of the world. God will have all men to be saved—He will do all His pleasure

—Christ will finish his work in righteousness and his rest shall be glorious.

But you will observe that this glorious rest is to be realized only *when the work is accomplished*. It is true an individual may rest from his labors before they are finished. The unfaithful shepherd—the hireling—whose duty it is to watch over and protect the sheep, may leave them to be destroyed. He may *rest* even while the flock is scattered abroad upon the mountains, or is devoured by the ravenous wolf. His rest is not glorious. The husbandman may neglect to gather in his harvest—he may leave the golden grain to be covered by the drifting snows, or driven away by the winter's blast. He may seek and find repose, but it is not a glorious rest. The fallen warrior may rest upon his hacked helmet and splintered spear, when at last he is conquered and subdued; but it is the inglorious rest of wounded pride and disappointed ambition. The king, too, may rest when he has lost his subjects—when the throne has crumbled from beneath him—when the sceptre is wrested from his grasp—when the diadem is torn from his brow, and he is made to bite the dust in the agony of his grief—even then he may rest from the care of the empire and the conflict of the world. But there is no glory for him; his rest may cover him with a mantle of shame and reproach, and consign his name to everlasting infamy. But the rest which remains for the Redeemer of the world will be glorious. He will restore the wanderer—he will gather in the harvest of

the world, that nothing be lost—he will conquer his enemies—not, indeed, by the might of his arm, but by the power of his love. It will be the subjection of *reconciliation*. “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to *reconcile all things unto himself*—by him I say, whether they be things *in earth* or things *in heaven*.”¹⁵

Neither the powers of the world, the spirits of the air, nor the demons of darkness, shall be able to arrest his progress, or fix a limit to his achievements. He will subdue all opposing powers and influences to the universal diffusion of his truth, and his throne shall be established forever. “He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;”¹⁶ and as his work will be finished in righteousness, so his *rest shall be glorious*.

Thus Christ is presented in the gospel. Look then, to the spiritual Ensign that is reared upon the lofty eminence of Zion. Blessed be God, we are not required by our faith to gather around that standard, to mourn over Him who is the Captain of our salvation. It is not the Ensign of a fallen chief, who would summon his few remaining friends to bind up his wounds and bear him from the seat of dishonor. Nay. It is to us the sign of the *Conquerer* and the signal of his triumph; and around that Ensign all nations, families, kindreds and tongues shall gather at last to celebrate the victory of his Cross and the

15. Col. i. 19, 20.

16. Isa. liii. 11.

glory of his name. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads . . . and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."¹⁷ As there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons; so the return of the last wanderer, will but complete the happiness of heaven, and secure *glory to God in the highest*. Well may the Redeemer rest, for *his work is done*. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."¹⁸ IT IS FINISHED. THE MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED. IN THE WIDE UNIVERSE THERE IS NO SIGH OF ANGUISH—NO WAIL OF WOE—! THERE IS NO PAIN TO SOOTH—NO SOUL TO SAVE!

I trust we all feel that this salvation is a matter of exceeding great joy. But is it enough for us that we are saved *at last*? If salvation is a joyful thing, O, then, it is well to be saved *now*. Let us, therefore, receive the gospel of Christ as a guide to our faith, and his example as the rule of our life. Let us break off our sins by righteousness, and conform to the Divine requirements. May our reverence for God and His government be manifested in every action, and the remembrance of His care and protection make us humble and grateful. Let the assurance of His love and the hope of His salvation, fill our hearts with His praise, and the victory of His Son be the crown of our rejoicing. Let Christ be formed in you, the hope of glory and

17. Isaiah xxxv. 10.

18. Rev. xxi. 4.

the virtues and graces which will adorn your lives, will remain and flourish in their beauty when all else shall decay and die. O, let me bow in spirit at the foot of his cross, and with a grateful heart, read the story of his love! And amid all the storms and conflicts of time, his grace shall be sufficient; and in life's last hour, when I am called from this earthly home, I ask but this—before I leave the world in which my Redeemer lived and died and rose again, let me but light my hope at the door of his sepulchre!

DISCOURSE VIII.

SCRIPTURE EVIDENCES.

“What saith the Scripture?”—ROMANS IV. 3.

THERE is as wide a diversity in the intellectual and moral, as in the physical constitution of man. Hence that which is especially adapted to one mind, may not be as well suited to another capacity. It has been our desire in this discussion, to render the universal truth apparent to all minds. For this purpose we have reasoned from different premises to the same conclusion. The illustrations and arguments derived from natural, moral and intellectual philosophy, may be more pleasing, and at the same time more convincing, to some persons, than any others we may be able to furnish; still, we may venture to hope, that to another, and possibly a larger class, the biblical argument will be equally interesting and profitable.

It will be perceived that the Divine authenticity of the Bible is not properly comprehended in the subject of our present inquiry. Of course we shall not go out of our way to frame an argument or to express an opinion on this point. The question presented at this stage of the investigation is, simply, “What saith

the Scripture?" And while I ask the favor of your candid attention to the answer, I leave every one to enjoy his own opinion concerning the nature and authority of the testimony.

I submit for your consideration, first, that the *will*, *purpose* and *pleasure* of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, embrace *the salvation of the world*. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."¹ Divines attempt to resist the force of this text, by assuming that the words, "who will have," do not imply a fixed purpose in the Divine Mind—that this language does not express the will of *determination*, but is rather to be understood as a *command*. If we succeed in our attempt to show that this is an erroneous assumption, the objection to our view of the text is gone in a moment. To remove the objection and establish our idea, it is only necessary to prove that the will of determination is clearly expressed in this language of the apostle. Let us now advert to the passage, and consider it in connection with the immediate context. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." But in what way or manner was it to be testified in due time that

1. I Timothy xi. 3, 4.

God had willed the salvation of the world, and that to this end Christ had given himself a ransom for all? If you say, it was to be made known through the ministry of Christ and his apostles—in the preaching of the Gospel—my reply is, they had already given their testimony in this way. Christ had finished his earthly ministry more than thirty years before, and the apostles had been engaged in the proclamation of this truth at least a quarter of a century. And yet, according to Paul, it was *to be testified* in due time. Now what further, better or more certain testimony remained to be given? Surely not the preaching of modern divines. They have hardly been more faithful in the proclamation of this truth than the Messiah and the early ministers of his cross. But the truth that God had willed the salvation of the world, and that Christ had given himself a ransom for all, was still to be confirmed in a more visible and glorious manner. That which had been prospectively finished in the life and ministry of Christ was to be actually completed in due time, that the world might know of a truth, that he had given himself a ransom for all. Thus we see that the more certain evidence is the *actual accomplishment*. The prisoner may not believe the tidings of deliverance—he may not heed the proclamation of liberty to the captives, when first it breaks upon the silence of his dungeon; but when his chains are broken—when the prison doors are open, and he is led out into the great light which God made to shine upon him, then he will believe

and rejoice. Thus it will be with the imprisoned spirits of men—the dungeon will be opened, the chains of the captive will be broken, and the creation will be delivered into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God.² Then it will be manifest that God's will implies a fixed and definite purpose—that He determined in the counsels of His love to save the world.

But there is, perhaps, no more certain way to determine the meaning of the apostle's language than by a reference to other portions of the Scripture testimony, in which similar forms of expression are used in reference to the same subject. We will therefore submit the text to another trial. We read that "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all all things into his hand."³ The will of God concerning the destiny of all these, is so plainly revealed in the Gospel, as hardly to admit of doubt or misapprehension. A single reference to the testimony of the great Teacher, will be sufficient for our present purpose. Now, keeping in mind the fact, that the Father hath given all things into the hands of His Son—the heathen for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession,⁴ I ask you as you acknowledge the Scriptures to be the word of God, to receive this revelation of His will. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will,

2. Rom. viii. 21.

3. John iii. 35.

4. Psalm ii. 8.

but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should loose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."⁵ This is so clearly expressive of the determinate purpose of God, that those who receive the Bible as their rule of faith, must yield to an honest conviction. This testimony of the faithful and true witness, and that of Paul, are to the same import. The apostle affirms that *God will have all men to be saved*, and Christ declares it to be the Father's will that *nothing should be lost*. These forms of expression are used in reference to the same subject, and are equally comprehensive. They admit of no limitation, but reveal, in a clear light, the immutable purpose of Jehovah in the salvation of the world.

The idea that the language of Paul is to be regarded as mandatory rests upon mere assumption, but as such an exposition is sanctioned at least by many divines of the Methodist order; we subjoin the testimony of their distinguished commentator. We give the opinion of Dr. Clark in his own words. "Because God wills the salvation of all men; therefore, He wills that all men should be prayed for. In the face of such a declaration, how can any christian soul suppose that God ever, unconditionally and eternally, reprobated any man . . . God is the maker, governor, and preserver of all men, of every condition, and of every nation; and EQUALLY *wills the salvation of all*."⁶

5. John vi. 37—39.

6 See Commentary.

Thus you will perceive, that the explanation given by divines of the Methodist Church, is sanctioned neither by the Scriptures nor the authority of their own expositor.

But admit, if you please, the exposition under review to be correct. Grant, for the sake of the argument, that the words of Paul, "who will have all men to be saved," do not express the will of determination—that they furnish no evidence of a settled and definite purpose in the Divine Mind, but are to be understood as a *command*, and what follows? Why, the logical advocates of this exposition are driven in a direct line to the conclusion, that the Omniscient One—the Supreme Governor of the Universe in giving His commands, has *no fixed and definite purpose*. Now, if the arguments employed against the doctrine of God's impartial grace and salvation lead to conclusions at once absurd and irreverent, surely, those who use them must be held accountable.

But our views of the will, purpose and pleasure of God, are confirmed by other portions of the Sacred Record. A reference to some of these may present the argument in a still stronger light. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; . . . in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; . . . Having made known unto us the mystery of his *will*, according to his good *pleasure*, which he hath *purposed* in himself; that in

the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.”⁷

“For the transgression of my people was he stricken;⁸ It pleased the Lord to bruise him; He hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.”⁹

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His *will* in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand.”¹⁰

“I am God and there is none like me; 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.”¹¹ Thus we have given you the law and the testimony, and from this we think it must be sufficiently evident, that the will of God implies a certain, fixed and definite purpose—that the purpose of God will be accomplished in the final deliverance and salvation of all men—that He who rules in earth as well as heaven, *will do all His pleasure.*

Having proved that the revealed will, purpose and pleasure of God is the salvation of all men, we now pass to consider His *promise* and *oath*. Abraham received the promise that he should become a great

7. Eph. i. 3, 7, 9, 10.

8. Isa. liii. 8.

9. Isaiah liii. 10.

10. Daniel iv. 35.

11. Isaiah xli. 9. 10.

nation, and that in his seed the most distinguished blessings should be conferred upon the race. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."¹² "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."¹³ "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."¹⁴ The same promises were subsequently confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, in language equally strong and emphatic. I wish you to observe, first, that these promises are *unconditional* and *universal*. They are not restricted to any rank, character or condition, or made to depend for their fulfilment upon any work of human duty or supererogation. This is sufficiently evident from the language in which they are presented. If you require other evidence that they extend to all, irrespective of their character or condition, we have it. In the epistle to the Romans, we read that the promise was *by grace*, to the end that it might be *sure to all*.¹⁵ Again, in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter, in addressing the Jews, says, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. And killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."¹⁶ "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."¹⁷ Thus we see

12. Gen. xii. 3.

13. Gen. xviii. 18.

14. Gen. xxii. 18.

15. Rom. iv. 16.

16. Acts iii. 14, 15.

17. Acts iii. 25.

that *all nations*, Jews and Gentiles—that *all ranks* and *conditions*, the high, the low, the rich, and the poor, the bond and the free, even all the families and kindreds of the earth—that all *characters*, not excepting those who crucified the Son of God, are comprehended in this covenant of promise. If, therefore, you would find an individual who is not included, he must be one who has no kindred—a member of no family, and belonging to no nation on the face of the earth. As it is impossible, in the nature of the case, for such a person to exist, it follows that the promise is universal in its application—that every child of God will share in the promised blessing, whatever it may be.

Having gained the first point in the argument, we are now prepared to advance, by a direct and natural transition to the final conclusion. Here I must request you to observe, that this great universal blessing is to be enjoyed in or through the seed of Abraham. “In *thy seed* shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” That Christ is signified by the seed of Abraham, is rendered certain by the testimony of Paul. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is CHRIST.”¹⁸ It follows, therefore, that according to this promise, all mankind are to be blessed *in Christ*; and we read, that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.¹⁹

18. Gal. iii. 16.

19. II Cor. v. 17.

The next point of inquiry to which I ask the favor of your attention is, the *nature of the blessing* here promised.

The opposers of Universalism attempt to evade the force of the argument derived from these promises, by assuming that they have no reference to the future life—that the blessings promised to Abraham were, his possessions in the land of Canaan, and the increase of his posterity in after ages. In short, that the blessing was wholly of a *temporal* nature. I shall take the liberty to strip this infidel objection of its flimsy covering, and exhibit its naked deformity. How, I may ask, have all the nations, kindreds and families of the earth received the blessing, upon this supposition? In what manner, for example, has this nation, and your kindred, and my family, been benefited by the temporal possessions of the Patriarchs and all their posterity? Certainly not in any possible way. Besides, we have proved by the Apostle, that the seed of Abraham, through whom the blessing is to be conferred upon the world, is Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory; and what are the blessings which we hope to receive in him? Are they a portion in the land of promise? Do they consist in lands and goods, here or elsewhere, or in any possible circumstances of worldly prosperity? Nay. But in him we hope for salvation and immortal life—for an inheritance, undefiled and that fadeth not away.

Again:—It is manifest that Abraham did not restrict the promise to any temporal favors. In other words, he did not confine the blessing to this world. We read that “by faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob;”²⁰ i. e., they dwelt in tents, and were without a local habitation; and it is worthy of remark, that Abraham never acquired any special right to any portion of the country except the cave of Machpelah, in which he left his bones. He did not seek for earthly possessions. He believed that there was a sacred significance in the Divine promise—that it revealed a still future and more glorious inheritance. Hence he continued to dwell there as in a strange country. The land of promise was to him but a mere type—an imperfect, symbolical representation of that spiritual rest and peace which the eye of faith beheld afar off. He desired “a better country, that is an heavenly.”²¹ “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”²² Thus it is rendered certain, that all men will ultimately be blessed in Christ, and that Abraham understood the promise to refer to the glorious realities of the life to come. These considerations forbid the supposition that the blessing is of a temporal nature.

But it may be said, it does not necessarily follow that the promise relates to the future life, because the blessing is spiritual in its nature. Some one may be

20. Heb. xi. 9.

21. Heb. xi. 16.

22. Heb. xi. 10.

disposed to contend that Christ has *offered* salvation to all, and in doing so, has fulfilled the promise. This is a great mistake. It is no where intimated that Christ was merely to *offer* a blessing to the world, but it is expressly *declared*, that all in heaven and on earth will be gathered together in Christ, that they may receive this blessing. It is utterly impossible in the nature of the case, that this promise should have its fulfilment in this world. Nations, kindreds and families have ceased to be. Many of them passed away long before the Sun of Righteousness appeared. Many others have been swept from the map of human existence, on whom the light of the Gospel hath never shown. Surely, no one will pretend that these received the blessing in Christ Jesus, while living on the earth. The tidings of salvation never sounded in their ears. They never so much as heard the name of the Redeemer. It remains, therefore, for them to receive the blessing in the immortal state, or the promise of God will fail forever.

But we have another, and if possible, a still stronger evidence, in the fact, that this promise is called *the Gospel*. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen, through faith preached before the *Gospel* unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.²³ Now, as life and *immortality* are brought to light in the Gospel, it is certain that these are comprehended in the promise, and must

23. Gal. iii 8.

constitute the incorruptible and glorious inheritance of the race. It was not in vain that Abraham looked for a better country—for a city whose builder and maker is God. He beheld, afar off, through the gloom and darkness of coming ages, the light and glory of the Gospel Day. “Jesus said unto them, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad.”²⁴

Ah, says one, the speaker can make out his case from the Gospel, but he seems to have forgotten that God has given a *Law*—that man has violated that law and must therefore suffer the penalty. No, my brother, I have not forgotten that, but I have yet to learn that the All-Wise Governor of the Universe has given a law that is incompatible with His revealed will, purpose and pleasure, or which may serve in any way to contravene His promise. It is the height of absurdity and blasphemy, to suppose that the Divine Legislator has given a law to defeat that promise on which the fidelity of all heaven is made to depend. But we may refute this objection in the most effectual manner, by a brief and incontrovertible argument, which may be found in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians. The Apostle reasons to the point: “And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before, of God in Christ, *the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, CANNOT DISANNUL, that it should make the promise of none effect.*” “Is the law then against the

24. John viii. 56.

promises of God?" And the Apostle's answer is—
 "GOD FORBID."²⁵

I need not remind you, that in this discussion, we have taken nothing for granted. The several points in the argument have been proved by the most positive and unequivocal testimony. In the mouth of at least two or three witnesses, the whole has been established. And is not this sufficient to produce conviction—to commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God? Would you have it confirmed by the solemnity of an oath? It shall be done:—"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear, surely shall say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."²⁶ "For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus."²⁷ Here you have still another evidence that the promise to the

25. Chap. iii. 21.

26. Isa. xlv. 23.

27. Heb. vi. 16—20.

Patriarch is the Gospel, and that it comprehends the unfading glories of immortal life. It affords to the believer a strong consolation and an everlasting refuge. The hope it inspires is an anchor to the soul—it is sure and steadfast, because it rests, not upon ourselves—not on any thing we have done or can do—not in any earthly inheritance, but upon GOD AND IMMORTALITY.

Now, if you are willing to credit the testimony of a mere man, will you not receive the promise of Him who cannot lie? If, among honest men, an oath is an end of all strife, will you not be silent and respect the oath of God?



DISCOURSE IX.

SCRIPTURE EVIDENCES.

“What saith the Scripture?”—ROMANS IV. 3.

It will be remembered that our last discourse was devoted to an examination of such portions of the Scripture testimony as relate to the *will*, *purpose*, the *promise* and *oath* of God. We are now prepared to continue the Scripture argument. In the arrangement and classification of the proofs to be presented in this discourse, we shall follow out the plan already adopted.

I will now ask the favor of your attention to those passages which represent the blessings resulting from the righteousness and the death of Christ, as *equal* or *superior* in their extent and magnitude, to the evils consequent upon transgression. The argument founded upon these never has been successfully controverted, and from the nature of the case, we are authorized to say it never will be answered. No man, who will receive the Gospel as his rule of faith, can resist its force. Indeed, the learned expositors, who have been devoted to a partial theology have, in view of this, not only been compelled to make concessions

fatal to their whole system, but in some instances they have been constrained to acknowledge and to vindicate the great salvation with spirit and power.

In the Epistle to the Romans we have a powerful illustration and defence of the great truth we design to enforce. The Apostle pursues, a course of antithetical reasoning, which is absolutely irresistible, and which should be sufficient to commend the truth to every man's conscience. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned But not not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one, many [that is the whole race] be dead; much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ hath abounded unto many,"¹ [i. e. the whole body of mankind.] A learned writer, Dr. Taylor, says: "It is evident that the Apostle in this, and the two following verses, is running a *parallel*, or making a *comparison*, between the offence of Adam and its consequences; and the opposite gift of God and its consequences. And, in these three verses, he shows that the comparison will not hold good in all respects, because the *free gift* bestows blessings *far beyond* the consequences of the offence, and which, therefore, have no relation to it."² Now if the offence involves all the world in sin and death, and the obedience of Christ and the gift of God, are co-extensive in their consequences, then holiness and immortal life will be

1. Romans v. 12, 15.

2. See Clark's note on the passage.

the exalted destiny and the incorruptible inheritance of all. Dr. Clark says, that by the *many* who are here said to be dead, the Apostle means *all mankind*. And he proceeds to illustrate and enforce our peculiar views of the subject, as you will perceive from the following:—“ And if *the many*, that is, all mankind, have died through the offense of one, certainly the gift by grace, which abounds unto the many, by Christ Jesus, must have reference to *every human being*. . . . For it is most evident that the same persons are referred to in both clauses of the verse. If the Apostle had believed that the benefits of the death of Christ had extended only to a select number of mankind, he never could have used the language he has done here ; though in the first clause, he might have said, without any qualification of the term, *Through the offense of one, many are dead* ; in the second clause, to be consistent with the doctrine of particular redemption, he must have said, *The grace of God, and the gift by grace, hath abounded unto some*. As by the offense of one judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation ; so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon *some* to justification. As by one man’s disobedience, *many* were made sinners so by the obedience of one, shall *some* be made righteous. As in Adam *all die* ; so, in Christ, shall *some* be made alive.”³ After showing in this manner, the absurdity of any and every partial view of the subject, he declares that this doctrine which confines the

3. See Commentary.

free gift of God to a part of His children—which restricts the benefits of Christ's mission and death to a *few*, never "*entered the soul of this divinely inspired man.*" Thus you perceive, (Dr. Clark being the witness,) that this narrow and partial system of faith, which limits the grace of God and the gift by grace, *never entered the soul of the Apostle.* This is true if we understand it to refer to him only as an ambassador of Christ; previous to his conversion to Christianity, he was a self-righteous pharisee, and, moved by the intolerant and exclusive spirit of partialism, he went forth breathing out threatening and slaughter against all who had a better faith and a broader charity. He was a partialist up to the time of his conversion. In other words, he limited the grace of God to a part of His children—to the Jews, or to the sect of the pharisees. But when Paul embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ, his whole soul was baptized into the spirit of universal grace and salvation; and from that hour, it appears from his own words, no less than from the testimony of Dr. Adam Clark, that the doctrine which limits the grace of God and the benefits of the Saviour's mission, never entered his soul.

Some contend that Christ has performed his part in the work of salvation, by so far removing the consequences of Adam's transgression, that all *may* be saved if they will, and that the eternal destiny of every man now depends upon his individual choice, and the merit or demerit of his own actions. How

it is that Christ removes the sin of Adam and its consequences, and leaves every other man to take care of himself, does not appear. But one fact is rendered quite apparent—the grace of God and the obedience and righteousness of Christ are set off, not against the *single transgression of Adam*, but the *offences of all men*. It is easy to see that this is the only inference authorized by the Apostle's language. "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of *many offences* unto justification."⁴ Thus you perceive that the gift of God is not restricted in any way by Adam's transgression, but is made to counterbalance the many offences of mankind. I trust this will be evident to all, if we but follow out the Apostle's antithesis. "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life."⁵ It is especially worthy of remark, that man does not receive this most precious gift on account of his obedience or righteousness. In this case, it would not be a free gift, but a *reward*. According to the Apostle, it was not in consequence of any merit in ourselves; but it was by the righteousness of *one*, [Christ,] that the free gift came upon *all men*. The Apostle continues:—"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.

4 Romans v. 16.

5. Verse 18.

Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."⁶ Now it will be conceded that the reign of sin and death is as extensive as the human race; and yet in the magnitude of their power and the extent of their influence and dominion, they are far less than the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men. "What if death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned?" the gift of God is no less universal. It extends wherever the curse is found. Nor is it restricted by these limits. Farther and wider and deeper than the ravages of sin—above and beyond the empire of death and the darkness and gloom of the sepulchre, the grace or favor of God will triumph in immortal life. But if the common opinion, that sin and death are to reign forever over a part of the universe, be correct, it cannot be said in truth, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. To render the Apostle's language true, the grace of God and the gift by grace must not only extend as far as the guilt and condemnation of sin, but it must *actually secure* to the *whole rational creation*, greater blessings than those which are lost by transgression. It must be manifest to all, that the intention of the Apostle, in this place, was to represent all mankind as receiving, through the intervention of Christ's mission, a blessing far greater than the injury they have sustained in consequence of sin. The mode of expression here employed will admit of

no limitation. All who are made sinners by disobedience, are, through the obedience of Christ, made righteous. As all are condemned in consequence of sin, so by virtue of the free gift, all, in like manner, are justified, or *made just*. Many (or all) are dead, from the nature of the offence, yet through the obedience and righteousness of Christ, they shall live again. “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁷ “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁸ Now it cannot be said that the phrase eternal life is employed by Paul to indicate merely the resurrection state, or the perpetuity of being, without any further reference to the condition of man. It is a life in which the reign of sin is over. It represents a state in which those who have been sinners are made righteous. All who have been condemned are justified. Those who were dead in trespasses and sins, are made alive in holiness. It is a condition in which grace and truth reign and triumph over all sin and error. Christ has described the nature of this life:—“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”⁹ Thus you perceive that the gift of God—that which came upon all men, or was secured to all, through the mission of Christ and his obedience unto death, implies a knowledge of the true God—His existence—His perfections, and His

7. Romans v. 21.

8. Chap. vi. 23.

9. John xvii. 3.

requirements. This knowledge will be universally diffused. 'This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least unto the greatest.'¹⁰ If we have any just conceptions of happiness and heaven, they are identified with the existence of that true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, which shall yet shine in all hearts, "to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."¹¹ The fact that the creature is still in darkness and chains—that he is enslaved by the world and the unhallowed passions of his own breast, is no objection to this great deliverance. "For the creature was *made subject to vanity*, not willing, but by reason of *Him* who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."¹² The original word here translated creature is, in the immediate context, rendered *creation*. According to Macknight and other critics, it properly signifies *every human being*. Therefore, all were made subject to vanity, in the hope that all will be delivered from bondage into 'the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.'

10. Jeremiah xxxi. 33. Hebrews viii. 10, 11.

11. II Cor. iv. 6.

12. Rom. viii. 20, 21.

The great Apostle had no idea that sin would prevent the triumph of redeeming grace. He did not confine the gift of God to a part of His children; nor did he restrict the benefits of Christ's mission. If we may believe Adam Clark, the idea "*never entered his soul.*" Paul rejoiced in the superabundance of heavenly grace, and his doctrine is that, when the reign of sin shall be finished, and death, the last enemy is destroyed; then that grace which bringeth salvation, shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life.

In our apprehension, the Apostle's language will admit of no other construction. Attempt to explain it in any other way, and you rudely assail the reason and the conscience of man. You commit an outrage upon all rules of logical propriety, and render the whole passage unintelligible.

To show you that we are not without the most learned and the most orthodox authority for this exposition, we will refer you to Dr. Clark's comment on the 21st verse of the fifth chapter of Romans: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." As extensively, as deeply, as universally as *sin*, whether implying the *act of transgression* or the *impure principle* from which the act proceeds, or both, *hath reigned*, subjected the whole earth and all its inhabitants; the whole soul, and all its powers and faculties, *unto death, temporal* of the *body*, spiritual of the *soul*, and eternal of both; *even*

so, as extensively, deeply, and universally *might grace reign*—filling the whole earth, and pervading, purifying and refining the whole soul; through righteousness—through this doctrine of *free salvation* by the blood of the Lamb, and by the principle of *holiness* transfused through the soul by the Holy Ghost; *unto eternal life*—the proper object of an immortal spirit's hope, the only sphere where the human intellect can rest and be happy, in the *place* and *state* where God is; where He is seen *AS HE IS*; and where He can be enjoyed without interruption, in an eternal progression of knowledge and beatitude; *by Jesus Christ our Lord*—as the *cause* of our salvation, the *means* by which it is communicated, and the *source* whence it springs. Thus we find that the salvation from sin here is as extensive and complete as the *guilt* and *contamination* of sin; death is conquered, hell disappointed, the devil confounded, and sin totally destroyed. [Here the prospect was so bright and glorious, that the Doctor could no longer suppress his emotions, and he exclaims in the fulness of his joy]—Here is glorying: *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God, and his Father, be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Hallelujah!* The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Amen and amen. Thus we see that those who at other times oppose our faith, when for a moment the veil of darkness and unbelief is withdrawn, and the excellent glory breaks upon the vision!—when their eyes are open to the bright

realities of the spirit world, they are ready to shout for joy.

But there are several passages which plainly declare that we are saved by the grace of God, which should be noticed in this connection. Before these are presented for your consideration, it may be well, in order to guard against any misapprehension, to speak briefly of the nature of salvation. What is implied by this word, and others of like import, should be determined before we proceed.

I remark, first, that the terms *saved*, *salvation*, and others of similar signification, are used with great frequency, and with such a degree of latitude, that their precise meaning can only be known from the connection. In the Scriptures and in popular language, they imply deliverance from the various evils which surround us in the world—poverty and oppression, pain, disease, sorrow and death, or indeed, any other danger or difficulty to which we are or may be exposed. It would be easy to illustrate this point by numerous examples from Scripture history—but this is unnecessary, as all will admit that there are various and almost innumerable evils from which we may be saved. Man is saved in a higher and holier sense, when he is led to break off his sins by righteousness—to rejoice in the promises, and to practice the precepts of the Gospel. These together comprehend what we may very properly term the special salvation—present deliverance from sin and ignorance, and other existing evils under which men labor, or to

which they are exposed here in the world. This salvation is, of necessity, made to depend upon the *faith* and *obedience* of the creature ; and in this general sense, we are required to *work out* our own salvation with fear and trembling.

But the great salvation of the Gospel, in its highest sense, relates to the future immortal condition of man. It is full, free and universal. In this most important sense, salvation is independent of all conditions requiring human agency. It was secured from the foundation of the world, in the eternal counsels of Him “who will have all men to be saved.” It is, then, very necessary to observe this important distinction—to consider the connection in which these terms are found, and to exercise an intelligent discrimination and judgment. If they imply deliverance from sin and ignorance here—from the power of our enemies—from danger, or any other temporal evil—if the salvation in any case is confined to this world, then it may be dependent upon our faith, repentance, obedience, good works, or in some way upon our own exertions. But if it be the more perfect salvation of the future immortal, incorruptible, and glorious state, it depends alone upon the grace of God, from which the Apostle concludes, that “if by grace, then it is no more of works.”

The Scriptures to which I will now direct your attention, treat of salvation in this last and most important sense, as you will readily perceive from the fact, that it is not of works. “For by grace are ye

saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the *gift of God*.”¹³ “ Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and *grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”¹⁴ “ In whom whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his *grace*.”¹⁵ God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were *dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with Christ, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His *grace*.”¹⁶ Others may deny that *we* have any part in this salvation, yet with an Apostle “ we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they.”¹⁷ As this salvation is of grace and not of works, it follows that it is all of God, and man can do nothing to deserve it. To suppose that it is dependent upon any circumstances or conditions involving human agency, is to reject the plain and unequivocal teachings of the Bible. It is to give up the ground on which the Christian rests his hope of salvation—to deny all the direct Scripture proofs on this subject, and to treat the Apostles and Christ himself as unworthy of confidence. It is, moreover, to introduce imperfection into the Divine administration, making His purposes subservient to the will and agency of mortals, and

13. Eph. ii. 8.

14. II Tim. i. 9.

15. Eph. i. 7.

16. Eph. ii. 4, 5, 7.

17. Acts xv. 11.

involving all the great interests of eternity, in doubt and uncertainty.

If you have faith in God—if He rules in earth and heaven, and you have the least confidence in the wisdom and benevolence of His administration, how can you believe for one moment, that He has suspended your immortal interests, the vast concerns of His government, the prosperity of His kingdom, and the glory of His name, upon such strange contingencies? Are you prepared to say that God has no purpose, or that man can prevent the accomplishment of His designs? If not, why all this doubt and hesitation, and scepticism, on a subject so plain? Why not trust in the redeeming grace of God? The foundation will stand sure when your faith and works, and all that you have, shall grow dim and pass away. What if you are distinguished for superior gifts and graces? What if you are more inclined to that which is good than many others?—God has made you what you are, and to His name be all the glory. This idea of merit in ourselves is an idle fancy, that will one day vanish like the dream of a night. But if this salvation is the gift of God, it certainly is not a reward for our works. You will observe here a most important distinction. A *reward* is anything given or received as a *compensation*, or as an *equivalent*, for anything conferred, performed or suffered; whereas, a *gift* is something bestowed as a *gratuity*, for which nothing is demanded in return. This great

salvation is not a reward, but a *gift*, for which no return can be given or expected. The Apostle does not admit that the agency of man has anything to do with this salvation. “By grace are ye saved, through faith, [and then, lest man might claim in part the glory of this work, he adds,] and that *not of yourselves*, it is the *gift of God*. From the infinite fullness of His love, and the exceeding riches of His grace, it is freely given—may it be gratefully received. May the subject have its proper effect upon our hearts and lives. While we meditate upon the love of God and the exceeding riches of His grace, may the Spirit be with us to direct our thoughts, that every rude passion may be hushed to rest, and every kind affection warmed into new life. And as we look back to the days of the Saviour, and contemplate the scenes of the garden, the cross and the sepulchre, and the sacred memories which come up from their hallowed precincts are presented to our minds, oh! may that Spirit which breathed upon the lonely Mount, be around and within us, like the breath of angels, and the atmosphere of heaven!

DISCOURSE X.

SCRIPTURE EVIDENCES.

“What saith the Scripture?”—ROMANS, IV. 3.

IN the present discourse we propose to call your attention to those passages of Scripture, which indicate the destruction of Evil. In a previous discourse it was proved by arguments and illustrations drawn from the nature of good and evil, that *Good* must ultimately triumph, and that, in the progressive development of truth and the human mind, the imperfect condition which we denominate *Evil* must of necessity come to an end.

It is well known that when things are only partially developed, they may appear to us to be evil, because we do not fully understand their nature, and the ultimate design of their existence. These are unfolded by degrees, as every thing advances to a more perfect condition. In this manner, all that we call evil will finally be removed or destroyed; or we may express the idea in the language of the Apostle—“When that which is *perfect* is come, then that which is in *part* shall be done away.”¹ Nothing inconsistent with the

Divine nature—nothing opposed to the glory of God and the happiness of His creatures can exist forever.

“ It suits not the eternal laws of Good,
That evil should be immortal.”

In the Scriptures, the truth is clearly set forth, that evil will be destroyed. Christ is represented as finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. When John beheld the Messiah, he exclaimed, “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !”² Now, if sin is to continue forever, it certainly will not be taken away. It cannot be removed and at the same time remain. Take an illustration : A husbandman sent his son to destroy the tares in a certain field, knowing that he was able to perform the work. But it appeared in the end that only a few were destroyed, while the greater part were left to flourish undisturbed. The work was left unfinished—the husbandman entirely failed to accomplish his purpose. That the tares were not removed or destroyed, is rendered sufficiently evident from the fact of their presence in the field. So in the case under consideration. If the tares of sin and iniquity are left to flourish, and to strike their roots deep into the soil of the moral vineyard of God—if the field, which is the *world*, is to be thus overgrown and disfigured forever, how can Christ be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world ? If the sin of the

2. John i. 29.

world is taken away, it will no longer exist *in the world*. This is self-evident.

Again :—The Apostle affirms that “ for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”³ By the works of the devil, we may understand whatever is opposed to the Divine nature and government—that which in the common apprehension is evil or sinful. Hence the plain doctrine of this text is, that Christ will destroy all evil. It is an evidence that neither the blindness of bigotry or the ingenuity of sophistry can evade, to prove that God, who alone is good, will destroy whatever is opposed to His own nature, and the glory of His kingdom. “ Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”⁴ It may be, indeed, it must be, consistent with the purpose of God, that evil should exist for a season. You will remember that when the man in the parable found that there were tares among the wheat, he commanded his servants to let both grow until the harvest, when he would direct the reapers to separate them and bind the tares in bundles to burn them. You will be particular to notice, that Christ employed this parable to illustrate the very subject under consideration — the manner in which he will proceed to destroy evil, or the tares of the world. Sin will be permitted to remain for a time, or until the harvest ; but in the end—in the consummation of all things, evil will be

3. I John iii. 8.

4. Matthew xv. 13.

entirely destroyed, as the tares were consumed when the harvest was gathered into the garner. How can there be any controversy upon this point? The truth is abundantly sustained by the unequivocal teachings of the sacred page. How can the Christian believe that sin will reign and triumph here and hereafter? that it is destined to a perpetual existence, with all its fearful consequences in the eternal world? We may as well deny that life and immortality are brought to light, as to question the truth that sin and death are to be destroyed.

Again:—We read that he took our nature upon him “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”⁵ Here evil is personified, and from this testimony of Paul, it appears that Christ will subdue the great enemy of his cross, and bring every evil work to naught. The devil will be destroyed, his kingdom overthrown, and his dungeon walls razed from their foundations. The last enemy shall be destroyed—DEATH.⁶ The Lord of Life shall triumph, and sin and death shall be the trophies of his victory. “Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”⁷

Ignorance and moral darkness are represented in the Scriptures by a veil that is spread over the nations. This veil is to be destroyed. “The Lord of Hosts will make unto all people a feast of fat things....

5. Heb. ii. 14.

6. I Cor. xv. 26.

7. Verse 54.

And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations."⁸ The Apostle employs this figure to indicate the blindness of Israel. "But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil, untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart; nevertheless, the veil shall be taken away."⁹ The covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations, will be removed. That this implies salvation from death, from sorrow and condemnation is evident from the immediate connection. "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off *all the earth*; for the Lord hath spoken it."¹⁰ Then sin and ignorance, darkness and death, will no longer exist in the moral kingdom of God. Life, and knowledge, and holiness will fill the Universe. The veil destroyed, the glory of the Eternal will illumine the soul, and the morning twilight of man's spiritual being will be followed by an eternal day, when God will be the light in which every eye shall see Him as He is.

The salvation of all men is clearly taught in those passages that speak of the reconciliation through Christ. "And all things are of God, who hath

8. Isa. xxv. 6, 7.

9. II Cor. iii. 14—16.

10. Isa. xxv. 8.

reconciled us to Himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”¹¹

“If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”¹² “Where-

fore in all things it behooved 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.”¹³

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”¹⁴ All things in earth

and heaven, is a mode of expression which will hardly admit of limitation. It properly comprehends all intelligent beings. This universal reconciliation through the mediation of Christ, is, therefore, another evidence of the truth of the proposition, that God will have all men to be saved.

The truth is clearly revealed in those passages which speak of the extent and duration of Christ’s kingdom. “And a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering and to conquer.”¹⁵

“And there was given him dominion, and glory,

11. II Cor. v. 18, 19.

12. Rom. v. 10.

13. Heb. ii. 17.

14. Col. i. 19, 20.

15. Rev. vi. 2.

and a kingdom, that *all people, nations and languages should serve him*. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."¹⁶ This kingdom is not an outward, visible empire, whose foundations are laid on crushed hearts, and wet with the blood and tears of millions! Nay. It is inward and spiritual. It is established in the human soul, and its very elements are "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."¹⁷ Christ is to reign in the hearts of his people, and we read that "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."¹⁸

This great salvation is further confirmed, by the *record* which God has given of His Son. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. AND THIS IS THE RECORD, THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE; AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON."¹⁹

It is especially worthy of remark, that the Divine testimony in reference to the salvation of man, is, by way of eminence, called "*the Record that God gave of His Son*." It is well that we are not left to misapprehend the nature of this record. It is written in

16. Dan. vii. 14. 17. Rom. xiv. 17. 18. Isa. ix. 7. 19. I John v. 9-11.

language so plain that to err in our conception of its meaning is quite impossible. But it may be said that this is only given to believers, or to the righteous—that the wicked and unbelieving have no part or lot in the matter. This is a great mistake. Christ came not to call the righteous. When he appeared, all were dead in trespasses and sins, and God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.”²⁰ Christ was offered for THE WORLD. That eternal life, which is the gift of God, was in him given to the world when all were lost. He did not wait for men to become good before he entered upon his mission. Christ and eternal life were not given when man believed, but when he did not believe—not on account of his righteousness, but because he was most deeply alienated from God, by wicked works. Our faith cannot change the fact. Let us briefly illustrate this point. It is true that Christ lived—that he taught the people—that he was crucified. These facts do not depend upon faith. It is equally true that God has given to the world eternal life in His Son. This no more depends upon the faith of the creature, than does the life, ministry and death of Christ. These facts exist independently of the opinion or faith of any man, or of the world. It is true, therefore, that God has given us eternal life in His Son, and whether we believe or deny the record, the fact is the same. Thus you perceive, that while the faith of the creature is made to depend upon *the fact*, the existence of the

fact itself does not and cannot, in the nature of the case, depend upon the contingency of faith. If God has not given eternal life to the sinner—if his immortality is to depend upon faith, then in order to obtain it, he must believe that he *has it*. In other words, he must believe a falsehood to secure his salvation, and what is most singular, his faith renders it *truth*. But this record will not admit of any such construction. It contains the positive evidence that eternal life is the gift of God to the world. If we question this truth, we virtually assume that God has not given us a true and faithful record. “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” Men may continue to object, but here stands the record of Jehovah.—Here it will remain, though all the world prove faithless, and heaven and earth pass away. These things are “written, . . . that ye may know that *ye have* eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

With these remarks on the record, we may next consider so much of the Scripture testimony as relates to the nature and condition of man in the future world. Paul refers to the heavenly bodies to illustrate the condition of mankind in the resurrection state. “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.”²² You will be particular to observe, that all the celestial bodies are here represented as glorious. They differ in their magnitude and splendor, some possessing a more excellent glory than others. Still, it is true that each and every one of these has some degree of glory—“So, also, is the resurrection of the dead.” All are raised with immortal, incorruptible and glorious bodies, yet differing in degree, as the sun, moon and stars differ in their light and magnitude. The Apostle is here speaking of mankind in general, without reference to their character or condition while on earth. He represents all as being raised to glory and immortality. Speaking of the intelligent creation, he says, “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonor, 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.”²³ Here we have another proof of the great salvation. This clearly indicates the nature of the change. It is from corruption to incorruption—from weakness to power—from a natural to a spiritual body—from dishonor to glory. All are destined to experience this change. “Behold I show you a mystery ; we shall not all sleep, but we *shall all be changed*. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image

22. I Cor. xv. 41, 42.

23. Verses 42—44.

of the heavenly—For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”²⁴ The plain doctrine of the Apostle, as taught in this passage is, that as all men are created at first in the likeness of Adam, or the representative of man in his earthly condition—so shall all in like manner be created anew in the image of Christ—that as all the heavenly bodies are glorious in a greater or less degree, so in the world to come, all will be raised to life and glory and will shine forth as the sun and stars in the firmament.

The great Teacher has also described the future dignity and glory of man, in reply to a question of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in this doctrine, and they reasoned from the supposition that if man was to be raised at all, it must be with his present imperfect nature and condition, and that he would still be subject to the various relations, appetites and passions peculiar to his present mode of being. Filled with this low and earthly conception of the subject they drew near and inquired of the Master, whose wife the woman would be in the resurrection, who had seven husbands. “Jesus answered and said unto them, ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels,

24. I Cor. xv. 49, 51, 53.

and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”²⁵ Christ is here speaking of the resurrection of mankind universally, without any distinction of character or condition. To say the least, he cannot be supposed to refer to believers. If you deny the universal application of this language, it must be understood as having special reference to the woman and her seven husbands. The question, then is, were they believers? And we have a sufficient answer in the immediate connection—“The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection,” and after commencing the interview by a reference to the sayings of Moses, they introduced the particular subject of their inquiry as follows:—“Now there were *with us*, seven brethren.” These persons were, therefore, of the sect of the Sadducees, who were *unbelievers*, and hence it follows that, whether you admit the unlimited application of the Saviour’s language, or restrict it to these individuals, the fact is established by the authority of the Son of God, that unbelievers *will be raised to an immortal life, crowned with glory, and made equal to the angels of God in heaven.*

May the purity and glory of this great truth be exemplified in our lives, that we may be wise unto salvation. Thus shall we reverence the most Holy One, and exhibit the redeeming energy of His truth and love. Zion will rejoice and be glad, and her harps will be tuned to loftier notes of praise.

25. Matthew xxii. 29, 30. Luke xx. 36.

DISCOURSE XI.

• THE PHILOSOPHY OF PUNISHMENT.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.”—JOHN III. 19.

THE word condemnation, and others derived from the same original, are frequently employed in the New Testament. The same word is variously rendered judgment, condemnation and damnation. These words are severally supposed to refer to some outward, arbitrary infliction, having little relation to the nature of man and the sphere of his present existence.

It is not my purpose to inquire into the grounds of the popular misapprehension. It is sufficient to observe in this place that the idea of a fearful retribution has for a long time been associated with these words. If it be granted that these terms are properly understood—that the idea of punishment is clearly conveyed, and that this is authorized by the Scripture use of *krises*, the original Greek word, it does not thence follow that the infliction is arbitrary in its character, and future in its administration. We may admit that punishment is fairly implied, yet this will not affect the question as to its nature, and the time of its infliction. The idea that the disobedience of a mo-

ment is to be followed with immortal pains—that the sins committed in the earth are to be punished with endless imprisonment in hell, can never be made to harmonize with Nature or Revelation. It is no less opposed to the results of enlightened reason and philosophical induction. The penalty bears no proportion to the offense, and the one has no proper dependance upon or relation to the other.

The Universe is governed in all its departments by wise and immutable laws. These are not the less harmonious and equal in their operation, because they are not clearly defined and understood by man. For every violation of the natural and organic laws, we are punished. This punishment is not an incidental and arbitrary infliction at the hands of the Lawgiver. On the contrary, it is the natural result of transgression—the legitimate and inevitable consequence of the infringement. Besides, it is worthy of remark, that here, we always find a due proportion and correspondence between the cause and the consequence, or in other words, the offense and the penalty. Even in human governments, imperfect as they are, there is more of wisdom and benevolence perceptible than the Divine Administration presents, when viewed through the distorted medium of the prevailing theology. If our judiciary powers were to inflict the same punishment upon all offenders, without reference to circumstances or the turpitude of their actions—if the murderer, the thief, the hypocrite, the profane and thoughtless, as well as the morally good

and upright, were indiscriminately consigned to the same dungeon, and for an equal period, we should all acknowledge the government to be unjust and oppressive. Such a government and such rulers would be equally destitute of wisdom and benevolence. And yet, those who are wise in the opinion of the Church and in their own conceit, have no higher conception of the Divine character and administration. They suppose that all who are lost will be confined in one dungeon—that they will sink down together into the unfathomable depths of the same bottomless pit, and that the period of suffering will be the same in all cases. This idea aims to destroy all distinctions in wickedness—it recognizes no difference in the moral character of those who are supposed to be lost. It dooms the moralist, and even the little child, who is conscious of but a single fault, to the same destiny with the wretch whose life is stained with a thousand crimes. A man may deluge this fair earth with blood—spread desolation and ruin over the scene of populous kingdoms, and yet he will suffer no longer than the good moral man. Should a civil magistrate administer punishment in this way, he would be hurled from the judgment seat and condemned as a criminal.

But we have a lesson, more beautiful and truthful, confirmed by the impressive teachings of Nature and the voice of Revelation. From these, we learn that the Government of God is founded in wisdom; and that His laws are equal and just—that in the

righteous administration of His government, "He will give to every man according as his work shall be." His chastisements bear a due proportion to the demerit of our offences. Indeed, the natural consequence of the action is, in the Divine administration, the proper penalty of the law. It follows, therefore, that every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense of reward, as truly as that every cause is followed by its corresponding effect. This idea I propose to illustrate and enforce in the present discourse. Here it may be well to call your attention to certain established laws, and to notice the consequences of their infringement.

It is well known that the human system requires a constant supply of nutriment. This is necessary to sustain the body—to supply the deficiency occasioned by insensible perspiration and otherwise—to increase the vital fluids, and to fill the numberless channels through which health and vitality are carried to every part of the system. This is an organic law of our nature, and its observance is not only indispensable to the vigorous and healthy action of the several organs, but it is essential to life itself. Deprive the body of sufficient and suitable nutrition, and it will begin to languish, and all its powers will be enfeebled. In this case, the consequences will bear a strict proportion to the nature and magnitude of the offense. If the violation be of a trifling character, the consequence will be a slight functional derangement and temporary weakness. But if this infringement be

absolute in itself, and at the same time protracted indefinitely, it will finally result in the prostration of all the physical powers, and the disorganization of the whole animal economy. In other words, if the body be deprived of food for a sufficient length of time, it will become weak and powerless and death will ensue. This law may be violated in another way. If poison were mingled with our daily food, the natural operations of nature would be interrupted. The consequence would be pain and uneasiness—a disordered and spasmodic action of the system—disease would follow, and in the end, life would be destroyed. Here we discover a principle which has all the force of an invariable law. It is, too, as much a law of Divine institution and authority as any recorded in the Bible. But you perceive that in this case the penalty is not a direct arbitrary infliction from God; nor is the punishment deferred till an indefinite future period. On the contrary, it is the immediate and natural consequence of this violation of the organic law. Here is a natural and obvious connection between the cause and effect, or the transgression and the penalty. There is, therefore, a reasonableness and philosophical propriety in the infliction, which must be apparent to every enlightened mind. But is it reasonable to suppose that a man will be endlessly miserable in hell, because in this world he refuses to eat, and starves to death, or indeed, because he violates any other law of his nature? Certainly not. With as much propriety you

may send a man to the penitentiary ten years hence for burning his fingers to-day. If, in this case, there is no natural and philosophical connection between the transgression and the punishment, so there is not in the other. The infliction is, therefore, arbitrary and unjust—contrary to reason and the constitution of things, and withall, opposed to the wisdom and benevolence of the Divine Administration. Suppose an individual travelling a dangerous road, should choose to prosecute his journey in the night. We read, “if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” Now if our traveller should fall by the way and fracture a bone, you would never deem it right and proper, after an interval of twenty years, to imprison him for the remainder of his natural life. Yet this is not more unreasonable and absurd than to suppose that the ancient Pharisees, for example, are now shut up in hell because eighteen hundred years ago, they persecuted the Master. In both cases, there is evidently no possible connection between the conduct of the offender and the punishment he receives. It is inferred that some men will be miserable in the future world, because they are wicked here. If the argument has any force, it will equally well apply to all, for all have sinned. But the conclusion is unauthorized by the premises, and the whole argument in favor of endless hell torments, as predicated upon the moral conduct of men in this life is illogical and unsound. The traveller, in the illustration, experienced the painful consequences of

his folly in the personal injury he sustained. A broken limb was the penalty of his imprudence. There was a better way ; “ Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.” But this man chose to walk in darkness, and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.

Another organic law requires that all the powers of the body be properly exercised. Health and strength are found in *action*, not in ease. Without suitable exercise, the organs of the body would gradually lose their power and their appropriate functions would be inadequately performed. When this is the case, the consequences are weakness of the muscular system, nervous irritability, and a fearful train of diseases incident to a life of inactivity. Here, as in the former case, there is an indissoluble connection between the offense and its appropriate punishment. The penalty has a special and definite relation to the nature of the transgression, and it follows as the *natural consequence* of the same. Let muscular motion be suspended, and in one year, the strong arm would become weak and powerless. For this infringement of the law, the offender would probably be deprived of the use of his limbs, a penalty corresponding to the nature of his demerits, and quite sufficient without the imaginary woes of the future.

The same is true of the mind. Exercise is necessary to the proper development of its powers. All the faculties become strong and vigorous by being suitably employed. This is an organic law of the mind, and it operates as invariably as those that relate to the body. As exercise is necessary to the perfection of our powers, whether of body or mind, so it is likewise the secret of success in every enterprise. Obedience to this law is ever rewarded with physical strength and intellectual energy, and every violation is punished with bodily weakness and mental imbecility.

It is by the constant exercise of the powers of locomotion, that the traveller is enabled to accomplish his journey. The mind is exercised in the production of thought and feeling. It soars above the eagle's flight, and, from the dizzy eminence descends to the unmeasured depths below. It was by the exercise of these powers, that Homer and Shakspeare gained the lofty summits of Parnassus. Thus, Franklin traversed the region where the storms gather. The tempest was his pavilion—the dark clouds were his chariot, and the winged lightnings were in his grasp. In this manner, too, Newton was prepared to unfold to the world the sublime mysteries of Nature, when

“ All her works lay hid in night.”

It is evident that man is rewarded or punished as he acts in harmony with, or in opposition to, the laws of his being. It is a fact, that our condi-

tion of pleasure or pain is made to depend upon the exercise of our powers. When wisely exerted, they are so many springs of happiness, uninterrupted and ever new. The world appears beautiful and glorious to such a man. He sees the impartial benevolence of God in the sun and in the rain—in the green earth and the crystal waters—the winds whisper of Him—the pale moon light is a dim reflection of His glory, and the distant stars appear to his vision like the soft eyes of angel sentinels, that watch over the slumbering world. All Nature smiles before him, and her ten thousand voices penetrate the lone depths of the spirit,

“ Untwisting all the chains that tie,
The hidden soul of harmony.”

If we fail to cultivate and improve the higher faculties of our nature, we suffer the immediate consequences of our neglect. Our happiness is limited by the partial development of these powers. There is a want of mental strength and nervous energy—a growing indisposition to vigorous effort, accompanied by an unnatural and diseased action of the whole system. This is as true of the mind as of the body. There can be no doubt as to the correctness of this principle, or the propriety of its general application. Here you observe, that whether our powers are wisely or improperly exercised, every action is sure to produce its corresponding effect. Whether this be favorable or adverse to our present happiness, depends upon the nature of the action. The idea which these remarks

are intended to illustrate, and which I wish to impress upon the mind, is this:—Punishment under the Divine administration is not a future, arbitrary infliction. It is confined to the sphere of our present existence. And where should we expect to gather in the harvest of mingled pleasure and pain consequent upon our doings, but in *this world*, the field of our labors? What lies beyond, is of God, and not of us. Those who look to the future world for their appropriate recompense, expect to reap where they have not sown. The idea is alike unphilosophical and unscriptural. It aims to interrupt the obvious and necessary relation between our actions and their appropriate consequences. We may as well attempt to separate the pain from the disease. There is an essential and eternal union here which cannot be dissolved. Then, let it be remembered that, in the moral conduct of men and their rewards and punishments, there is a natural connection of cause and effect. If we but rightly improve our time and faculties, we shall be happy. There are springs of the most refined and elevated enjoyment ever open to those who seek wisdom. Let us suppose the case of one who had every opportunity to become acquainted with the various branches of natural science. By a proper use of his faculties, and a judicious improvement of his superior advantages he might have been wise and useful; but he lived and died in ignorance. In what way is this man punished for his ungrateful neglect of Heaven's blessings, and the misapplication of his own powers?

It is true this man hid his talent in the earth, and you are authorized to say that he is obnoxious to punishment. A wise reference to his own interest and happiness would have led him to seek knowledge and understanding. In the researches of the Geologist and the sublime investigations of the Astronomer, he would have found new cause to reverence God, to admire His works, and to observe His laws. All these incentives to a life of obedience and devotion were lost in his case through his own neglect, and the misimprovement of his time. Without doubt the popular Theology would send this man to hell because *he did not study Astronomy!* But we may dispose of his case in a manner that will far better accord with the philosophy of Nature and the Bible. This man never worshiped God among the stars! He never enjoyed those higher and holier communications of knowledge and happiness which he might have received. It would be little short of madness to suppose that he would be sent to hell forever because he did not improve his mind. We might as well conclude that he would come under the same condemnation for neglecting to exercise the members of his body. But the nature of his punishment, and its proper place in the order of time and circumstances can hardly be a matter of controversy. In this case, as well as in the others I have mentioned, the consequences were immediate and sure. In the pursuit of unworthy objects, he lost sight of the perfection and glory of which his nature was susceptible. He

stopped short of the lofty eminence which he might have attained, leaving the treasures of superior light and knowledge to be enjoyed by the faithful and true. Here the proper punishment, as well as its relation to and dependence upon the conduct of the man, are clearly seen. There was light for him, but he loved darkness or ignorance, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

This course of reasoning will apply to the *moral* and *religious* nature of man. In the teachings of the Master, we find an instructive parable which will serve as an illustration of the subject. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready."¹ But it appears that for various and unimportant reasons, the persons invited did not attend. Now in what way were they punished for their wicked ingratitude and obstinacy? What is the penalty for refusing to attend a feast? How were these men made to suffer the consequences of their folly? The answer is plain:—They were shut out from the light and beauty of the banqueting hall, and deprived of all the pleasures of a sumptuous entertainment. This answer, which may be drawn from the parable itself, clearly indicates the nature of the punishment. You will observe that the figure of a great supper is here employed to represent the Gospel, and the nature of the

1. See Luke, chapter xiv.

punishment is strongly implied in the language of the Saviour:—"For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Here we have the true idea of the punishment. From the very nature of the case, the disobedient and irreligious man is shut out from this great feast. He is self-banished from God and the glory of His power. He is not disposed to seek the lofty eminence where the votaries of Truth quench their thirst at the mountain rill; but is content to drink from the muddy pools and marshy glens below. His happiness is less refined and elevated in its nature. There are springs of moral life and spiritual rest and peace, which are all unknown to him—they exist in God. If the moral sentiments are neglected and forgotten—if the religious faculties are not employed in gratitude and praise and adoration, we may expect as the natural consequence that our love will grow cold—that we shall lose the moral power and spiritual strength we possess, and that darkness and insensibility will follow instead of the true light and the excellent glory.

We have had occasion to observe in substance, that the exercise of our powers, whether of body or mind, is essential to their strength and preservation; also, that every infringement of this law is followed by its immediate and appropriate punishment. The analogy holds good in the present application of the argument. As our highest happiness results from the proper and

healthy action of the moral and religious faculties, so, if these are neglected or improperly exercised, they become the source of uneasiness and pain. Sin and unbelief are punished with present condemnation: "The wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest."² This condemnation is not in the future. "He that believeth not *is condemned already.*"³ And the nature of this condemnation is clearly defined in in the text. This alone is revealed in Nature and Revelation, and confirmed by the experience of every man. The sinner may as well attempt to flee from himself as to escape from this condemnation. It is ever present—and

"Conscience, while she seems to sleep
On rose and myrtle, lull'd with syren song,
* * * * *
— See, from behind her secret stand,
The sly informer minutes every fault,
And her dread diary with horror fills.
* * * * *
Thou tremendous power!
Who dost inhabit us without our leave;
And art within ourselves another self,
A master self, that loves to domineer,
And treat the monarch frankly as the slave!
How dost thou light a torch to distant deeds?
Make the past, present, and the future frown?
How even and anon, awake the soul,
As with a peal of thunder, to strange horrors?"

Let the sinner remember that his condemnation is not removed from the present to the far distant future. 'His damnation slumbereth not'—'He is condemned *already,*' 'and this is the condemnation, that light

2. Isaiah lviii. 20.

3. John iii. 8.

is come into the world and men love darkness.' Oh, is it not enough that the sinner is left to wander amid the gloom and darkness of ignorance and moral night! Will you say he is not punished when he is without light and without hope in the world? Is it well with him when he can find no rest?—View him when the pale ghosts of innocence and virtue witness his feverish slumbers. The night brings no repose, for 'there is no peace to the wicked.' When the morning dawns, his frightful visions give place to the more fearful reality. Light shines upon the world, but his soul is dark. In every foot-fall he hears the sentence of condemnation. The ten thousand voices of Nature speak to him but the language of reproach; and every leaf that trembles in the breeze, but makes him tremble too! There is no escape from this condemnation. When the lone wanderer in a desert land, shall quench his thirst with the burning sands beneath his feet—when the weary pilgrim shall find sweet repose on a couch of thorns, or in the midst of devouring flames; then the sinner may expect to find rest and joy in transgression. As you reverence the Author of your existence and would secure your own happiness, observe the Divine requirements, and remember that darkness, tribulation and anguish, are the present portion of the wicked.

O, walk in Wisdom's ways, and thy peace shall be as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. If we thus act and live, we shall not seek in

in vain for water in a barren land. The windows of heaven will be open to us, and the fountain of our rest and joy will be as a mighty flood. Then we shall walk in the green pastures, and beside the still waters of life and salvation. We shall enjoy communion with God, and that delightful unity among ourselves, which is more precious than "the dew of Hermon, that ascended upon the mountains of Zion." Here I present you with the great moral lesson to be drawn from this subject :

—— "Vice ever brings its own punishment,
And Virtue alone is happiness below."

DISCOURSE XII.

CONCLUSION.

„ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.”—ECCLES. XII. 13.

THERE is a disposition among men to distrust the benevolent purposes of the Divine Being. God is true, but man is faithless. His unbelief is sufficient to disturb his present peace, and to overshadow his future destiny with the deepest gloom. When the soul is dark, the creature is unhappy. To enlighten the human understanding—to strengthen the weak—to confirm the highest hopes of humanity, and to further the knowledge of the glory of God, is the appropriate business of the Christian ministry. We indulge the hope that an earnest though humble effort may subserve the interests of this cause. If we have been unable to commend the truth to every man's conscience, it is still possible that our labor has not been in vain. Before we close this discussion and submit the subject, it will be necessary to present a summary of the evidence on which your decision should rest. From our present point of observation, we may command, at a single view, the entire ground of the argument. This will enable you to form an

intelligent judgment. It now only remains for us to “hear the conclusion of the whole matter.”

In the first discourse, it was our object to illustrate the inefficacy of the old Theological Systems and the various theories in morals and religion. We had occasion to observe, that little comparatively had been accomplished for man, either to improve his disposition, character or external condition. From the present state of society, and other facts and circumstances, it was rendered evident that certain means have been long and faithfully employed, without any important results; that these have failed to renovate the world—to elevate the standard of the public morals—to purify the heart or to correct the outward life. We ventured to propose other principles of action—to hint at other means and measures. The world has followed its old ways long enough. After the experience of so many ages spent in fruitless effort, we deemed it proper to adopt a higher rule of life, and inconsistent to reject the principle by which we proposed to govern, without the test of an actual experiment.

We were then prepared to assume our position and advance our peculiar idea. As God is the acknowledged source of all being, ‘from whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things,’ it was proper to reason first from His nature. Accordingly the several **ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE BEING** were successively employed as the ground of the argument. In every

case, we were led to the same conclusion. We reasoned from different points to one point. It was made to appear that God must, of necessity, be present with every creature He has made ; also, that His works possess those characteristics which render them illustrative of His goodness and wisdom—that there is in all, a benevolent design and a complete subserviency of the means to the end.

This reasoning was applied to humanity. We think the fact was rendered sufficiently evident, that if the two essential characteristics of wisdom are united in the last and noblest work of the Creator, the result is certain, and man must be saved. It was further maintained, that as God is Almighty, He can accomplish His purpose, or execute whatever His love may prompt and His wisdom devise. We were made acquainted with the fact that this wisdom is from above, because it is “without partiality.” Our attention was called to the evidence that God is impartial in the bestowment of His blessings, causing His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust. It was proved that the mercy of the Lord endureth forever—that the nature and disposition of mercy is to pity and forgive the offender, and to relieve his sufferings. We ventured to assume what all must admit, that God is perfectly just. The next step was to prove that the justice of God requires the rectitude of man—that the claims of justice will only be secured when all men become

Thus it appears, that infinite justice is incompatible with endless disobedience—that every child of God must do justly—that all must finally be made holy, or the demands of justice be unsatisfied forever. To give additional force to the argument, it was contended that God is immutable—that as He was merciful and long-suffering in the beginning, He will be no less so in the end—that His nature is ever the same, while His purposes admit of no change or modification. The several attributes united, form the Divine Nature which was proved to be love. As “God is love,” and as He is ever present in all places, and with all His creatures, it was our privilege to rest in a most happy conclusion:—God can no more withhold His love from a single soul than He can withdraw His all-pervading presence from a part of the Universe.

Your attention was next called to the WORKS OF NATURE. It was our object to illustrate and enforce the truth that the being, the wisdom and the goodness of God “are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. It was contended first, that the creation proves the existence of an infinite Intelligence. That if the works of art, from the simplest to the most complicated, convey to our minds the idea of mental agency—if the structure is proof of the existence of a builder who had the wisdom to conceive, and the power to accomplish his design; surely, the creation should be regarded as the work of One who had infinite love to move, unerring wisdom to direct, and

almighty power to execute. By this course of illustration, we were led to the Apostle's conclusion, "He that built all things is God." The second part of our argument, as derived from this source, was designed to show that the existence, the arrangement and the harmony of the Universe—that Universal Nature in all her stupendous operations, is constantly tending to one great result—*life and happiness*. Thus the only logical conclusion was seen to favor our idea.

Having proceeded thus far, it was thought proper to inquire into the NATURE OF GOOD AND EVIL, with a view to determine which would be likely to triumph. God was presented to us as the Author of all things—the ultimate source of all life, motion, sensation and intelligence—as the original Cause of all causes, in whom was the germ of all existences. Man and every thing in nature was supposed to be subject to the law of gradual development and progressive life; hence all at the beginning are imperfect. Good was admitted to be a *Positive Principle*, while it was assumed that *Evil* implies merely a *negative state*—the absence of Good. It was our object to prove that one is in its nature eternal, and that the other is of necessity temporary. We trust it was made to appear that while Good is the GREAT FIRST CAUSE, claiming an independent existence, Evil is only that imperfect condition of things in which they are not sufficiently advanced to disclose the ultimate design. Our idea is well expressed by the poet—

“ There is but one great right and good ; and ill
And wrong are shades thereof, not substances ;
Nothing can be antagonist to God.”

Good being an indestructible principle, and Evil an unsettled condition, we were authorized to conclude that Good will ultimately triumph. Thus God will be all in all, and man be purified and saved.

The next argument for the holiness and consequent happiness of man, was derived from his own nature. Four distinct propositions were employed:—First, the universal desire for immortal life and happiness. As the Creator has made sufficient provision for the wants of all His creatures—as He openeth His hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing, it was inferred that He will not disappoint the earnest expectation of the spirit.

Second:—Man was proved to be a progressive being. He was supposed to possess faculties and capacities susceptible of almost endless expansion—interior powers that find their appropriate exercise in the purest thoughts and the loftiest aspirations—a deathless nature!—yet one that cannot live without “the bread of God,” “which cometh down from heaven.” The argument in this form is deemed conclusive. However imperfect the creature may be he is still subject to the same law of progressive development. The powers of his inward being will be gradually unfolded. He is destined to receive higher and still higher degrees of spiritual illumination, until he is qualified to rejoice amid the light and glory which

eye hath not seen or the heart of man conceived. Every thing is imperfect at the beginning, but every thing must go on to perfection. The little blade will develop a grain that is precious. The seed deposited by the winds will yield a fruit that is pleasant to the taste. The little acorn will become an oak. It doth not yet appear what *we* shall be. What if we find man low and grovelling? This is but the rudimental state—the first stage of his progress. He may be an animal now—a worm—but there is an immortal germ in him, and he shall be an angel of God!

The adaptation of the creature to its proper sphere, through all the gradations of being, was next assumed as the foundation of the argument. It was observed that in the nature of animals, and the physical constitution of man, there is a manifest reference to the external world. Every living thing is fitted to its appropriate place; but there is no special adaptation of the spirit to earth. It will live and enjoy a higher life, when “the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved.” There is a better country, that is a heavenly—*that* is the spirit’s home. As the Divine Love and Wisdom have furnished a suitable element—a sphere and a habitation for every creature of this lower world,—so there must be higher spheres for celestial beings. In our “Father’s house are many mansions”—a place is prepared for you. The force of the argument in this case depends on what appears to be an invariable law of Nature. So far as our observations extend, it is a

settled principle of the Divine economy, and hence the truth in its application to man is confirmed.

Under the fourth proposition, it was made to appear, that the tendency to evil has its existence in the *animal nature*—that the spirit is pure—fitted to enjoy the presence of God and to delight in His law, even while another law is seen warring in the members. As the flesh with all its lusts, must perish here, and cannot inherit the life to come, the inference was drawn, that man will be delivered from the body of this death, and be led by the Spirit to his immortal inheritance.

The next evidence of the truth of our idea was derived from the DIVINE PATERNITY. God is the universal Father. He sustains this relation to the spirits of all flesh. We had occasion to speak of the law which binds the parent to love and protect his offspring. It was assumed that the obligation does not in any way depend on the conduct of the child, or any peculiarities of its disposition and character. It was proved to exist as a necessary part of the Divine economy in Nature. From these premises, we were led, by a course of inductive reasoning, to the only rational conclusion, that our heavenly Father will not and cannot abandon His children. As the obligation is of Divine institution and authority, God will not deny Himself by acting contrary to its requirements. His love will remain unchanged, and His benediction will rest on the wandering prodigal while he is yet far from the mansion of his Father.

Another illustration of our idea was found in the MISSION OF CHRIST. In the nature, the design and the end of that great enterprise—in the view of its Divine origin and glorious consummation, we felt a deeper conviction—in the magnitude of his work, the purity of his principles, the fullness of his love, and the serenity of his mind—in short, in the living example of a PERFECT MAN, there is much to strengthen our faith and hope, and to warm our affections. We see what humanity may become—what man *is* when his interior nature is unfolded, and his spiritual powers are freely and divinely exercised. In the knowledge of what Christ *was*, we have a beautiful conception of what we *shall be*. We must “grow up into him in all things,” “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

As the course of reasoning pursued in the illustration of our idea, had been mainly of a philosophical character, it remained to support our conclusions by a direct appeal to the SCRIPTURES. We have presented the testimony from this source, and if in your judgment there is no other or higher authority, you must abide the decision. We trust it was made to appear to the satisfaction of all, that the will and pleasure of God is the salvation of the world ; and that His promise and oath are pledged for the accomplishment of His purpose. In the second place, it was proved from the Scriptures that, the blessings to be enjoyed in Christ will far exceed in number and

magnitude the evils of transgression, so that where sin abounded grace shall much more abound. All who have suffered the consequences of the offense will receive and enjoy the fruits of obedience. All who were made sinners shall be made righteous, and those who have received the wages of sin, which is death, will possess the gift of God, which is eternal life. It was further proved, that the great salvation which comprehends the immortal joys of the world to come, depends not on human agency, but the ability of God to accomplish His purpose. It is "not of works, lest any man should boast;" but "by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all." Again, the scripture writers declare that the sin of the world shall be taken away, and everlasting righteousness brought in. God will destroy the veil and the covering that is spread over the nations—swallow up death in victory, and reconcile the world unto Himself. The kingdom of Christ is represented as universal. "All people" shall "serve him," and of the "increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." If, according to the record, "*God hath given to us eternal life,*"—if, in the future world all men will be clothed upon with immortal and glorious bodies, and possess the nature of angels, this is all that we can desire, and the light of this faith must fill the soul with joy unspeakable.

Even in the nature of punishment we have an evidence of the truth of our general proposition. Men are recompensed in the earth. The intimate

connection between every action and its appropriate consequence is plainly discernible, so that the authority of Revelation is sanctioned by an enlightened philosophy.

Here we propose to leave the argument. You are not required to rest your faith on

“Trifles light as air.”

You have evidence before you which, in our judgment, is

“confirmation strong
As proofs of Holy Writ.”—

From the Attributes of God, the Works of Nature, the Philosophy of Good and Evil, the Constitution of Man, the Divine Paternity, and the Mission of Christ, no less than from the combined and concurrent testimony of Apostles and Prophets, we derive the assurance, that God “*will have all men to be saved.*”

We have, of course, furnished but a small part of the evidence that might be adduced in the discussion of this interesting subject. It is impossible to exhaust the theme, since the truth is revealed in all the works and ways of God. It whispers in every breeze—distills in the dews and showers—it is written in radiant lines on the starry heavens—it gushes from every fountain—sparkles in the rill, and shines in the sun-beam—it speaks from every wound of a crucified Redeemer, and hath its deep utterance in the sublime voices of Nature, of Reason, and of Revelation.

We are wedded to no system. It is no narrow and sectarian platform on which we stand. It is not a

creed or confession to which we ask your assent. We leave the spirit free and the thought unfettered. We are not commissioned to make shackles for the world to wear. Too many, already, are engaged in that business. We only present our idea. For the sake of humanity we hope it may be accepted. We have no interest in building up a mere earthly power. We labor, not for the *sect*—but, for HUMANITY ; not for the *ism*, but for the IDEA. We desire to advance the truth—to hallow the name of God, and to bear a message of hope to the imprisoned spirits of men. There are many to whom the influence of this truth is precious, and for whom it has a great work to perform. It comes to “seek that which was lost, and to restore that which was driven away.” It will strengthen the weak and “bind up that which was broken.” The child of sorrow requires its holy ministry. The faint and the dying must have something to support them when heart and flesh fail. This truth will be a healing balm to the torn and bleeding bosoms of humanity. It will soften the grief of those who mourn over the wreck of earth’s best joys!—It will lift up the pilgrim who bends to the grave of his buried hopes ; and the poor exile will rejoice to know that he has a kind Father and a “sweet home” in heaven.

We would enforce our peculiar idea because it appears to be necessarily and intimately connected with true spiritual worship. Before the heart and the affections can be properly engaged in the service—

before the worshiper will bow in the beauty of holiness he must have right views of God. The Divine nature must not only command his highest reverence, but it must excite his deepest and purest love. Our idea will never make men mad or melancholy. It has no power to arouse the unholy passions. They expire beneath its gentle sway. It sanctions no irreverence to God or cruelty to man. It is "full of mercy and good fruits." Hitherto its power has been but little felt; but the world must yet adopt a faith that works by love, to purify the heart. Our idea has been like a sun-beam struggling to scatter the clouds. We have contended against fearful odds. Our influence has apparently been measurably lost amid the opposing influences. It has been like a little rill of some ethereal fluid, diluted by a thousand polluted streams. All that we desire is an opportunity to bring our principles to the test of a practical illustration in the government of the world. We request you to consent to the experiment. Let Love, the only reforming power in the Universe, have leave to rule the people. Give it a supremacy over the baser passions. Let it shape the thoughts, direct the will, and govern the actions of men. Give it an utterance every where, from the pulpit and the press; carry it with you into the councils of the nation, into the halls of justice, and the avenues of business. Let kindness be employed to subdue the criminal—the fire of love to dissolve his chains and melt his stubborn heart. Give him the pure air and the sun-beams—

These are the inheritance alike of all the evil and the good. Uncharitableness, injustice and revenge, have had their turn. Let man now be governed by Grace and Truth and Love, a trinity of beautiful spirits,

“ Each worth the mission of the Son of God.”

Give them a thousand tongues, and bid them speak their language in every mortal ear. It is time for Love to rule the world. Love will secure to all their rights. It will equalize labor and the gifts of Providence. It will do something for the poor and the oppressed, that men may be free and equal this side the grave.

If we receive the truth it remains for us to speak, and act and live, in humble obedience to its requirements. We acknowledge as our master, One who came to bear witness to the truth; who was willing to live for it, and at last to seal it with his blood. May we have a measure of his spirit, and may his love be shed abroad in our hearts. It may be a scene of conflict through which we pass; but the faithful and true in all ages—those whose memory is most dear—have walked in that way. It is the path of honor, of glory and immortality. TRUTH can never die!

——“ The sweeping storm of time
May sing its death-dirge o’er the ruined fanes
And broken altars,”

but there will be a temple and a shrine, where the pure in heart, and the free in spirit, will meet and worship.