

THE PROMISE

OF

THE SPIRIT.

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S E R M O N I.

THE CHARACTER OF THE COMFORTER, AND THE UNSPEAKABLE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS MINISTRATION.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” John xiv. 16.

The hour had come when the son of man was to be glorified,—when he must leave his disciples, and return to his Father. His work of teaching was now almost completed, and he was about to enter upon his work of suffering and dying. This was his great work, the work peculiar to him as the Redeemer. A mere man might have been so inspired by God as to communicate all the truths, and utter all the predictions which our Saviour delivered; and so strengthened, and endowed, as to perform all the miracles which he wrought; but none but a being of independent existence, and omnipotent power, could have availed as the substitute of sinners, and made satisfaction for the sins of the guilty. This was his peculiar work,—the work, for the doing of which the Father prepared him a body, in reference to which he said, “Lo, I come to do thy will O God.”

It was long before the apostles understood the import, or the necessity of his death; no wonder therefore that it was contemplated by them with horror, especially as it was so contrary to all their expectations. No wonder that their hearts were filled with sorrow, when he told them that he must leave them, and leave them, amidst circumstances of humiliation, and ignominy, and suffering. He had frequently hinted to them that he would be put to death by the Jews, and lately he had told them plainly that he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and raised again the third day.

The thought of losing a beloved friend by death is

painful in any circumstances; but more especially if that friend is endeared to us by all that is righteous, and pure, and lovely in character, and amiable in disposition, and dignified by the possession of great powers, much needed, and employed for the noblest purposes. To think of losing such a person in the midst of his usefulness is distressing; but doubly so to lose him by a violent and ignominious death. This was the position in which the apostles were now placed. For upwards of three years they had lived on terms of the most endearing intimacy with Jesus. They had listened to the words of heavenly wisdom which fell from his living lips, they had felt and witnessed the power of his eloquence, and had seen all that benevolence of heart, and intense human sympathy, which led him to relieve suffering wherever he beheld it, and called forth those stupendous miracles of mercy, by which his divine commission was established. No wonder then that sorrow filled their hearts when he told them plainly that he must be taken from them by a bloody and ignominious death, and it was to comfort them in their sorrow that he addressed them in the words of the text:—"I will pray the Father" &c.

The promise of our text is the first of that series which our Lord gave to his disciples during this, the last interview which he had with them before he suffered, regarding the mission of the Comforter. It is to the effect that, when he had left them, and gone to the Father, he would intercede with him in heaven on their behalf; and he would give them another Comforter, that he might abide with them for ever. *Another Comforter*, that is one who would act towards them, as his substitute, who would be to them, what he had been, their instructor, monitor, comforter. The word in the original is *Paraclete* which properly signifies one sent for to assist by his counsel and advocacy. It is the same word that is elsewhere applied by John to our Saviour, and there very properly translated *advocate*. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." It is used however in a much wider sense, and is employed to denote one who instructs, guides, and comforts, as well as pleads

for; and it is in this wide sense that I would understand the word here, as meant to indicate the office of the Holy Spirit in his dealings with the souls of men; enlightening, convincing, pleading with, and comforting them. "Christ is thus called, because he is represented as transacting the concerns of our souls with God; and for this cause, he tells us, he goes unto the Father. The Holy Spirit is thus called because he transacts the cause of God and Christ with us, explains to us the nature and importance of the great atonement, shows the necessity of it, counsels us to receive it, instructs us how to lay hold on it, vindicates our claim to it, and makes intercessions in us, with unutterable groanings."* And we may add, comforts us, by showing the relation in which we stand to God, as reconciled to him through the blood of the Lamb, by enabling us to realize the glorious prospects presented to us in the Gospel, by diffusing a calm and holy peace throughout the soul, and making us to experience something of the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. No doubt these words were spoken at first with a view to comfort and encourage the apostles, in the prospect of parting with their beloved master; but the promise was not restricted to them, it was meant for the comfort and encouragement of his disciples till the end of time; for it is in this sense alone that we can interpret the expression, "that he may abide with you forever." This then is a promise in which we ought to feel the deepest interest, belonging as it does to us, as well as to the apostles,—a promise this in which we may well rejoice, and be exceeding glad, more especially when we connect it with a previous promise of our Saviour.—"If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

THE CHARACTER OF THE COMFORTER.

Having thus promised to the disciples a comforter who would supply his place to them on earth, and act for him during his absence in heaven, Jesus proceeds to instruct them regarding the character of this glorious one. He

* Dr. Adam Clarke.

describes him as the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. Again, in the 26th verse, he terms him the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in his name, and near the close of the following chapter. the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father. From these passages it is abundantly plain, that he, who is here termed the comforter, is the third person of the glorious Godhead, "the same in substance with the Father and the Son, and equal to them in power and glory."

There are some persons bearing the name of Christian, who deny the personality of the Holy Spirit, and contend that he is only an emanation, or quality, a power or influence proceeding from God, and bestowed upon men. This view is in direct opposition to the words of our Saviour in the text, who speaks of the Holy Spirit, as a person, and terms him the comforter, who is to abide in the church for ever; and in the 26th verse he uses these remarkable words regarding him, "But the comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Again Jesus says of him, "He shall testify of me," and again that he would, "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" and once more, that he would "guide the disciples into all truth," "for," says he—"He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." Here then the Holy Spirit is said to teach, to bring to remembrance, to testify, to convince, to guide, to speak, and to show,—acts belonging only to a person; and to represent an emanation, or quality, or influence, performing these acts is to violate all the proprieties of language, and make our blessed Saviour employ language which, in that case, would be absurd and deceptive.

Again, understanding, will, power, are ascribed to the Holy Spirit,—attributes which can belong only to a person; so that we conclude with certainty, that if there be any propriety in the language of scripture, the Holy Spirit is

as much a distinct person, as either of the other persons of the Godhead.

There are others again, who, while they admit the personality of the Holy Spirit, deny his Divinity, and represent him as one of the greatest of created beings.—But this view, though not quite so absurd, and irrational as the former, is just as unscriptural. In the word of God, the Holy Spirit is associated with the Father, and the Son, and spoken of as being equally with them the source of every spiritual blessing. Thus the apostles were commanded to go, and teach all nations,—“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And in the well known apostolic benediction, we find the same association of the different persons of the Godhead—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen.” But what is perhaps still more satisfactory, we find the very term, God, applied by the apostle Peter to the Holy Ghost. When Ananias attempted to deceive the church, in regard to his appropriation of the money received as the price of his land, Peter reproved him, in these terrible words,—“Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”—Thus, you will observe, that, whilst he accuses Ananias of lying to the Holy Ghost, he shows the aggravation of the crime, by telling him, that he had not lied to men, but unto God, from which it is plain that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Godhead.

I am well aware that the nature of the Godhead, and especially the subsistence of three distinct persons in one undivided essence, is an awful mystery—one of those great depths, which human reason can never fathom. And at this we need not be surprised, for surely it is not to be expected, that the creature of a day, whose dwelling is in the dust, whose existence is limited to a point of space and time, should be able to comprehend the nature of the

infinite, and eternal God. All that we can know, regarding this subject, is matter of pure revelation. And on such a subject, it becomes us not to attempt to be wise above what is written, but to receive, with simple faith, the announcements of scripture regarding it.

We find indubitable evidence, in Scripture, of the divinity of the Lord Jesus, and also of the Holy Spirit, who are both termed God, and to whom attributes, and operations, peculiar to the Godhead are ascribed; and yet they are, in some way incomprehensible to our finite, and feeble faculties, related to the Eternal Father, so as with Him to form one God,—a trinity in unity,—distinguishable in person though indivisible in essence. We know that there are three divine persons, each spoken of in Scripture as God; and at the same time, we find Moses saying, with great solemnity, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord;”—Whilst it can easily be made apparent to enlightened reason, that there *can* be but one Omnipotent Being, from which we conclude that these three divine persons constitute one Godhead, eternal, incomprehensible, possessed of every possible perfection, and infinitely entitled to the admiration, gratitude, and love of all intelligent beings.

The great truth, regarding a plurality of persons in the Godhead, meets us at the very commencement of the Bible, in the very first verse of the first chapter of the book of Genesis; for though *there* lost to the English reader, those who are acquainted with the original, know that, in the Hebrew, the word corresponding to God is in the plural number, whilst the verb, with which it is construed, is in the singular; thus intimating not obscurely that, in the unity of the Godhead, there is a plurality of persons.

But in the 26th verse of the same chapter, the truth has not been allowed to evaporate in the process of translation. There the English version indicates, with sufficient clearness, this plurality of persons in the divine nature.—There God is represented as saying—“Let *us* make man in our image, after *our* likeness.” And again, we find the Lord God saying (Gen. iii. 22.) “Behold the man is become as one of *us* to know good and evil.”

These passages would not, in themselves be sufficient to

prove conclusively, that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead; but they harmonize beautifully with, and corroborate the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is fully developed by a comparison of different passages of scripture.—For this is not one of those doctrines which lie on the very surface of the word of God, but can only be discovered by a careful investigation, and comparison of different passages. It would be foreign to my present purpose to enter, at length, into a formal proof of this doctrine; my object is simply to show you that the comforter spoken of in the text, is one of the persons of the Godhead, and as such, able to represent Christ on earth, and supply the want of his personal presence.

After the matter of the world was created, but while the earth was yet without form and void, the Spirit of God, we are told, moved on the face of the waters, doubtless to reduce the confused mass to order, and prepare it for the production of those things, which God summoned forth from it, by the word of his power. And this association of the Spirit with God, in the work of creation, may well be regarded as an indication of his divine nature. And as the Spirit operated in the old creation, so it is his agency that is chiefly employed in the new. “Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit,” said our Saviour, “he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” And again, Paul tells us that, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

Again we find the Holy Spirit associated with Jehovah, in the exercise of divine power, even in qualifying and sending forth a prophet. “And now,” it is said by Isaiah, “the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.” Once more in the Acts* of the apostles, we find Paul thus addressing the Roman Jews,—“Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, ‘Go unto this people, and say,—Hearing ye shall hear.’” &c. Now when we turn to the passage alluded to in

* Acts xxviii. 25.

Isaiah,* we find that He, who, in Acts is termed the Holy Ghost, is in Isaiah termed the Lord; from which it is plain that the Holy Ghost is the Lord, and that, while Isaiah speaks simply of God, Paul particularises that person of the Godhead by whom the prophet was commissioned. But further, there is something very remarkable in these words of the Holy Spirit, as related by Isaiah—"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us," which, if they do not directly point out, yet distinctly recognize the plurality of persons in the Godhead. They seem indeed clearly to indicate that, while the Holy Spirit was the agent, he was acting for the Godhead.

I have been thus particular in endeavouring to demonstrate the Godhead of the Spirit, that we may have the most exalted idea of Him, who is our comforter, and of the privileges of the dispensation under which we live,—which is the ministration of the Spirit. This most glorious Being possessed of all the power, as well as of all the goodness of God, though invisible to the eye of sense, is ever present in the church, over which he watches with the most assiduous care, which he protects by his power, directs by his counsel, and comforts with his felt presence, bestowing upon believers the tenderest tokens of his regard, enlarging their hearts with the love of God, conferring upon them a foretaste of the joys of heaven, even upon earth, and filling their souls sometimes with rapture at the prospect of the heavenly glory, when they shall see God's face, and be made like him, and no cloud of sin shall ever more interpose between their souls and him; when the light of his countenance shall ever shine upon them, and no care or grief shall ever intrude to interrupt or diminish the happiness that shall for ever reign throughout the numerous mansions of our Father's house.

THE UNSPEAKABLE ADVANTAGES OF THIS MINISTRATION
OF THE SPIRIT.

With such a comforter, glorious in majesty, infinite in wisdom, and goodness, and power, well might the

* Isaiah vi. 8. 9.

apostles be satisfied, and submit without a murmur, to the removal from them of their beloved master. And with such a comforter in the church still, what cause has the believer for thankfulness, and encouragement, and holy joy! Having made such a provision for the instruction, and guidance, and comfort, and sanctification of believers, well might Jesus say to the apostles,—I will not leave you comfortless, or as it is in the original, “orphans,” fatherless, unprovided for, in the midst of a cold and hostile world.

This infinitely glorious one is invisible to the eye of sense, and therefore the men of the world receive him not. It is things seen, and material, and gratifying to the sense, that they receive and appreciate. They do not repose confidence in the divine testimony regarding him, nor value the graces which he bestows, and consequently they do not listen to his holy suggestions. Instead of this, they resist, and grieve him away, and so have no experimental knowledge of him. Thus they receive him not, as their heavenly monitor; and if they do not reject the divine testimony regarding him, they have no well defined and settled convictions, with respect either to his existence or his mission. But the very invisibility, and immateriality of the Holy Spirit, instead of being a disadvantage to be regretted, is an advantage for which to be thankful. Unclogged by a material form, he is limited to no place, but is everywhere present, watching over the true interests of the church, and ministering to the spiritual wants of believers. And most important of all, being immaterial, he can so manifest himself to the souls of believers, can come into such immediate contact with their spirits, that he is said to dwell with them, and to be in them.

It is a very mistaken idea to suppose that we could know more of the spirit of God, and have more satisfactory evidence, with regard to his existence, if we saw him in bodily form. We can know God only from his attributes, as manifested in his works and word; and the sight of the Holy Spirit under some material form, instead of giving us clearer views of his nature, would only mystify us. But the humble Christian who believes Christ's testimony

regarding the Spirit, and receives him into his heart, and yields to his holy suggestions, in conformity with the Word, has in his own heart the earnest of the Spirit, by whom he is sealed till the day of redemption, and is thus comforted, and sanctified, and demonstrated to be one of God's children. And thus the believer has not only the witness of the Spirit in his own soul, but he himself becomes a witness to others, not merely by the testimony of his mouth, but of his life, that the Spirit is indeed in the church, enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting the people of God, and making them meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

In the presence of one of the persons of the Godhead, in the Church, whose special office it is to watch over its interests, to extend its boundaries, and promote its spiritual prosperity, we have one of the most touching evidences of the condescension, and love of God, which may well draw forth our liveliest admiration, and most fervent gratitude and love; and one of the strongest guarantees which Omnipotence can give, that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. But let me not be mistaken here. By the church, I do not mean any particular denomination of evangelical Christians, but the invisible church, composed of all true believers, to whatever outward organization they may belong. This is the true church, the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in heaven. In this church the Spirit is, and ever will be, till the kingdom of grace is merged into the kingdom of glory. And here he is employed in enlightening, counselling, comforting, and sanctifying the people of God, and fitting them to be instruments for carrying on Christ's work in the world, and enabling them to do greater works, than any which Jesus himself performed on earth. He raised dead *bodies*, it is true, to *natural* life whilst on earth; but his disciples, through the power of the Spirit dwelling in them, are enabled to raise dead *souls* to *spiritual* life. Jesus no doubt also quickened dead souls whilst he sojourned on earth, but his success in the conversion of souls was comparatively limited, because the Spirit was not sent forth till Jesus was glorified.

It was not till he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, that he received gifts for men, that the Lord God, the Spirit, might dwell amongst them. And then, when the Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, in that fulness, which is the glory, and the characteristic of the Christian dispensation, their words had a power which instantaneously threw down the strongholds of Sin, and Satan, carried conviction to the understanding, and produced an overwhelming impression upon the heart, so that sinners were converted in multitudes, and the Church increased by thousands, as the fruits of a single sermon. Nor were these manifestations of divine power accompanying the preaching of the gospel, confined to the day of Pentecost, or the apostolic age. We have the promise that the Spirit is to abide in the church for ever, and if we pray earnestly for the Spirit, and welcome him into our hearts, and really have him dwelling *with* us, and abiding *in* us, we shall not only grow in grace, and walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, but we shall see the power of the truth exerting its legitimate influence over the hearts of men, humbling proud sinners, subduing their rebellious will, bringing them to Jesus, and making them a willing people in the day of his power. Let the gospel be but faithfully and fully preached, accompanied with earnest prayer, and longing desires for the promotion of God's glory, and the conversion of sinners, and just because the Spirit, with his omnipotent power, is in the church still, it is impossible that it can be without effect. The effect may not be so great as desired, and expected, but an effect there will be. Sinners may not be converted in large numbers; but conversions there will be; the progress of corruption will be stayed, God's people will be built up, precious seed will be sown, and the preparation made for a glorious harvest, which another may be honoured to reap and gather in.

S E R M O N I I.

THE ADVANTAGE TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST'S ABSENCE IN HEAVEN, AS SECURING THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE ON EARTH.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you:” John xvi; 7.

There is a love which knits hearts together by the tenderest and most endearing ties;—a love this not necessarily arising from blood relationship, but which is founded on mutual esteem and approbation, and heightened and confirmed by kindred feeling. And wherever this love exists, it is an evidence of refinement and virtue; for wherever vice predominates, *there* is intense selfishness, and disregard of the comfort and feelings of others. But there is a love even stronger than this. It is the love which we feel for one vastly elevated above us, by the possession of qualities of mind and heart of the noblest and rarest sort. A person may be possessed of great qualities which cannot fail to command our admiration; but if these are dissociated from virtue, he may excite our dread rather than call forth our love. Again there may be great qualities of mind, in connection with the sterner virtues, and such a person may secure our respect, as well as command our admiration. But when great qualities of mind are associated with the possession of great power, and beautified by all that is lovely, and kind, and benevolent, and good; when we are brought into contact with such a character, and even received into his confidence, and friendship, and have opportunities of seeing the blessed effects of his beneficent conduct, and ourselves experience his kindness, a feeling of intensest affection, and reverence, and admiration, springs up for him in our soul; so that there is scarcely any sacrifice which we would not make for one so noble and beloved. Such was the love which

the disciples cherished for our Saviour. He was infinitely exalted above them by the possession of a power which no mortal could hope to rival, and which gave unmistakable evidence of his divinity; and to this was united the most sublime morality, the loftiest views of duty to God, and the strictest views of faithfulness, and integrity, and justice to man.

And then, there was in his heart such sensibility to suffering, such deep and pure affection, and such unselfish love, and concern for the welfare of others, that the loftiest admiration, and most ardent affections were cherished for him by the apostles. And it would have been passing strange if it had been otherwise. There was in him all that was calculated to excite the admiration, to win the confidence, and secure the affection of all who had a mind to appreciate unparalleled excellence, or a heart to love genuine worth. No wonder then, when our Saviour spoke of leaving his disciples, that sorrow should have filled their hearts; and in our text, he furnishes them with the only consolation which was capable of supporting them in their trying circumstances. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you."

IT IS EXPEDIENT FOR THEM THAT HE SHOULD GO AWAY.

It is hard, in any circumstances, to part with those who are dearest to us,—to give them the last shake of the hand, or the last fond embrace, and watch their beloved form as it fades away in the distance, to be seen not for many long years, if ever again in this present world. And yet the assurance that it is to be better for the beloved object of our affection, and better in the long run for ourselves also,—this assuages our grief, though it cannot altogether stifle our sorrow. When a tender-hearted mother feels assured that her beloved boy will be better cared for, in a distant land, under the patronage of some wealthy and influential relative, than he could be with her, and that he will be far more likely to succeed in life; when she sees moreover a probability that, after

many years of successful toil, he may return to her, laden with riches and honour, the thought of all this reconciles her to her present loss, and she submits calmly, if not cheerfully, to part with him, from the prospect of advantage both to herself and him. Even the *probability* of such a result, arising from a painful loss, is sufficient to mitigate the sorrow of the most affectionate parent, and vastly more, surely, ought the certainty of great advantage resulting from Christ's personal absence,—a certainty founded on the assurance of him, who had given such evidence of his ability to execute all his purposes, and his willingness to perform all his promises,—vastly more, I say, should such an assurance have comforted the hearts, and assuaged the sorrow of the apostles, at the prospect of parting with one who was so unspeakably dear to them.

Christ's departure from his disciples would be of unspeakable advantage to them every way. It would promote their best interests both for time and eternity. He had told them before that the Son of man had come, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. And in this sense, doubtless, it was expedient for them that he should go away—that he should be removed from them by death, since by that death he would make an atonement for sin, and procure for them everlasting life. But though this is true, it is not exactly *the* truth which is meant to be conveyed by the passage before us. Christ might, after his sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection, have continued personally present with the disciples on earth. He might have continued with them on earth, in his glorified human nature, still farther to instruct them, to encourage and strengthen them, and carry forward his cause to a world wide triumph, in spite of all opposition. This was no doubt what the disciples expected. But it would not have best accomplished the glorious purposes which the Saviour had in view, and therefore he told them it was expedient for them,—more for their advantage,—if not for their present comfort, at least for their highest interests, that he should go away. He had told them before that he was going to his Father, so that they might have known, and probably did know, that he was

going to his Father in heaven. Here then he lets them know that it would be more for their advantage, better for the highest interests of the Church, and the advancement of God's glory, throughout the universe, that he should depart from this earth, and take up his residence with his Father in heaven.

THE REASON WHICH CHRIST ASSIGNS, WHY IT WOULD BE MORE TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE DISCIPLES, THAT HE SHOULD GO AWAY.

It was because his presence in heaven was necessary, before the gift of the Holy Spirit, in all the promised fulness, which was to characterise new Testament times, could be conferred upon them. No doubt the Holy Spirit was in the church from the beginning. He strove with the antediluvian sinners, He inspired old Testament prophets, and enlightened, and converted, and sanctified, and comforted old Testament saints. Still it was in comparatively scanty measure that his sacred influences were poured out in these times: and it was predicted as a characteristic of the times of the Messiah, that *then* the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon all flesh. It seems to have been necessary, however, that Jesus should present himself in heaven, and enter upon his glory, before the new dispensation of the Spirit could be established. Jesus says plainly here, "If I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you."—And John elsewhere, in speaking of a promise of Jesus, regarding the gift of the Spirit, says,—“For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” It seems that Jesus must complete the part which he undertook, in the work of redemption, before the new dispensation of the Spirit could commence. He had to ascend up on high, he had to lead captivity captive, before he could receive gifts for men, that the Lord God, the Spirit, might dwell among them. It seems as if it had been necessary that he should enter formally into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, with the body which had been crucified, and slain: and *there* by the wounds still manifest upon it, and the blood which had been shed for sinners, thus give evidence, in the

presence of the great Sovereign of the universe, and of the principalities and powers of heaven, that the propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men had been completed, and the price of their redemption paid; so that God might now be just, and at the same time, the justifier of the ungodly. Had Christ not then gone away from earth, and ascended up into heaven, and presented himself before the throne of his Father, with the blood shed for sinners upon him, and taken his seat upon the mediatorial throne of the universe, the Holy Ghost could not have been given. But having thus gloriously ascended up into heaven, and shown that his work of doing and suffering was completed, or in other words, that he had glorified his Father on earth, and finished the work which he had given him to do, he poured forth the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, as the fruit of his atoning death, and intercession on their behalf, and pleading that this unspeakably precious gift might be conferred upon them, in fulfilment of the promise made to him, on his undertaking to glorify his Father's name in the great work of redemption.

IN WHAT RESPECTS THE GIFTS OF THE INVISIBLE SPIRIT
ARE MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE CHURCH, THAN
THAT PERSONAL PRESENCE OF A VISIBLE SAVIOUR.

Whether we can understand the reason of it, or not, it is evident from our Saviour's own words, that greater advantages would result to the Church, from the continued presence of the Holy Ghost, than could have arisen from His own personal presence with her. It is evident that a new and loftier dispensation was about to be established, that greater privileges were about to be conferred upon the Church, and greater blessings upon men at large, than had ever been enjoyed since sin entered this fallen world. The church was to enter into a new relation with God, since its reconciliation had been effected by the blood of atonement. The greatest obstruction in the way of the communication of the richest spiritual blessings, having been removed, the Holy Ghost was now about to enter fully upon the discharge of that office, in the economy of redemption, which had been assigned Him in the

councils of eternity. When, therefore, Christ comforted his disciples, with the promise, that he would pray the Father, and he would give them another Comforter, that he might abide with them forever, even the spirit of truth, he just meant that he would plead with the Father, now that his part in the economy of redemption was accomplished, that in accordance with covenant agreement, he would send forth the Spirit to operate powerfully upon the minds of men, to show them their guilty and undone condition; to make them feel their need of a Saviour; to show them the excellency and all-sufficiency of Jesus; to constrain them by the power of persuasion, to embrace him as their Saviour, and then to sanctify and comfort them, and hold up their goings, and direct them till their pilgrimage in this life is ended, and they enter upon their glorious reward.

Thus then, the great advantage, which would arise from Christ's absence, was that the church would enter upon a new and more privileged condition, arising from the fact, that the Spirit would now enter upon the discharge of his peculiar function in the economy of redemption; assume the direction of the Church's affairs, and gather in the glorious harvest, for which the Saviour had made the indispensable preparations. No doubt, as has already been said, the Spirit had been in the church from the beginning; but up till the period of Christ's ascension, his influences had been bestowed in scanty measure. It was not till the work of redemption was completed, and the price of it, in the sufferings of Christ, paid, that the gift of the Spirit, which he purchased with his blood, was bestowed, in that richness, and extensiveness, which is the special characteristic, and glory of the Christian dispensation. The gifts of the Spirit, bestowed before the advent of Christ, were small measures of his gracious influences given, as it were in advance, but it was not till the work of redemption was completed, that those gifts of the Spirit were bestowed in all their fulness, which were necessary, to enable sinners to avail themselves of it, and to carry on the work of sanctification in saints, and make

them meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Still we are very apt to think, that the advantages to be derived from the operation of an invisible agent upon the intellect and heart, are not equal to what might have resulted from visible intercourse with the Saviour, from beholding his miracles, from listening to his words of heavenly wisdom, and witnessing that perfect example of holiness, and purity, and integrity, and devotedness, by which he would have illustrated his lessons, and allured sinners, and elevated, and dignified believers. The reply very generally given to this is, that had Christ continued personally present on earth, after his resurrection, and the glorification of his human nature, that he must have been confined to one particular locality at a time; and that consequently, he would have been less extensively useful to the human race, than the Omnipresent Spirit, who is confined to no locality, but is everywhere ready to attend to the wants, and listen to the prayers of all, and is to continue with the church for ever. There is probably something in this; much less however, I think, than is generally supposed. For though the glorified human nature of the Saviour could not have been present in more localities than one at a time, with what rapidity might he have travelled throughout the world, and with what untiring energy, and resistless power might he have addressed sinners, and instructed, and comforted, and elevated believers.—We conceive however, that this would have been inconsistent with God's nobler plan of operating by unseen influences, upon the mind of man, and thus exercising his faith, and, by the power of persuasion, and the force of moral motives, bringing him voluntarily to Jesus, and leading him to make a complete surrender of himself to God; whereas in the other case, there would have been something like compulsion, and terrifying sinners into submission.

Let us bear in mind however, that each of the persons of the Godhead had his own peculiar part to perform in the economy of grace: that, whilst it was the glory of the Father to devise the scheme of salvation, and the glory of the Son to execute the work, and pay the price of redemption,

it is the glory of the Spirit to apply the remedy provided to the souls of men. And consequently, the Lord Christ, having finished the work which the Father had given him to do on earth, ascended into heaven to carry on the work of intercession in that higher sphere. And just as the Spirit of God, when he moved originally upon the face of the waters, brought order out of confusion, and light out of darkness, so now he is sent into this world, to enlighten dark souls, and regulate their affections, and purify their hearts, and fill them with the love of God, and bring them back to their allegiance to *him* against whom they have so grievously rebelled. It is the office of the Spirit to enlighten, convince, and impress souls, and so bring them to accept, with thankfulness, the offers of salvation, through that Saviour, in whom alone deliverance is to be found. Without his almighty power to enlighten the understanding, and renew the heart, the clearest statements of divine truth will fall ineffectual upon the ear; for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they seem foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

And thus we can see how it was better for the church, that Jesus, having finished his work of redemption, should leave this world, and allow the Holy Spirit to carry on his work of dealing with the souls of men, enlightening, convincing, and renewing them, bringing them to accept of Jesus as their Saviour, and submit to him as their King; and then farther manifesting himself to their souls, elevating their whole moral nature, adorning them with the beauty of holiness, and enabling them to maintain communion with God, and so to walk with him in purity here, that they may be prepared to walk with him, in white hereafter.

But there is another respect, though not specially alluded to by the Saviour here, in which it was of advantage to the church that Christ should leave it, and go away to the Father. It was that he might carry on the work of intercession, to greater advantage in the immediate presence of God. We know that he is invested with all power in heaven, and on earth, seated on the mediatorial throne of the

universe. But we know also, that he is a priest upon his throne; and that he intercedes for his people, and presents, and urges their petitions, and O, what comfort to the poor sinner, that we have God's assurance in his own word, that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous." Yes Brethren, we have an omnipotent Friend, one who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who sympathizes with us in our sorrows, and difficulties, and temptations, and is ever ready to plead for the forgiveness of every poor penitent, and to send forth his Spirit to strengthen us in our infirmity, and help us in the hour of temptation and sorrow.

Brethren, if you were acquainted with some powerful friend, who had secured your confidence, and called forth your loftiest admiration, and endeared himself to you, by many acts of substantial kindness, you would no doubt delight in his society. His presence would be like sunlight to your soul; and it might be painful to think of his being separated from you. But if he was going to occupy a distinguished place in the government of the country, where he would have the ear of royalty, and the opportunity of promoting your interest far more effectually than if he were to continue with you, in the remote locality where your lot was cast, in that case, you would rejoice to submit to the loss of him, because it would be advantageous both to himself and you; and so, however painful it might be to the apostles, to be separated from such a friend; yet when they realized fully the object of his separation from them, and saw him ascend gloriously on the chariot of the clouds to heaven, they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. And so, let us comfort ourselves with the assurance, that Jesus is promoting the interests of his church more successfully on his throne in the heavens, than if he were personally present with us on earth. *There* in his glorified human nature, in that most influential centre, in which the government of the universe is carried on;—and there consequently, with his eye surveying the universe, and observing all the agencies which might operate to the injury or advantage of his

church, he overrules them all for the promotion of her highest good.

O brethren, with such a friend in heaven what have we to fear! Do you doubt his interest in you? Think of the agony of Gethsemane, and the shame, and horror, and dying groans of Calvary, and surely you will not be able to doubt that he who died for your offences, still cherishes the deepest interest in you. And "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." Yes brethren he ever loveth to make intercession for us, and let the assurance of that encourage us to go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy so pardon, and grace to help us in every time of need.

SERMON III.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT, IN CONVINCING THE WORLD, CONCERNING SIN.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin; and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." John xvi. 8-9.

To an enlightened and reflecting mind, there are few things more astonishing than the indifference which the great mass of mankind manifest in regard to everything divine and spiritual. I believe there are few people who have reasoned themselves into the belief that there is no God; but I am satisfied there are great numbers who have no profound convictions, no clear, settled, and satisfactory views, in reference to this sublime, and infinitely important subject. I believe there are few indeed, if any, who, after patient investigation, and calm reflection, have come deliberately to the conclusion that there is no God. But if there be any such, their conclusion is a most presumptuous and unphilosophical one. For though *they* may see nothing within the range of their limited observation, which, they think affords them indubitable evidence of the being, and providence of a personal God; how do they know but that in *some* part of creation, there might be found evidences of the being, and perfections, and power of God, which even *they* could not resist. Before any man could, on just, and truly philosophical principles, arrive at the conclusion that there is no God, he must visit every corner of creation,* and examine every planet, and star, that revolves in the immeasurable fields of space; for otherwise it would be impossible to be certain but that in some central sun, or far off planet, there might be the throne of the Eternal, and Omnipotent Jehovah, surrounded by a blaze of unapproachable glory.

But though there are very few, if any, who believe

* Foster.

that there is no God, I am satisfied that there are vast numbers in the world who have no settled convictions on the subject, and who live as if there were no God to take cognizance of their conduct, and no day of judgment, on which they must appear before him. This may well be regarded as a mystery of folly and impiety. But there is another mystery, not so great and astonishing indeed, but still a mystery of stupidity, and ingratitude, and impiety. It is that, while multitudes of men admit the existence, and perfections of the God of creation, of providence, and redemption, they live in indifference about him, without any realizing views of his glory, or any anxiety to secure his favour, or avoid his righteous indignation. Such men live almost exclusively for a present world, and suffer themselves to be engrossed with the objects of sense and time. They may indulge the lusts of the flesh, and act unfairly towards their fellow men, or they may be exemplary in their moral deportment, blameless in the estimation of their fellow men, and even generous in their disposition, and beneficent in their conduct; and yet the great God, whose they are, and to whom they are indebted for everything, may be seldom in their thoughts, and occupy no place in their affections. They may admit the existence of a spiritual principle within them, over which death has no power, and a future judgment, and an eternal state of rewards and punishments; and yet these infinitely important truths may exercise no commanding influence over their feelings and conduct. One might be tempted to believe that this indifference of the great mass of men to the sublime and infinitely important truths of religion, was the result of positive unbelief; but it is not necessarily so, for they cannot doubt the certainty of death; and yet they are not adequately affected by it, and live as if they were to live for ever. And their views of sin are just as inoperative upon them. They cannot conceal from themselves the solemn truth, that they have sinned against the great God, times and ways to themselves innumerable, and yet they are little affected by this awful consideration; though they profess to believe that God is a being of inflexible

justice, and infinite holiness, and omnipotent power, whose resources of punishment are as tremendous as his treasures of goodness are inexhaustible. This state of indifference about God and sin, and our condition for eternity, is substantially the condition in which all men are by nature. It is represented in Scripture as a state of death, and deliverance from it as a resurrection. And the great change produced on the moral nature of man, in virtue of which he is enabled clearly to apprehend these things, to see them in all their unspeakable importance, and to act upon these convictions, is spoken of in Scripture as a new birth, as a new creation, and a passing from death unto life.

It is obvious that a change so great as this, cannot be produced upon a man by any effort of his own, or by any effort of any creature. It is God alone who can adequately repair that most delicate part of the human constitution which has been most deranged by sin. And as Jesus atoned for man's sin, so that it is consistent with God's justice to extend pardon to the chief of sinners, so he made provision also for his restoration to spiritual life, and holiness, to spiritual communion with God, in time, and the full enjoyment of his presence, in eternity. For this purpose he procured the gift of the Holy Spirit;—that he should be sent into the world, and carry on the work of redemption, in its application to the hearts and consciences of men. And it is with reference to this part of the Spirit's work, that our Saviour says in the text,—“When he—the Spirit of truth—is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin because they believe not on me.”

There are three things, in regard to which it is said, in the text, that the Spirit will reprove, or as it is rendered in the margin, convince the world,—He will convince the world concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment. It is to the first of these parts of the Spirit's work only, that I shall direct your attention to-day.

Christ declared that, when the Holy Spirit was come, he would convince the world, that is men at large, Gentiles as well as Jews, concerning sin. The nature of the Sin

of which he here declares that the Spirit would convince men, he explains in the ninth verse, as meaning more especially the sin of unbelief, "of sin," says he, "because they believe not on me."

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT CONVICTED THE MEN OF THAT GENERATION OF SIN, IN REJECTING THE SAVIOUR.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out in his extraordinary gifts, upon the apostles, in fulfilment of the Saviour's promise, he would convict the men of that generation, and country of fearful guilt, in rejecting and crucifying the Son of man, whose divine commission was attested by miracles, the genuineness of which was admitted even by the Jewish rulers themselves. Christ did not claim the confidence of his contemporaries, merely on the authority of his own declarations, he appealed to his miracles, as affording indubitable proof that the Father had sent Him. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish," said he "the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." And again, "If I had not done among them the works, which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." And it was by weighing the evidence resulting from the miracles which Jesus wrought, and contrasting them probably with those which Isaiah predicted the Messiah would perform, that Nicodemus came to the conclusion that he was a divinely commissioned teacher, for no man, he said, could do the miracles which he did, except God were with him. In reference to the work of the Messiah, when he should come to save his people, Isaiah had spoken in these beautiful words—"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." And not only did Jesus frequently perform all these works, but greater works than these did he do. He made death relax his grasp, and the grave give up his victim.—And these miracles were not done in a corner, but in open day, in the most public places, and in the presence of vast

multitudes, so that the Jewish rulers could not afford to treat them with silent contempt.

We have an account of their investigation of one of his miraculous cures, that of the man blind from his birth, with a view, no doubt, to expose it, if there had been anything fraudulent, or delusive about it; but they could find nothing to suit their purpose. And afterwards, when the report of Lazarus's resurrection was brought to the chief priests and Pharisees, they took the alarm, and gathered a council, and said—"What do we? for this man doeth many miracles."

Thus the conduct of the Jewish rulers affords an awful illustration of that deplorable spiritual blindness of which I have already spoken, while it furnishes the clearest evidence of their tremendous guilt. But Jesus was now to give additional evidence of their guilt, which, together with the former, would form an amount of cumulative evidence which may well be considered overwhelming. He was about to pour out the Holy Spirit in that abundant fulness predicted by Joel, who would afford not merely that internal evidence which most powerfully convinces the regenerate, but that outward evidence in miracles, and mighty works, which would convict the Jewish, and heathen unbelievers, who had taken an active part in, or consented to the death of Jesus, of the fearful guilt which they had brought upon themselves. Accordingly, when the Holy Ghost descended in visible glory upon the apostles, and they received the baptism of fire, and were enabled instantaneously to speak foreign tongues, and afterwards to do even greater works than our Saviour performed on earth; not only to restore the lame, and raise the dead, but to raise to spiritual life dead souls, to convince of their guilt multitudes who had consented to the death of Jesus, and lead them to embrace *him* as their Saviour, whom they had formerly rejected, and blasphemed.

Thus when the three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, were convinced of the claims of Jesus, as the Messiah, and embraced him as their Saviour, their conduct as the result of the power now wielded by the apostles, in consequence of the fulness of the Spirit, that dwelt in them,

convicted the rejectors of Jesus of sin. "Then was the world brought to a voluntary confession of the sin of murdering Jesus." And looking at this in connexion with the gifts of healing and tongues exercised by the apostles, these things afforded the most indubitable proof of the divinity of Jesus, and consequently of the sin of those who rejected and crucified him. Thus, while the out-pouring, and exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit convicted, upon indubitable evidence, the rejectors of Jesus, they reproved them at the same time.

When men beheld the despised apostles exercising such extraordinary power, in fulfilment of the promise of the crucified one, they felt this to be the testimony of heaven to the truthfulness of his character, and the justice of his claims. This, however, though a most important, was only a temporary consequence of the operation of the Spirit's gifts. He is to continue in the church for ever, and he has still a work of conviction to do in the hearts of men.

IT IS THE PERMANENT PART OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK TO
CONVINCE MEN CONCERNING SIN.

I have already spoken of the blindness and indifference of man, in his natural state, in regard to everything divine and spiritual. It is astonishing to think with what coolness men will talk of the justice, and holiness, and omnipotence of God, and admit that they have sinned against him, and that there is a day of judgment coming, on which they must appear before him, to receive an award for eternity, according to the deeds done in time. One would think that the consciousness of having violated the laws of such a Being, and incurred his righteous displeasure, and exposed themselves to the gnawings of the worm that cannot die, and the torments of the fire that cannot be quenched, one would think that the consciousness of all this would petrify men with horror, and render them incapable of enjoying the pleasures, or attending to the business of life, till they obtained reconciliation and peace with God. But it is not so with the great mass of men, who will readily enough admit the grand truths of religion, and yet remain

practically unaffected by them. Hence the permanent necessity of the Spirit's work in convincing men of sin.— He must both enlighten the understanding, and impress the heart, before we can either see sin in its true character, or feel an adequate sense of its danger. He must remove the scales from the eyes, before we can see sin, in all its injustice, and hatefulness, and ingratitude, and rouse conscience from its lethargic torpor, before we can feel the alarm, and terror, which a consciousness of guilt before God may well inspire.

“The Spirit,” says M. Henry, “is sent to convince sinners of sin, not barely to tell them of it. In conviction there is more than that, it is to prove it upon them, and force them to own it. It is to make them know their abominations. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin, that we have done so and so; of the fault of sin, that we have done evil in doing so; of the folly of sin, that we have acted against right reason, and our true interest; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become odious to God; of the fountain of sin the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Spirit demonstrates the depravity and degeneracy of the whole world, that all the world is guilty before God.”

When the Spirit of God has thus aroused conscience and given us an insight into our own hearts, and enabled us to see them in all their depravity, and enlightened our intellect so as to enable us to understand the law of God, in all its comprehensiveness, and spirituality, as extending not only to the actions, but to the words, and thoughts, and then, when our sins set themselves in gloomy array before us, actual transgressions committed, duties neglected, God forgotten and dishonoured, rash words spoken, and sinful thoughts indulged in, what agony of soul is excited, what terrors aroused, and what fearful apprehensions of coming judgment take hold upon us!

This is the case when the Spirit gives us realizing views of the sins which we have committed against God; but there is one sin more aggravated than all the rest, more ungrateful, dangerous, ruinous, of which it is the special office of the Spirit to convince us, I mean the sin of un-

belief in Jesus, as the Saviour of sinners. The work of the Spirit, mentioned in the text, was not merely to convict the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles of that day, of fearful sin, in disbelieving, and rejecting, and crucifying the Saviour, but this work extends to all time, and his office is still to convince men specially of the fearful sin of unbelief. This sin is the most aggravated of any: it is most dishonouring to God, and most ruinous to man. It robs God of his greatest glory; it virtually impugns his veracity, and shuts out man from the only remedy provided for the salvation of his soul. And even when there is not positive unbelief, when there is the conviction of the understanding merely, without the consent, and submission, and acceptance of the heart, this indifference, and indecision, and refusal to accept Christ's gracious offers, argues the basest ingratitude, as well as the most miserable folly. Unbelief is not only the most prevalent, and ruinous of all sins, but it is that which lies at the bottom of all iniquity. If men habitually lived as seeing God who is invisible, they durst not commit sin, feeling that they were in the presence of the Omnipotent punisher of it. And if they lived in the belief that Jesus died for them, how could they grieve, and wound him afresh, by indulging in that sin which crucified him? The Spirit, by his internal operation upon the heart, will not only convince sinners that, because they believe not in Jesus, they are overwhelmed by sin; but that apart from him, they have not a particle of righteousness about them. Thus he will make them feel that it is not only sin to disbelieve in Jesus, but that without belief in him, all sin is unforgiven, and will lead to everlasting perdition.

In ordinary cases, and more especially in the case of those, who have been piously brought up; who have been trained to the fear of the Lord, and accustomed to self-restraint from their earliest years, the work of conviction is seldom severe, and often so quiet, and gradual, that it is scarcely perceived, till it issues in a state of complete reconciliation to God, and the enjoyment of perfect peace. But in cases where the individual has lived in a state of complete alienation from God, and in the indulgence, it may

be, of open sin, conviction is sometimes produced suddenly by the mighty operation of the Spirit of God; and in such cases it is generally violent, and alarming. It is the Spirit only, who can effectually convince of sin, in any case; though a sermon, or conversation with a Christian friend, or the perusal of God's word, or some remarkable event in Providence, may be the means employed for the production of that most important effect. And when it is produced, and the great realities of the spiritual, and eternal world burst suddenly upon the view, no wonder that the individual is sometimes agonized in soul, and ready almost to sink into despair. When a person has been living exclusively for a present world, practically ignoring the providence of God, and giving himself no concern about the future, if his mind is suddenly awakened to a sense of the realities of the spiritual and eternal world, no wonder that he is overwhelmed with terror, and alarm. When a man is suddenly made to realize the holiness, and justice of God, and his own utter ungodliness, and guilt; and to feel that he deserves nothing but everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power, who may describe the agony of soul which he experiences! Such a sudden realization of spiritual and eternal things is not uncommon, during great revivals of religion; and the agony of soul which it produces is nothing more than, in the circumstances of the case, might be expected. And most frequently such sudden and fearful convictions compel the sufferer to apply for mercy and pardon, where alone they can be found, and to agonize in prayer, till he finds peace in Jesus. If the work, in such cases, is a violent and terrible one, it is generally a short, and effectual one. And the change produced is so great that it cannot escape observation. Such a person is often one wondered at. Having been forgiven much, he loves much. Peace flows in upon him like a mighty stream, and his joy is, for the time, very much in proportion to the depth of misery and despair, from which he has been delivered. Having been brought up out of the deep pit, and miry clay, and had his feet set upon a rock, and his goings established, the overflowing gratitude

of his heart finds expression in new songs of praise to the God of his salvation, and his case is so marked, that many see it, and fear, and are led to trust in the Lord.

There can be no doubt that an internal work of conviction by the Spirit of God is necessary in all, even those who are the most happily constituted by God as to natural disposition—the most amiable, and conscientious, and correct in their moral deportment. This is necessary, however happily constituted they may be, however pious their parents; however judicious and godly their education: for all true believers are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The convictions in such are generally not so severe, however decided and observable they may be; though I have known cases of this kind, in which they were long continued, and distressing. The truth is, that men's minds are so differently constituted, and their circumstances so various, that uniformity is not to be expected, in God's dealings with men; for he accommodates his grace to the peculiar condition, and circumstances of each. Hence the folly of expecting similar experiences in all cases.

There are some persons who doubt the genuineness of conversion, if it has not been preceded by severe and distressing convictions,—what our old divines used to term “*a law work.*” I once knew a gentleman of extensive property, who had devoted a large proportion of it to the cause of God, and for many years, given all the evidence which one could reasonably expect, of genuine conversion, and yet I remember him expressing serious doubts to me, whether he had experienced a saving change of heart, and was really a child of God; because he had never experienced these distressing convictions of sin, which some appear to regard as absolutely indispensable. No doubt, all who have been awakened, and renewed by the Spirit of God, have been convinced by him of sin, have been made to see its exceeding sinfulness, and their own utterly lost condition by nature, and their need of a Saviour, and the preciousness and all-sufficiency of Jesus. But when the remedy is known, and its efficacy believed in, even before the severity of the disease is felt; and when it is

confidently applied, when the first symptoms are experienced, it may be reasonably expected that the cure will be speedy and certain.

Yes Brethren, when, in consequence of judicious teaching, Jesus has been known, and intelligently believed in, before convictions are awakened by the Spirit in the soul, when these convictions arise, and Jesus is instantly applied to, I believe that peace generally ensues, without any severe or protracted struggle. This is certainly to be desired. And my opinion decidedly is, that, instead of terrible, and agonizing convictions being desirable, we ought to account it special matter of thanksgiving, if we are brought to peace in believing, without having to pass through them.

Though convictions may be sudden and terrible, and genuine conversion speedy and remarkable; yet I believe that a work of grace is more frequently gradual, and to be determined with certainty only by its fruits, as "the Sun by its shining, and the spring by the stream which it sends forth." If the life is holy, and the fear, and the hatred of sin deep, and sincere, and the struggle against it determined, and successful, that is one of the most decided evidences of genuine conversion. This successful struggle against sin must of course be the result of the fear, and the love of God, and the admiration of the beauty of holiness, and daily applications to God for that spiritual strength, in virtue of which alone we can resist, and overcome temptation; and wherever there is the love of God, and the love of the adorable Redeemer, and trust in his blood alone for salvation, and in the power of his Spirit alone for sanctification, and the love of his day and of his house, and his people, and the victory over outward sin, and the daily struggle against indwelling corruption, then we may be assured that we are the children of God, whatever may be the nature of the convictions through which we have passed.

S E R M O N I V .

THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN CONVINCING THE WORLD, CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more."—John xvi. 10.

Who can by searching find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection? Even the loftiest of the Archangels, who may have been advancing in knowledge, and experience, and growing in intellectual strength for thousands of ages, can never, with all their mighty energies, fathom the depths of infinite being, or fully comprehend the nature and perfections of the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, and Omnipresent One, whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting. And if these mighty beings, who have probably the power of moving with inconceivable rapidity, and visiting the most remote parts of creation, and who have consequently the most extensive opportunities of observation, if even they, with all their mighty sweep of intellect, cannot master the great thought, which has for its object the eternal and self-existent Creator, how is it to be supposed that man, the creature of a day, whose dwelling is in the dust, who is confined to a comparatively small extent of space and time, how is it to be supposed that such an one should be able to comprehend the nature of the Godhead? It requires very little power of thought to perceive that the thing is an impossibility, and that we must be content with such glimpses of the being and perfections of God, as our limited powers can gather from his word and from his works. From his works of creation and providence, the reflective and observant student may learn something of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God; but it is from his word alone, that we learn anything of the mode of the divine existence, and of the wondrous work of Grace, which affords us the most comforting view of

the goodness and love of the Eternal, and Omnipotent One.

In the Godhead we are told that there are three distinct persons, one in essence, and unity of action, equal in power and glory; and that by mutual agreement, they have different offices to perform, in the great work of redeeming sinners, from condemnation and ruin, and restoring them to God's favor and friendship,—to holiness of heart and purity of life, as an indispensable preparative to admission to the inheritance of the saints in light,—to fulness of joy in God's presence, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore. We know, from the divine record, that the Father devised the scheme of redemption, that he so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. We know that the Son carried that scheme into execution, and redeemed us by his own precious blood, suffering all that justice could demand, as the substitute of sinners, and submitting that his soul should be made an offering for sin. And further, we know that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to apply to the hearts and consciences of men, the remedy which Christ provided for sin; and that he is to be with the Church always, even to the end of the world.

What comfort in the thought, that one of the persons of the Godhead charges himself specially with the care of the Church on earth, with its preservation, extension and growth in grace! What comfort in the thought, that a Being of infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power is ever present in the Church, to enlighten, strengthen, sanctify and comfort believers, and to arouse, convince, and convert ungodly sinners! Of the mode of the Spirit's existence, or of his special residence, we know nothing. He is possessed of the attribute of Omnipresence, and is said to dwell with believers, and to be in them; yea, their bodies are said to be temples of the Holy Ghost, and it was promised by the Saviour, that he would lead them into all truth, and comfort, as well as sanctify them. It would be presumption to say that the Spirit is occupied exclusively with the concerns of Christ's Church on earth.

It is possible however, that this may be the only rebellious world, in all God's universe, and that it may not only require, but obtain, the greatest share of his attention. Nor will this appear so extravagant, when we remember that the Lord Jesus not only remained for upwards of thirty years on earth, and took human nature into union with his divine nature, but finally expiated our sins, in his own body on the accursed tree. And if God thought it important enough that such condescension should be submitted to, and such a sacrifice made, in order to redeem sinners, it does not appear more wonderful, that the Spirit should continue in the world, chiefly occupied with carrying on the work of redemption, in its application to the hearts and consciences of men; and thus fitting for glory the souls whom Christ purchased with his blood. We know that the Holy Spirit is in the world, and though invisible to the eye of sense, occupied probably with the Church's affairs chiefly, so that we may well take comfort and encouragement from this, and rest assured that, if the Holy Spirit thus interests himself in the work of salvation, he is as willing, as he is able, to listen to the prayer of the humble penitent, and second his feeble efforts, and soften his hard heart, and bring him to close with Christ's gracious offers, and enlighten, and sanctify, and comfort, and sustain him, till his pilgrimage in this life is ended, and he enters into the joy of his Lord.

CHRIST'S RECEPTION INTO HEAVEN, AND MISSION OF THE COMFORTER, IN FULFILMENT OF HIS PROMISE, A PROOF OF HIS PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The righteousness of which our Saviour here speaks, and concerning which, he says that the Spirit would convince the world, refers particularly, in the first instance, to his personal righteousness. The world accused him of blasphemy, of imposture, and sedition, and for these alleged crimes, he was condemned and executed. But when he arose from the dead, and the sublime fact could neither be concealed nor refuted; and especially when he ascended gloriously into heaven, in the presence of his apostles, and thus returned to his Father, these things pro-

claimed his innocence to the world, and convicted of fearful sin, the men who had been guilty of his murder. And the circumstance of his continuing with the Father, so that he was no more seen among men, afforded evidence that he received a cordial welcome there. Thus the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, might be regarded as heaven's testimony to his righteousness. And this testimony ought to have been regarded as sufficient, even by the world; since it was known by his opponents that he had declared, while living, that he would rise from the dead, on the third day after his death, which led to their taking every precaution to prevent the removal of his body from the sepulchre. And his resurrection, notwithstanding, amid circumstances of resistless power, and the most sublime and terrific grandeur, as testified by the Roman soldiers, was the fulfilment of his own prediction; and thus proved the truthfulness of his character, and showed, at the same time, God's approbation of his righteous conduct. Jesus himself evidently attaches importance to their seeing him no more, as evidence of God's welcome reception of him. The force of this argument would not be felt, however, till the Spirit was poured out upon them, in fulfilment of the Saviour's promise. But when he was poured out in rich and glorious effusion, according to the Saviour's promise, in his extraordinary gifts, as well as ordinary influences; this afforded a tangible and practical evidence even to the world, regarding the righteousness of him, whose apostles had thus been endowed with miraculous power. They knew that it was believed, on sufficient testimony, that he had risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, from whence he said that he would send down these mighty gifts, whose extraordinary effects they had witnessed, with their own eyes. And the exercise by the apostles, of these gifts, such as the world had never witnessed before, afforded indubitable evidence to every reflecting and honest man, regarding the righteousness of him, who had been so unjustly, and unmercifully, and wickedly put to death. And to the more enlightened of the disciples especially, the fact of his continuing with the Father, and returning to them no more, must have afford-

ed satisfactory evidence, not only regarding his personal righteousness, and acceptance with the Father, but regarding the completeness, and sufficiency of the work which he had accomplished on earth. Such must have been the conclusions produced on the minds of all honest men, in Jerusalem, by the visible effects of the mighty operations of the Spirit; but mightier still must have been the effects produced by the inward operations of the Spirit, on the hearts of multitudes. When the truths respecting the life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus, were communicated to the people, by the preaching of the apostles, and when the grand object, accomplished by his death, was explained,—even the satisfaction of God's justice, and the vindication of his law; when they were made to see that when Christ suffered, it was as the substitute of sinners, and that all this took place, according to the predetermined purpose of God, as fully declared in the prophetic Scriptures, when all this was explained by the apostles to the people, the Spirit of God carried home the truth with power to their hearts, and shed a new light on Scripture, and made them feel that Jesus, the crucified One, was indeed the Messiah promised by the prophets, and whose death was an all-sufficient atonement for sin. "The vindication of Jesus from the charges brought against him," says one, "he chiefly referred to the Holy Spirit, the advocate, who, by his influences on the minds of the people, and by his eloquence and energy, in the ministry of the apostles, convinced both the Jews and the Gentiles, that the sentence of the Jewish rulers was unjust, and infamous; and that the very person whom they had crucified, was both Lord and Christ;—Lord, the great governor of the universe, and Christ, the Lord's anointed, the promised Messiah. It was a matter of the utmost consequence to the Christian cause, to have the *innocence* and *holiness* of its founder demonstrated, and the crime of the Jews, in putting him to death, made manifest to the world. This also has been literally fulfilled: the universe, that has heard of him, believes the righteousness and innocence of Jesus; and the

Jews, his persecutors, are confounded, and execrated throughout the habitable globe.*

THE SPIRIT'S AGENCY IN CONVINCING MEN, REGARDING THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

We have seen that the word righteousness employed in our text, includes the personal righteousness of Christ; but this does not by any means exhaust its meaning.—Christ must be righteous himself, before he could provide a righteousness for others. And being perfectly separate from sinners, and in himself knowing no sin, he provided a righteousness for us, in virtue of which alone we can be justified, in the sight of a holy God.

This righteousness just arose from Christ's suffering unto death, as the substitute of sinners, and yielding a perfect obedience to God's law in all things, as man's representative in the covenant of grace. And this righteousness, thus provided by God, is made over, or imputed to all who believe in Jesus, and accept him as their Saviour, and, instead of seeking to establish a righteousness of their own, depend for salvation on the righteousness of Christ alone, and accept it, as God's free and unmerited gift, through the blood of the Lamb. This is what Paul terms, "the righteousness of God, without the law,"—that is, the righteousness which God provided, and will accept, on the part of the sinner, without his yielding a perfect obedience to the law. It is "that righteousness, or obedience to the law, both in its penalty and requirements, which has been yielded to it by our Lord Jesus Christ.—This is indeed the righteousness of God, for it has been provided by God, and from first to last, has been effected by his Son Jesus Christ, who is the mighty God, and the Father of eternity. To that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed; on that righteousness must he rest; on that righteousness must he live; on that righteousness must he die; in that righteousness must he appear before the Judgment seat; in that righteousness must he stand for ever in the presence of a righteous God, "I will greatly rejoice," says Isaiah, "in the Lord: my

*Dr. A. Clark,

soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."*

This righteousness, thus provided by God for the sinner, was not unknown to believers in ancient times. It was typified in every sacrifice that was presented, and witnessed by the holy prophets, as by David, when he says, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy *righteousness*;"—not certainly the personal righteousness of God; for that, in the circumstances in which he was placed, David would have shrunk from contemplating, but that righteousness, which God provided for the salvation of the sinner, through the blood of the great Redeemer, who was to be offered up in sacrifice, in the fulness of time.

It was comparatively dim views of this glorious subject, which the old testament saints possessed; but Jesus tells the apostles here, that when the Holy Spirit was come, "he would disclose to those whom he influences, that righteousness of God, which is revealed to faith as the ground of a sinner's justification, even the obedience unto death of the divine Redeemer, as our surety. He convinces them concerning the suitability, and sufficiency of this righteousness for the end proposed; He makes them sensible that, in this way, God is righteous in justifying sinners as well as glorious in mercy, and in all other perfections. He discovers to them how the law is thus magnified, and how real faith, in the righteousness of Christ, is inseparably accompanied with hatred of sin, with humility, love of God, and the beginning of all holy dispositions. He convinces them, that Christ's ascension to the right hand of the Father fully proves his ransom accepted, and the righteousness finished, through which believers are justified; and therefore there is no need for him to appear again on earth, till he shall come to judge the world."†

* Haldane on Romans iii. 21.

† Scott's Commentary.

THE TWO-FOLD MODE, IN WHICH THE SPIRIT'S WORK
MAY BE REGARDED.

Such then is the two-fold righteousness, in regard to which, Jesus says that the Spirit would convince the world. First. The personal righteousness of Christ,—that he was a holy and innocent person, and then the righteousness which he provided for believers, by his perfect obedience to the requirements, and penalties of the law, or in other words, by yielding a perfect obedience to all the requirements of the law, and suffering its extreme penalty, as the substitute of sinners. There is a two-fold mode also, in which the Spirit's working may be regarded: First. As indirectly, through the miracles and teaching of the apostles, in whom the Spirit dwelt, and through whose agency he wrought, and then as directly, through his own immediate, personal working, stimulating the natural faculties, enlightening the mind, removing prejudices, suggesting new truths to the understanding, and carrying home truths presented by others, whether in books, or by the living voice, with resistless power to the heart.

THE TWO-FOLD EFFECT PRODUCED BY THE SPIRIT'S
TEACHING.

Again there is a two-fold effect produced by the Spirit's teaching.—“There is a convincing unto salvation, and a conviction unto condemnation.”* First. Those who believe, and receive the Holy Spirit's gracious teaching, he convinces of sin, of their need of a Saviour, and of the all sufficiency of Jesus as a Saviour, so that they are led to embrace him thankfully, and cordially, as all their salvation, and all their hope. Secondly. Those who are impenitent and rebellious, and receive not the truth, he convicts, and shows to be inexcusable, by the evidence which he affords of the righteousness of Jesus, and his own power, and presence in the Church.

We have seen that the righteousness, of which it is said in the text, that the Spirit would convince the world, though it refers, in the first instance, to the personal right-

*Alford.

eousness of Christ, embraces also the righteousness which God, through Christ, provided for the world, hence termed by Paul the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe. Looking at the matter in this light, some have termed this righteousness, somewhat improperly perhaps, the world's righteousness, and in reference to it, a great living writer asks—"What is the world's righteousness?" "Not their own," he replies, "but that of the accepted man Christ Jesus, standing at the right hand of God,—(seen by us no more, but by that very withdrawal testified to be the Son of God, THE RIGHTEOUS ONE), manifested in the hearts of men by the Spirit to be *their only* righteousness:—and thereby that righteousness, which they had of their own before, is demonstrated to be worthless, and as filthy rags.—It is the going to the Father, by which this righteousness is assured to us, and by the effect of which,—the spirit—the conviction respecting it is wrought in our hearts. The condemnatory side of this part of the conviction is,—*that* remorse, wherewith they whose day of grace is past, shall look on the perfect righteousness which might have been theirs, and on the miserable substitute, with which they contented themselves."^{*}

EXHORTATION TO SERIOUS ENQUIRY AS TO WHETHER WE
HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

I have thus endeavoured to explain the nature of the Spirit's mission, in convincing men of sin, and righteousness: and it ought to be made a solemn, and searching enquiry with every one of us,—have I been the subject of the Spirit's operation? This is a question as important, as it is solemn, for remember that, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. In our natural state, the mind is dark, and perplexed, and it is but dim, and distorted views which we have, in regard to every thing divine and spiritual. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Are there any here, whom the Spirit

*Alford.

has convinced of sin, but who have not yet been brought to peace, and joy in believing? It may be a dark night with you at present, but have patience, and the day star will at length arise upon your hearts. Do not, I beseech you, seek to kindle sparks of your own, and blow them into a flame, that you may walk in their false and seductive glare. And above all, do not seek to escape from your distressing feelings, by stifling your convictions. This is to quench the Spirit, and seek a temporary oblivion of your misery, in the stupefying effects of the world's opiates.

But from this there will, sooner or later be a fearful awakening; when probably all remedies will be unattainable, and unavailing. As you value your soul's safety, look your condition fairly in the face. Do not shrink from the contemplation of it. And instead of hiding from the sight of your sins, look at them in all their aggravations; and let the keen remorse which you feel, in consequence of them, lead you in deep sorrow of heart to Jesus, and beseech him to relieve you of their heavy burden. "On him," it is said, "were laid the iniquities of us all;" and he is both able, and willing to bear *yours*. Come to him in faith, and lowly penitential feelings; and he will cause light to arise in your darkness, and peace in your distraction, and joy in your sorrow. His grace will be made sufficient for you, and his strength will be perfected in your weakness.

I know there is a goodly number here, who have not only been convinced of sin, and righteousness, but who have obtained peace and joy in believing. I have little, dear brethren to say to *you*, at present, farther than to congratulate you; and exhort you to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.—The Spirit of God, I doubt not, will speak to you, at these tables,* in terms more appropriate, and comforting than any thing which man could address to you. I cannot conclude this discourse, however, without addressing myself to those, who may never have experienced the strivings of the Spirit in their souls, and who may hitherto have been

*This was preached on a communion Sabbath.

living exclusively for a present world. Would you be awakened, my friends, to a sense of your true condition, as spiritual and immortal beings,—as beings who cannot avoid the awful eternity which is before you, even if you should desire to hide yourselves from it, in the gloomy depths of annihilation?—Pray that God would pour out his Holy Spirit upon you, to lead you into all truth concerning yourselves, as spiritual, and immortal beings.

Without his teaching, you must ever remain in ignorance, regarding all that it is most important for spiritual and immortal beings to know. None teacheth like him. And we have the promise that, if we ask his gracious influences to enlighten, to convince, and convert us, in true sincerity of soul, and with the earnest desire to obtain them, they will not be withheld. Seek then those gracious influences, with all your heart, and God will cause light to arise in your darkness, and lead you into all truth, and grant you the peace that passeth understanding here, and fulness of joy in his own presence hereafter.

S E R M O N V .

THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN CONVINCING THE WORLD, CONCERNING JUDGMENT.

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."—
John xvi, 11.

When Jesus was about to leave his disciples, and continue absent from them in heaven, till the history of the present dispensation is wound up, and he comes again the second time, without the necessity of a sin-offering, to perfect the salvation of his people, it was desirable that he should say something to comfort them. And *that* he did most effectually, by telling them of the provision which he had made, for the welfare of his Church, during his absence, and for carrying on the work of redemption, in its application to the hearts and consciences of men. And this he did, by telling them that the Holy Ghost, whom he terms the comforter, from the abundant consolation which he administers to believers, would come, and convict the world, concerning sin in general, and especially concerning the guilt of not believing in him, and accepting him as the Saviour. He tells them likewise that the Spirit would convince the world, not only concerning the personal righteousness of Jesus, who had been most unjustly and wickedly rejected, and condemned by the Jews, but also regarding that righteousness which he provided for believers, through which alone sinners can be acquitted, and accepted, in the sight of a Holy God. And now, he tells them in our text, that, when the Spirit was come, he would convince the world, concerning judgment,—that is, that the Almighty, as a righteous Governor, exercises justice on earth, and that there is a great day of judgment coming, when all the accounts which are unsettled in this world, shall be finally rectified; and when he will render to every man, according to his works.

THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT, IN FULFILMENT OF CHRIST'S
PROMISE, AND TO THE OVERTHROW OF SATAN'S POWER,
A PALPABLE EVIDENCE THAT GOD NOW RULES
THE WORLD, AND WILL ULTIMATELY JUDGE IT.

The very fact of the Spirit's coming, and investing the apostles, with new powers, would be to themselves a farther confirmation of the truth of all that Jesus had said to them; and, by his powerful operation on their minds, he would impress this still more deeply upon their hearts. But he would not only *convince* the apostles, but *convict* the world;—that is, by undeniable evidence, he would prove, against their former unbelief, the divine majesty, the righteous character, and supreme sovereignty of the Lord Christ. When Jesus says here, that the Spirit would convict the world, concerning judgment, he just means, that he would afford such evidence, regarding God's present exercise of justice, and future judgment of the world, as would convince all fair and reasonable enquirers, and leave all others without excuse. But how, it may be asked, would the Spirit bring home this conviction to the understanding? Jesus tells us,—because the prince of this world is judged. He would bring home with power to the understanding the fact, that the prince of this world is judged,—a fact this, which would soon be made palpable to the senses.

By the prince of this world, there can be no doubt that we are to understand Satan, who is elsewhere termed “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience.” I am aware that some superficial readers have imagined that the prince of this world here means the Lord Jesus himself.—But this is impossible; for in the fourteenth chapter of this book, he applies the same expression to Satan, as coming to tempt him,—“The prince of this world cometh,” said he, “and hath nothing in me.” The same title is applied to Satan by Jesus, when he declared in view of his own crucifixion, that the time had now come, when Satan would be ejected from his usurped dominion over this world. “Now is the judgment of this world,” said he,

“now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” As if he had said,—Now is the crisis of this world, now has the critical time come, when it shall be determined, who shall govern it. Now has the time come, when he, who has hitherto ruled, with usurped dominion over this world, shall be cast out.

Here then, Jesus declares, that the execution of Judgment upon Satan, the Prince of this world, would afford indubitable evidence that God now executes justice in this world, and that he will ultimately judge it, in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Jesus here speaks, you will observe, of what will take place, when the Spirit is come. He tells us that he will convince the world, concerning the judgment, which God now exercises, and will exercise, by the palpable evidence which will then be afforded, that the prince of this world has been judged, and condemned, and cast down from his usurped dominion over this world.—But what, it may be asked, is the evidence, which will be afforded, of Satan’s overthrow? To this we reply, that the very death of Christ affords an evidence of Satan’s overthrow. This to many of you may seem a strange assertion. To many of you it may rather appear that the death of Christ was Satan’s triumph. Such it probably appeared to himself at the time. But he soon found that it contained the elements of his destruction. In the death of Christ, sin was condemned and punished,—that sin which Satan introduced into our world, and in the condemnation and punishment of sin, he was condemned and punished. And though it might seem, at first, that by death Jesus was overcome, and Satan victorious over him, the result soon proved how great a mistake this was; for Christ’s death was but the preparative to his victory and ultimate triumph. He entered, as it were, into Satan’s dominions, and in his own territory, the scene of all his former victories, the battle-field strewed with the bones of innumerable victims, *there* in the very stronghold of death, he conquered him, who had the power of death, that is the devil. He took human nature upon him, for the very pur-

pose, that he might die, and through death accomplish this glorious victory. He submitted to death, but it was that he might grapple with and ultimately destroy it. He entered the gloomy abode of the tomb, but it was that he might break its strong bars, and divest it henceforward of its gloomiest terrors to believers. The power of death could not hold the Prince of life. He came forth victorious over it, and prepared the way for the complete fulfilment of his own prediction. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

When Christ rose from the grave, the grand crisis in the world's history was past. The most indubitable evidence was thus afforded, that he had conquered, in his own dominions, him who had the power of death. And when he ascended up gloriously into heaven, and procured the gift of the Holy Spirit for men, and, in fulfilment of his own promise, poured him down upon his disciples, the most palpable evidence was afforded, that God had accepted his death, as a ransom for sinners, and that he was satisfied with the atonement which had been made for sin. And thus it was, that by death, Christ deprived death of its sting. And then, too, it was that Satan was judged, and conquered, and cast out. Even before Christ's death, he limited the power of Satan, and obtained many a victory over him. In every demon whom he ejected, he obtained an advantage over Satan. And when the seventy disciples returned to him with joy, saying, "Lord even the devils are subject to us, through thy name," he said unto them, "I beheld Satan, as lightning fall from heaven." Thus Christ, during his life time, not only resisted all Satan's temptations, but weakened his influence, and frequently defeated him. And after the Holy Spirit was poured out, his power was vastly diminished, and the way prepared for its final extirpation from the world. By enlightening men's minds in the knowledge of God, and of the claims, which he has on their service, their gratitude, and affection, and then discovering to themselves their own true character, as guilty and hell-deserving sinners, the Spirit awakens men to a sense of their lost condition; and

then, when he discovers to them the preciousness and all-sufficiency of Christ, and the freeness of the gospel offer of salvation, through him, they are led thankfully to embrace him. And thus having their understandings enlightened, they are enabled to see through the crafty devices of Satan, and are delivered from his dominion.

It is said that Christ spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them, on his cross; from which it would appear that, when Christ made satisfaction to divine justice, on the cross, Satan was vanquished, his power at once restrained, and vastly diminished, and the way prepared for its ultimate extinction. Thus, if Satan bruised Christ's heel upon the cross, his own head was crushed in the struggle. Thus, it would appear that, after the redemption of sinners was purchased by Christ's death upon the cross, the power of God was directly put forth to restrain and ultimately destroy the power of Satan. And when the Holy Spirit was poured out, he convinced men of this, not only by enlightening their minds, to discover the meaning of scripture, in reference to this subject, but by emancipating multitudes from the dominion of Satan, illuminating their understandings, purifying their lives, and making them in Christ Jesus, wholly new creatures. Within a short period after the introduction of Christianity, the reign of ignorance, and superstition, and idolatry, and cruelty, and moral abomination was shaken to its basis; and the present vastly improved moral and spiritual condition of the world proves that Satan has been hurled from his throne of usurped dominion over the world; and that he exercises uncontrolled sway over it, only in those dark regions, where the glorious truths of the gospel are unknown.— Thus in the emancipation of multitudes from the dominion of Satan, at the commencement of the gospel dispensation, palpable evidence was afforded that Satan was judged, and cast out. And this circumstance afforded an awful demonstration of the fact, not only that God exercises righteous judgment among men now, but that there is a great day of Judgment appointed, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, when every dark deed of iniquity shall

be made manifest, and an award given to men for eternity according to the deeds done in time.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, BY HIS DIRECT OPERATION UPON THE MIND, CONVINCES MEN BOTH OF GOD'S PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD, AND OF THE FUTURE JUDGMENT.

When the Spirit of God arouses men's consciences, and sets their sins, in gloomy array before them, he not only convinces them of the certainty of the day of judgment, but fills them with awful terrors, in regard to it. Then he makes them feel that, however solemn a thing it is to think of death, it is more solemn still to think, that after death cometh the judgment. As surely then as Satan has been judged, shall every one of us be judged also. And this awful truth the Holy Spirit brings home, with tremendous power, to the consciences of awakened sinners.

You cannot doubt, Brethren, that you must die. This is a truth which painful experience brings home often, with resistless power, to every one of us. And yet in ordinary circumstances, how little are the generality of men affected by the certainty of death. Truly it would seem, as if men thought all men mortal but themselves, and lived, as if they were to live for ever. And this indifference about death, which they cannot doubt, may show us, that their indifference about the future judgment proceeds, not so much from positive unbelief, as from indifference, a strange and mysterious apathy, from which the Spirit of God only can effectually arouse us. But as he works by means, and employs human instrumentality, in arousing sinners from their carelessness, and indifference, let me seek, by setting the simple truth before you, to endeavour to alarm you into something like activity, about your spiritual condition.

Here then is a truth, which we cannot ignore, however much we may seek to evade it, and suppress its voice now. Here is a truth which we must face, which will force itself upon us, on a dying bed, even if we should succeed in altogether stifling its voice, by the pleasures, or the business of this world, in the day of health. Here is a solemn truth,—one of the most important of all truths,—we must all

appear before the judgment seat of Christ, on the great day of the settlement of accounts, between us and God, when we must all receive a portion for eternity, according to the deeds done in time. Now, Brethren, are you prepared for this solemn day? or are you preparing for it?—Your own conscience will convict you of innumerable transgressions. Even if your life has been, upon the whole, moral, and exemplary, so far as your fellow-men are concerned, how many of you have lived, at one period of your life, and how many of you are living, now, in indifference about God, in the neglect of the special duties which you owe to him, and destitute of that love, and gratitude towards him, to which he is so justly entitled at the hands of all his intelligent creatures! Alas, Brethren, we have lived chiefly for ourselves, and a present world, and have been unmindful of the God who made us, and to whom we are indebted for every thing; and who, consequently, has the first claim on the love, and admiration, and gratitude, and service of his creatures. This crime of ungodliness, or indifference about God, which is the great prevailing sin of this world, however lightly it may be regarded by men, is the most heinous, and damning of all sins.

I know there is not one in this assembly who is free from sin. Our own consciences condemn every one of us. And I know too, just as certainly, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Brethren! what utter madness in any man to neglect making preparation for that awful day, since death may come at any time, and deprive us of all opportunity for ever! And O, if death take any of you by surprise, and find you unprepared, what is to become of you! In that case, these ears, which are now listening to a friendly warning, and perhaps somewhat impatiently, *must* then listen to the fearful sentence,—“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Let me beseech you then, this moment to stir up your souls to solemn thought;—to seek to lay hold of, and realize this great truth, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. I know that, if you are led to consider your ways, and examine

into your heart, and life, conscience will condemn you, and array the terrors of God's solemn threatenings against you. But I am authorized to proclaim a free pardon to the chief of sinners. God willeth not that any sinner should perish in his sins, but rather that all should come unto him in lowly penitential sorrow, through Christ, and be saved.—Christ tells us that he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. Let me beseech you, then, to repent, and believe the gospel *now*.—Christ died to make an atonement for the chief of sinners, and his blood cleanseth from all sin. And God has told us in his word that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—God is represented by the apostle Paul, as *beseeching* sinners to repent, and return to him, that they may be saved; and he *prays*, sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. I beseech you, ye careless ones, to pause and consider *now*. I beseech you to flee for refuge to Christ *now*, that when the storm of God's righteous indignation bursts over a guilty world, it may not overwhelm you. You may have been living long in the neglect of God; but it is not too late to return to him. It is yet an accepted time; it is yet a day of salvation.—The Spirit, and the Bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*.

Yes, Brethren, the salvation which I preach is free to *you*, though it had to be purchased by the sufferings, and death of Christ. And O think of the love of him, who redeemed you, by his own blood; and of the fearful aggravation of your guilt, if you persist in practically denying the Lord that bought you. When Christ said,—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me,”—he well knew the attractive power of the cross;—that the contemplation of his sufferings undertaken for sinners, and through which alone God's justice was satisfied, so that it became possible for him, as the moral Governor of the universe, to extend pardon to sinners, he knew that

this would call forth the admiration, and gratitude, and love of all who believingly contemplate them, and draw them irresistibly to himself. "The attraction of affection, which holds the soul to God, has been broken, and the soul of man, actuated by selfishness,—revolving upon its own centre only—jars in its course with its fellow spirits, and crosses their orbits; and the whole system of the spiritual world upon earth, revolves in disorder, the orbs wandering, and rolling away from that centre of moral life and power, which alone could hold them in harmonious, and happy motion. Into the midst of this chaos of disordered spirits, God, the Sun of the spiritual world came down. He shed light upon the moral darkness, and by coming near, like the approaches of a mighty magnet, the attraction of his mercy, as manifested in Christ crucified, became so powerful, that many spirits, rolling away into darkness, and destruction, felt the efficacy, and were drawn back, and caused to move again, in their regular orbits, around the light, and life, and love of the spiritual system.* O, that the contemplation of Christ suffering and dying for sinners may draw *you* to him. He is able and willing to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God, as humble penitents, through him. Let me beseech *you* then, to accept *Him*, as your Saviour *now*, to return in heart to God through Him, in faith, in penitence, and gratitude, this very moment. And if so, when the day of judgment comes, it will have no terrors for you. It will be the day that will consummate your happiness; for then will you hear those words of welcome, and approbation addressed to you.—"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world."

*Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation.

SERMON VI.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROMISE.

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call,—Acts ii. 39.

To the careful investigator of the Old Testament, it will appear evident that, from the creation of the world, the Spirit of God to a certain extent, exerted his influence upon the minds of men. Thus, in the days of Noah, we find God declaring,—“My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”

After the great declension of religion, which seems to have succeeded the death of that patriarch, when men had almost universally lapsed into idolatry, and it became necessary for God to separate from the rest of mankind the family of Abraham, in order to preserve a knowledge of himself, and of pure religion in the world, it is probable that the Spirit ceased altogether to strive with the idolatrous nations;—that they were given over to a reprobate mind and left to follow the devices of their own evil imaginations. The Spirit however still continued to instruct, direct, and remonstrate with that church, which was formed out of the descendants of the father of the faithful. Thus it is said by Isaiah,—“In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity, he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit.” And again it is said by Haggai,—“According to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.” But though it is evident that the Spirit was not altogether withheld from the Church, during the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, his sacred influences were then imparted but in scanty measure. They were rather like the partial

droppings before the shower, than the full outpouring of the rain, which refreshes, and fructifies the soil. It seems indeed that his influence was then exerted chiefly in an indirect manner, through the medium of prophets, who were endowed with his extraordinary gifts, and thus fitted to admonish, instruct and reclaim their brethren. We do not question that those common influences of the Spirit, which operate both upon the righteous and the wicked, were, to a certain extent, exerted upon the hearts of the Jewish people; but those influences of the Spirit, which prevail in the Christian church, by which men are awakened, enlightened, converted, refreshed, comforted, and sanctified, seem to have been very partially experienced by the great body of the members of the Jewish church. Accordingly the prophet Joel mentions it, as a characteristic of the latter days, or time of the Messiah,—that then God would pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh, that even upon the servants and handmaidens, in those days, he would pour out his Spirit.

This will appear still more evident, when we attend to what is said upon the subject, in the New Testament. About the time of our Saviour's advent, we read of a few individuals being inspired with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit; but this was for a particular purpose, and we have no reason to believe that they continued to enjoy these blessed influences, whilst we are certain that the great body of those who looked for redemption in Israel, enjoyed no such privilege. The gift of the Spirit was a privilege which, John the Baptist taught his hearers to expect, would be conferred upon them by that mightier one who was to come after him. "I indeed baptize you with water;" said he, "but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." But during the whole of our Saviour's personal ministry, this baptism with the Holy Ghost was never performed; and he always pointed to it, as a thing which would take place, after he had left his disciples,—as a thing indeed, which could not take place, so long as he continued among them. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth," said he, "if

is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The gift of the Spirit indeed, in all its richness, and power, could not be conferred till Jesus had accomplished the great work of redemption, and ascended gloriously up on high to assume his mediatorial kingdom; for the bestowal of the gift of the Spirit, in all its fullness, was a consequence of the atonement.— Thus the apostle John, in explaining a saying of our Saviour, adds,—“ For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Again Peter says—“ Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Certain influences of the Spirit had been shed forth on the Church all along, but in such scanty measure, when compared with the great outpouring of his gifts and graces, after the ascension of Christ, that the apostle John might well say,—“ That the Holy Ghost was not yet given;” that is, the large effusion of his influences predicted by Joel, and promised by the Saviour, had not yet taken place,—the new and precious dispensation of the Spirit had not yet been established.

It is a remarkable fact that, just as the promise of the Messiah pervades the Old Testament, so the promise of the Spirit pervades the New. In ancient times, men's hopes were directed chiefly to the Saviour, and when that Saviour had actually come, to one of the most glorious effects of his finished work of redemption. Thus the gospel dispensation, when contrasted with the Mosaic, is termed by St. Paul,—“ The ministration of the Spirit.” And the Holy Spirit, doubtless in allusion to the promises which had been made regarding him, is termed by the same Apostle, “ The Holy Spirit of promise.” Once more, our Saviour himself terms the influences of the Spirit—“ The promise of his Father.” “ Behold,” says he, “ I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” And God be praised, the blessed influences of the Spirit were not confined to those, to

whom they were originally promised, but are still ready to be poured forth on all, who cordially believe, and earnestly seek them; so that we ought constantly to expect, and fervently pray for the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit, in our own souls. Our Saviour's words, regarding this most interesting subject, are as explicit, as they are precious,—“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” And we have a most comfortable comment on our Saviour's declaration, in the words of the text:—“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

THE NATURE OF THE PROMISE.

It is evident from the preceding verse, that the promise here spoken of is that of the communication of the influences of the Holy Spirit; and to any one moderately acquainted with Scripture it will be obvious, that the influences, or gifts of the Spirit, may be reduced to two classes, the *extraordinary*, and the *ordinary*. By the extraordinary influences of the Spirit are meant those gifts, in virtue of which prophets were inspired to predict future events, and enabled to perform miracles; and by which apostles and evangelists were guided into all the truth, and had all things called to their remembrance; by which they were enabled to speak languages which they had never learned, to cure blindness, and inflict it; to restore the lame, to heal the diseased, and to raise the dead. These gifts, however, were bestowed for a particular purpose, and were not intended to be permanent in the Church; for when that purpose, for which they were intended, was accomplished, they were removed. But, however splendid these gifts may appear, and however important they may have been for the peculiar exigencies of the Church, at the time, in which they appeared, in point of real advantage to those who were possessed of them, they were probably inferior far to those ordinary influences of the Spirit, of which all genuine believers are partakers. This may be inferred from our Saviour's words to the seventy disciples, when they returned to him

with joy, saying—"Lord, even the devils are subject unto us, through thy name. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not," said he, "that the devils are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." It may also be inferred, from the fact, that wicked men have been partakers of these extraordinary gifts, which they exercised for the benefit of others, though they themselves seem to have derived no permanent advantage from them. This was eminently the case with Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and probably also with Judas. Our Saviour seems to have intended to show the superiority of the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, and the utter inadequacy of his extraordinary gifts, of themselves, to secure the conversion and sanctification of the soul, when he says—"Many will say to me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Now here you will observe that our Lord does not deny that they might have wrought miracles, in his name, but because they were unconverted, and unsanctified, he professes that he never knew them, or recognized them, as his; and, therefore, commands them to depart from his presence.

By the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, I mean those, in virtue of which men are awakened to a true sense of their condition, as spiritual and immortal beings, convinced of sin, enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, comforted and sanctified. It is by the communication of these gifts that Christ is to be in the Church always, even to the end of the world. These are the very chiefest of the gifts which he received for men, after he had ascended up on high, and led captivity captive. It appears to me that, by the promise in this passage, are meant, not the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which are peculiar to a few, but his ordinary gifts, which are common to all believers. It is probably called *the* promise in this passage, by way of eminence,—the great promise of the Christian dispensation,—that which was spoken of, in such glowing

language by Joel, and pointed to by Christ, as the promise of his Father,—that which, when realized, would not only compensate for the bodily absence of Christ, and supply his place to the disciples, but be more profitable to them, than even his bodily presence could be: “It is expedient for you,” said he to them, “that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

In order to appreciate the full importance of this promise, it is necessary to bear in mind, that, by nature, man is dead in trespasses and sins, as incapable of being duly affected by spiritual things, as the dead corpse is, by material objects; and as incapable of restoring himself to spiritual life and holiness, as the dead corpse is of resuming the animation which has become extinct. The Spirit of God must breathe upon the dry bones, before they can live. It is only through his influence, that the eyes can be unsealed, so as to see clearly the reality of spiritual things. It is only through his operation upon the heart, that it can be made to feel their importance. It is only through his influences that men are awakened to a sense of their danger, and convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

‡ The great change which is produced on the sinner, in consequence of the saving operation of the Spirit, is represented in Scripture, under various similitudes. It is spoken of as a *new birth*, a *passing from death unto life*, and a *new creation*,—figures these which, if they mean any thing at all, imply that a great, a radical change takes place on the moral, and spiritual nature of man, and takes place too independently of any co-operation, on the part of the being, on whom they are produced. But as to how the Spirit operates in the regeneration of the sinner, that is a matter, in regard to which Scripture is silent.—Our Saviour seems to indicate, that the knowledge of this is too high for us, when he compares the Spirit's operations to the wind, whose effects we see, and may feel, but whose causes, and workings, and retreats we cannot trace.

‡ We cannot then understand, and it is needless to guess at the mode, in which the Spirit finds access to the mind.

and operates upon it; it is quite evident, however, from the whole language of Scripture on the subject, that he does find access to the mind, and operates upon it directly, not in opposition to its faculties, but through means of them;—that he first restores, enlarges, and improves its faculties, and afterwards guides those, who walk after his counsels, and in whom he is said to dwell as in a temple;—that he not only operates upon the mind in regeneration, but afterwards continues to pour out more copious, and more precious influences, in proportion as they are valued, and fervently desired, and sought in prayer. “If ye, through the Spirit,” says Paul, “do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Again, the Spirit is said to “help our infirmities,” and again, we are said to be “strengthened with might by his Spirit, in the inner man;” and once more, by him we are said to be “sealed to the day of redemption;”—that is, to have the mark of purity, and sanctity set upon us, intimating that we are devoted to Christ. Again, believers are said to be “washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”—Finally, that the gift of the Spirit is his divine energy operating upon the mind from without, is still farther evident from the warnings addressed to us, in Scripture, such as, “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;”—“quench not the Spirit;” and from incidental observations in Scripture, with regard to this subject. Thus we find Stephen, in the Acts, addressing the Jews, in these words—“Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart, and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye.”

Thus, it is clear that the Spirit is the great agent in the work of regeneration,—that it is he who, after he has awakened us to a sense of our spiritual danger, and necessities, takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to our souls;—that it is he, in short, who applies to us all the benefits, and blessings which Christ purchased with his blood;—for though Christ alone prepared the great remedy, it is the office of the Spirit to apply it.—

Well then may he be termed "that Holy Spirit of promise." Well may the communication of his influences be termed "the promise of the Father;" for the gift of the Spirit seems to comprehend the sum and substance of all the promises; inasmuch as the most precious of them all were fulfilled, that he might be sent; inasmuch as those, upon whom he is conferred, have, in this very circumstance, partaken of the benefits of Christ's death, and are henceforth united to him, by a living faith, and thus enjoy not only the earnest, but the first-fruits of salvation.

With respect to the nature of the promise, I have only farther to remark, that it respects both the less obvious, and slow operations of the Spirit, in what may be called his ordinary dispensations, and those great outpourings of his influences, which have, from time to time, refreshed and revived the weary heritage of the Lord, when it might well be said, in the language of prophecy,—“That a nation was born at once; for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” Those great outpourings of the Holy Ghost, in virtue of which multitudes have been converted at once, and the whole church revived, and made to bring forth fruit abundantly, have been peculiar to the Christian dispensation. No doubt, there were times of awakening, in the ancient Israelitish Church, as in the time of Samuel, when we are told that “all Israel lamented after the Lord.” There must have been a mighty awakening too, in the time of John the Baptist, when “Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to him, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” And yet he pointed to a baptism of the Spirit, infinitely more precious, which did not take place, in his day, and which he said, the Mightier One, who was to come after him, would confer. And those prophecies which refer to the great outpouring of the Spirit, by which the Church was to be so strengthened, and revived, speak of it, not only as a thing future, but in connexion with the times of the Messiah. There can be no doubt that it is in allusion to gospel times, that Isaiah says—“For I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit

upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." And that Joel's famous prophecy, regarding the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, referred to gospel times, is evident from Peter's application of it to the glorious scene, which took place on the day of Pentecost. "This is that," said he, "which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons, and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants, and on my hand-maidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." There is no evidence that any thing so extraordinary, or glorious as this, ever took place during the ancient dispensation, though there were occasional seasons of revival among them. Such blessed times are the characteristic, and glory of the Christian dispensation. And the blessed seasons of refreshing and revival, which have taken place of late years, on this continent, in Great Britain, and Ireland, and in various parts of the continent of Europe, give evidence visible, and unmisakeable, that the Spirit is in the Church still, and that the times have not passed for ever, when he will be poured out upon all flesh. And well were it for us, in connexion with this promise, to seize upon the concluding part of it,—“And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,”—and plead it, and give the Lord no rest, till he pour out his Spirit upon us, even as floods upon the dry ground; and save sinners in multitudes.

THE EXTENT OF THE PROMISE.

The promise of the Spirit was not limited to the men of the apostles' day, or to the people of the stock of Israel, but the promise was unto them, and to their children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Here then the promise is, in one respect, universal, and in another, limited;—universal with respect to nations and tribes of men, limited with respect to those

individuals out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, whom the Lord shall effectually call. It was clearly predicted by the prophet Isaiah, that it should come to pass, that God would gather all nations, and tongues, and they should come and see his glory; that his glory should be declared among the Gentiles, and "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord."* And this prediction was in part fulfilled, in the time of Paul, when writing to the Ephesians he could say—†"But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ; for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Thus it is clear that the Gentiles are equally interested with the Jews, in the salvation of Jesus, and in all the gifts and blessings which he died to procure for men, and consequently in the gift of the Holy Spirit. But farther, we are taught by the apostle John, that all who believe in Jesus, receive the Holy Ghost.—"But this, spake he of the Spirit," says the beloved apostle which they who believe in him should receive." And our Saviour himself declares, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more, shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" This harmonizes exactly with the language of the text,—that the promise is to all who are afar off, whom the Lord our God shall call. I have no doubt that it is to the plentiful effusions of the Holy Ghost, which were to take place in the latter days, that Isaiah alludes, in such magnificent language, in the 66th chapter, "Who hath heard such a thing?" says he "Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in a day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her;" for thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her, like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles, like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his

* Isaiah lvi. 18, 19, 21. †Ephes. ii, 13, 14,

mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

But again the promise is limited to those individuals out of every kindred, and generation, and tongue, whom the Lord shall effectually call. Christ's death had a merit sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world; Isaiah lvi. 8, 10, 12, 13. We know however that, in point of fact, all are not saved; and why? because they "*will* not come unto him that they might have life." And why do they not will? because of their hardened, impenitent, unbelieving hearts, which nothing can soften but the mighty operation of the Spirit of God. And none *will* accept the gospel invitations, but those whose hearts, like Lydia's, the Lord opens. In point of fact, therefore, the promise is made effectual only to them, whom the Lord draws by his Spirit, to whom the Spirit shows the things that are Christ's, and applies them to their souls;—or in other words, to those whom the Lord our God shall call. We know that to all who "receive Jesus he gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;" but we know also that none *do* receive him, but those "who are born, not of blood, nor of the *will* of the flesh, nor of the *will* of man, but of God."* We know, and O, how delightful the truth,—that "Him who cometh unto Jesus, he will in no wise cast out," but we know, also, that it is those only whom the Father giveth unto him, who *will* come unto him; for no man can come to me," said Jesus, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him."† This effectual calling of the sinner, on the part of God, is absolutely necessary, before he can be roused from his apathy, and shaken out of his indifference, and disarmed of his hostility and led to embrace the Saviour.—However men may dislike this doctrine, it is written, as with a sunbeam in the word of God, and is alone consistent with the experience of a deeply exercised soul, who feels that he could never have come to the Saviour, had not the Almighty drawn him. I am aware that those who dislike, and shrink from this doctrine, refer this and similar passages to a national calling; but this scarcely removes

*John i. 12, 13. †John vi. 37, 44.

the difficulty a single step; for it is not one whit less mysterious, that God should call one nation, and pass over another than that he should call effectually one individual, and pass by another. We can only resolve it into the sovereignty of God,—“Even so Father; for so it seemed good, in thy sight.” There is no thoughtful man, who has not felt a great difficulty here,—the old difficulty of reconciling man’s responsibility and free agency, with God’s sovereignty and predetermined purposes. Grant us but the omniscience, and omnipotence of God, and all the doctrines connected with free grace, and God’s electing love, inevitably follow. At the same time, I *feel* that I am a responsible being,—I have the consciousness that I am a free agent, but how to reconcile the two things, I frankly confess that I cannot tell. This is certain, that God exercises no forcible constraint upon the will, in drawing us to Jesus. By the force of motives, and the power of conviction, he operates upon the will.—He makes us “a willing people in the day of his power.” There are difficulties connected with this great subject, which no human being and perhaps no finite being, will ever be able fully to solve but surely it must be admitted that the omnipotent Jehovah can *do* some things, which his creatures cannot fully comprehend.

This great subject was once a stumbling-block to me, as it has been to many; but I have long since learned to draw comfort from it, and ceased to perplex myself about the difficulty. It is one of these secret things which belong unto the Lord, about which it is perhaps as presumptuous as it is unprofitable, to enquire too curiously. I have learned to follow confidently the voice of the good Shepherd, even when I cannot see my way clearly. And he has invited *all* the weary and heavy laden, to come unto him, with the promise that if they do so, they shall find rest to their souls. And he has invited all the ends of the earth to look unto him, and be saved. And to crown all, he has assured us that “him, that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out,” and that “whosoever WILL, may take of the water of life freely.” With these promises in my hand, I feel that I am warranted to make the offer of salvation

freely to all, assured that whosoever *will* be saved, *may* be saved, assured that whosoever cometh to Jesus, far from being cast out, will be welcomed; and that he is as willing as he is able, to save to the uttermost all, who come unto God through him. Let none therefore be perplexed about this doctrine of the Spirit's calling, so long as we have the assurance that even more willingly than an earthly father will "give good things to his children, will our Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

S E R M O N VII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT THE INSPIRER OF THE APOSTLES, AND GREAT TEACHER OF THE CHURCH.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John xiv. 26.

No one can have studied the new Testament with care, and given adequate attention to the promises of our Saviour, regarding the mission of the Holy Spirit, without perceiving that he pointed to a time noticeable, and most important, when the Holy Spirit, whom he terms "the promise of the Father" would be bestowed. He does not intimate that the Holy Spirit has not been given before; but he points to a new era in the history of the church of God, which would be ushered in by an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit;—an outpouring of his gracious influences altogether unparalleled, and so copious that it could not fail to attract the attention of the world, as well as to enlighten, comfort, and sanctify the apostles, and endow them with extraordinary power, so as to fit them, in every respect, for the great work, with which they were entrusted,—for the organizing of Christ's church, in the face of a hostile world, for the completion of God's revelation of divine truth to man in the New Testament Scriptures, and the diffusion of the glad tidings of salvation, throughout the world. He speaks in language, with regard to this great event, which is not to be mistaken. He speaks of the Spirit's being *sent*, of his being *come*; and commanded his disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father;"—until, through him, they should be endowed with power from on high. And when the promised period of the Spirit's outpouring came, it could not be mistaken. It was on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were

all, with one accord, in one place. They had spent the previous ten days—from the ascension of the Saviour—in prayer; and they were probably now engaged in that exercise, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound, as of a mighty, rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Here then was a thing, in regard to which they could not be mistaken. Here was the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and fire, which had been promised by the Baptist, actually conferred. Here the cloven tongues, like as of fire, appeared on the brows of each of them, and they felt conscious of a new and wondrous power stirring the inmost depths of their souls. They were miraculously endowed with the power of speaking various languages, and thus fitted at once for carrying on the missionary work, among all nations. Nor was this the only occasion, when the power of the Spirit was perceptibly manifested.— Upon the return of Peter and John to their friends, after a night's imprisonment, and a bold confession of their faith in Jesus, as the only Saviour, before the High Priest and leading men of Jerusalem, “when they had prayed, the place was shaken, when they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT THE GREAT TEACHER OF THE CHURCH.

In the passage before us, our attention is directed to the Holy Spirit, as the great teacher of the church; for though the promise was made immediately to the apostles, yet it was through their divinely inspired preaching, and writings, that the church was to be instructed in all necessary religious truth, even till the consummation of all things. Our Saviour says here, that when the Father should send the Holy Ghost in his name, that is, as his representative,—that he should teach the apostles all things. And in a subsequent passage, he says—“Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into

all truth," or rather, as it is in the original—into all *the* truth. We are not for a moment to suppose that, in either of these passages, our Saviour promises that the Spirit would communicate to the apostles, a knowledge of all things in general. As well might we suppose that it is a promise, that he would communicate omniscience to them. It simply means that he would communicate all necessary religious knowledge to them,—all that was necessary for their own comfort, and enlightenment, in the way of salvation: and all that was necessary to fit them, whether by the living voice, or by their writings, to make wise unto salvation the men of their own, and all succeeding generations.

It was by the same Spirit, that all the Old Testament prophets were inspired, from Enoch to Malachi; for "holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." How often do Moses, and the other prophets communicate messages directly from God to the Church, with this solemn announcement,—*"Thus saith the Lord!"* And David says expressly,—*"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."* And so Paul, with reference, doubtless, not only to the Old Testament, but to that portion of the New also, which was written at the time, says,—*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* These words of Paul may be regarded, in the light of a commentary on our Saviour's words in the text—*"He will teach you all things,"* that is—all things needful to direct you, in the way of salvation, and to comfort, and guide you, in your progress through life. And so Paul says, that the Scriptures are intended to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work; that is, perfectly instructed in the knowledge of all things needful to salvation, and furnished with inducements, and motives, sufficiently powerful to lead him to the performance of all good works, becoming him as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, and the expectant of a glorious immortality.

In the course of the Old Testament dispensation there was much precious truth communicated, on the most important topics of religion; but still, when all the scattered rays from type, and ceremony, and prophecy, and direct revelation were collected into one focus, believers, in these days, walked only as it were, in the light of the full moon. It was not till Christ ascended up on high, and sent forth the Spirit into the Church, that the Sun of divine truth arose, and shed a clear, and satisfactory light on all that it is most important for man, as a responsible, and immortal being, to know. Not only were new truths communicated, through the preaching and writings of the apostles, but old truths were illustrated, and seen with a distinctness unknown before. Not only was the field of spiritual vision extended, but it was irradiated by an intenser light, poured on it direct from the fountain-head of all light and truth.

The statement in John xvi. 13.—“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all *the* truth,”—corresponds exactly with the promise of our text, “He shall teach you all things,” &c. And both are meant to show us, that the Spirit operates upon us, through our own mental faculties, and employs them, in the communication of the truth, so far as they are available. He guides us, in the use of them, into all the truth, enlightening, and strengthening, and directing them. And this he does, to a certain extent, in the case of all true believers. But in the case of the apostles he did much more. They were to be employed in communicating the truths of the gospel, with divine authority, for the guidance of the Church, in all time; and therefore they enjoyed his extraordinary influences. By his almighty power, he brought all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Jesus had said unto them;—he preserved them effectually from all error, and guided them by unerring wisdom, as to all they should communicate in the writings of the New Testament; and as to the manner also, in which the truth should be presented by them. In committing to writing, and preserving, for the use of the Church in all future ages, the great truths which

Jesus had communicated to the apostles, it was necessary only that the Spirit should recall them to their memory, preserve them effectually from all error in the writing of them, guide them, as to the manner, in which they should present the truth, and direct them as to what portions of it they should communicate. We know that we have not a complete record of all that Jesus did, and said, for the simple reason, that, if so, the New Testament would have been so bulky as to have interfered with its usefulness. It was meant for all,—for the common people, as well as for those who have leisure for literary pursuits; and therefore it must, of necessity, contain only an abridged account of Christ's sayings, and doings—a selection of all that was most important;—enough to comfort, and elevate, and stimulate us, and guide us in the way of salvation, but nothing to gratify an idle curiosity. This is inspiration.

THE SPIRIT THE REVEALER OF FUTURE EVENTS.

There is another species of inspiration, which implies a divine operation upon the mind, of a higher sort. I mean the revelation of future events. The gift of prophecy our Saviour promised, that the Spirit would confer upon the apostles. "He will show you things to come," said he. This gift of prophecy was conferred, in abundant measure, on Peter, John, and Paul; and in the striking, and unmistakable fulfilment of their prophecies, we have a most convincing proof of the reality of our most holy religion. But the gift of prophecy was not confined to the apostles. It had been predicted by Joel, that, in the last days, God would pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh, and that their sons, and their daughters should prophecy. And so we find that, in apostolic times, not only did Agabus deliver remarkable predictions, of the fulfilment of which we have an account in the New Testament, but the daughters of Philip the Evangelist also did prophecy.

When the prophets were inspired to predict future events, they must have been entirely passive, in the hands of the Spirit. They could utter only what he communicated, and probably employed the very words which he sug-

gested. This, indeed, the prophets themselves declared.— Thus when Agabus took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet with it, he said,—“ Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews, at Jerusalem, bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

So entirely passive do the prophets appear to have been, when future events were disclosed to them, that sometimes they did not understand fully the import of the things, which they were made the instruments of communicating to the Church, and had to study their own predictions. Thus Peter says—“ Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the things that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

THE SPIRIT ENLIGHTENED THE MIND, AND EXALTED THE FACULTIES OF THE APOSTLES. AND THIS HE DOES, TO SOME EXTENT, IN THE CASE OF ALL BELIEVERS.

But there is another species of inspiration, of which the apostles were the subjects, closely allied to the refreshing of the memory, and guiding into all the truth, of which we have already spoken, but still slightly different from it. I mean the illumination of the mind, and exaltation of the faculties, in virtue of which they were enabled clearly to understand truths, which were dark, and incomprehensible to them before, and to see them, in their relation to other truths, and comprehend fully the glorious scheme of redemption. Thus, after the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, the apostles fully understood, and appreciated truths, which had appeared mysterious, and revolting to them before, and obtained an insight into the way of salvation, to which they had been strangers before. This is probably what the apostle John means by the “unction of the Holy One,” bestowed, to some extent, on all genuine believers, but in a double measure, upon the apostles. “But ye have an unction

from the Holy One," says he, "and ye know all things." And again with reference to the same subject, he says— "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him—that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

Except in the matter of predicting future events, the Spirit revealed to the apostles little that was entirely new. He rather presented to them Old Testament truths, irradiated by the light of recent events, and enabled them; through the help of the facts which they had themselves witnessed, more fully to understand the import of our Saviour's teaching. He recalled to their minds our Saviour's instructions, preserved them from all error, in the recording of them, and thus guided them by inspiration, into the comprehension of all necessary truth, and guided them infallibly, in the communication of it to the Church. But though believers now are not inspired, or infallibly preserved from error, yet they, too, have an unction from the Holy One, in virtue of which they are guided into all truth, necessary for their own comfort, and guidance, in the way of life. All true believers are such by the unction of the Holy One; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

As for the apostles, it was necessary that they should enjoy the gifts of the Spirit, in a far higher degree than ordinary believers; for they were made the instruments of communicating the will of God to men, in all future ages. It was necessary, therefore, that they should enjoy the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit. "So our Saviour promises his apostles, in the text, that the Holy Ghost should bring to their minds, by an immediate efficacy, the things that he had spoken, that, by his inspiration, they might be enabled to write, and preach them for the good and benefit of his Church. So Peter tells us, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" that is, in writing the Scriptures, they were borne up by him, carried beyond themselves, to speak his words, and what he indited to them. The apostles forgo' much

of what Christ had said to them, or might do so; and what they did retain in a natural way of remembrance, was not a sufficient foundation to them, to write what they so remembered, for a rule of faith to the Church. For the word of prophecy is not from any man's proper impulse, it comes not from any private conception, understanding, or remembrance. Wherefore, Christ promises that the Holy Ghost shall do this work; that they might infallibly give out what he had delivered to them. Hence that expression in Luke i. 3,—“Having had perfect understanding of all things, from the very first,” is better rendered—“having obtained perfect knowledge of things from above, (noting the rise, and spring of his so understanding things, as to be able infallibly to give them out, in a rule of faith to the Church,) than the beginning of the things themselves spoken of; which the world itself will not easily admit of.”*

As for ordinary believers, it is enough that they are effectually guided by the Spirit, into all the truth that is necessary to comfort, and direct themselves. And he enables them to see the meaning, and feel the comfort of the promises, far more than the apostles themselves did, while Christ was with them.—“While Jesus was with the apostles, how little efficacy on their hearts had any of the heavenly promises he gave them! When the Spirit came, how full of joy did he make all things to them! That which was his peculiar work, which belonged to him by virtue of his office, that he also might be glorified, was reserved for him. And this is his work to the end of the world,—to bring the promises of Christ to our minds and hearts, to give us the comfort of them, the joy and sweetness of them, much beyond what the disciples found in them, when Christ in person spake to them; their gracious influence being then restrained, that, as was said, the dispensation of the Spirit might be glorified. So are the next words to the promise of our text,—“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” The Comforter being sent to bring what Christ said to remembrance, the consequence of it is peace, and pardon from trouble of heart, whatever peace, relief, comfort, joy, supportment we have, at any

* Owen.

time received, from any promise, work, or thing done by Christ, it all belongs to this dispensation of the Comforter. In vain should we apply our natural abilities to remember, call to mind, consider, the promises of Christ; without success would it be, it is so daily; but when the Comforter doth undertake the work, it is done to the purpose.*

THE INSPIRATION OF THE APOSTLES, PROPERLY SO CALLED, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE SPIRITUAL ILLUMINATION OF ORDINARY BELIEVERS,

As to that divine inspiration, in virtue of which God's servants of old were enabled to write the Scriptures, I would remark, that, whilst in regard to what they heard, and saw, the Spirit recalled all things to their remembrance, and directed them, as to what they should commit to writing, and guided them, as to the manner of doing it, and presided over the execution of the work, so as effectually to preserve them from all error, still, in the doing of it, he seems to have left them to employ their own individual powers. And thus it is, that we find such variety of manner and expression, in the books of Scripture.— Each writer preserves his own individuality, and seems to have been left, within certain limits, to employ his own peculiar gifts and powers.

When a skilful musician plays upon different instruments, they all give forth different sounds, the tones peculiar to each of them; but they all emit the notes which the musician intends they should. If he play the same tune on each, the notes will be precisely the same, as given forth by all; but there will be a beautiful variety in the sounds. It is just so with the Holy Spirit, and the different writers of the books of Scripture. It is the same Spirit that breathes into each of them, and they all give forth the very statements, and sentiments, and promises, and instructions which he intends they should; they all express the mind of the Spirit, but each in his own peculiar manner, they are each instruments, in the hand of the same Spirit, and each gives forth the very truth which he inspires into

*Owen.

them, but with the peculiar sound, and manner, expressive of the distinct individuality of each.

That divine inspiration, in virtue of which God's servants of old were enabled to compose the Scriptures, was not bestowed upon ordinary believers, in apostolic times; nor is it conferred upon the most distinguished believers now, just because there is no longer any necessity for it; for God never confers special gifts, when they are not needed. But, as a divine illumination was needed by the apostles, before they could understand or appreciate our Saviour's sayings, so a divine illumination is needed still before we can understand, or appreciate the writings of the apostles. To the great mass of men, the Bible is, to a large extent, a sealed book. The understanding must be enlightened by the Spirit of God, before it can be comprehended and received; for it is spiritually discerned. Now here, observe the respective functions of the Spirit and the word. The Spirit must prepare the mind, and heart, to comprehend, and receive the word, and then farther enlighten the understanding through the word. But farther to the natural man the Bible is not only dark and mysterious in many respects, it is uninviting and repulsive. Man must be made to see the tremendous evil of sin; and the consequences of what may appear to the natural man but a small sin, ramifying throughout eternity and like the circle occasioned by a stone thrown into the smooth sea, ever increasing in diameter, till its influence is said to be felt on the remotest shore,—he must be sensible of this, before he can understand, and approve of God's awful severity in dealing with it:—The carnal mind is enmity against God, and there is a positive contempt felt by multitudes for every thing connected with religion. It is clear, therefore, that not only must light be let into the understanding; but the enmity of the heart must be subdued, before divine truth can be understood, and appreciated.—The expositions and reasonings of ministers and other intelligent Christians, may do something towards the accomplishment of this; but only as they are instruments in the hands of God's Spirit; for no thing but divine power can open the blind eyes, and soften, and renew the stony heart.

O for more humbling views of the blindness of our understandings, and the hardness of our hearts, in regard to those great moral, and spiritual truths, which it most concerns us, as spiritual and immortal beings to know, then should we have a keener sense of our helplessness, and danger, and need of that divine illumination, in virtue of which alone, we can comprehend God's holy word; and of that renewal of heart, in virtue of which alone we will appreciate it, and submit to it. It is this deep feeling of our helplessness, and danger, and need of divine assistance, that alone will constrain us to cry earnestly to God for help. And if we do so, in deep earnestness of soul, that help will not be withheld, for even more readily than an earthly parent will give needed succour to his helpless, and imploring child, will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him. "Ask and it shall be given you" said our Saviour, with reference to his very subject; "Seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

SERMON VIII.

THE SEALING OF THE SAINTS.

"In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."—EPIH. I. 13, 14.

It will scarcely be doubted by any intelligent student of the Bible, who regards all its statements as containing the very truth of God, that the Holy Spirit is that person of the Godhead, who carries on the whole work of redemption, in its application to the hearts, and consciences of men;—beginning the good work in them, and carrying it onward to perfection; for though Christ is said to be the author, and finisher of our faith, it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit, as his Representative on earth, that he operates. "There is no good communicated unto us from God, but it is bestowed on us, or wrought in us, by the Holy Ghost. No gift, no grace, no mercy, no privilege, no consolation do we receive, possess, or use, but it is wrought in us, conferred upon us, or manifested unto us by him alone. Nor is there any good in us towards God, any faith, love, duty, obedience, but what is effectually wrought in us by him; for in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing." *

He it is, who kindles the first spark of spiritual life in our souls, and arouses us from the state of brutal stupidity, in regard to spiritual things, in which all men are by nature sunk. He it is, who first awakens us to a sense of the value of the soul, and the infinite importance of eternity, He it is who awakens us to an overwhelming sense of the tremendous evil, and guilt, and ruinous consequences of that sin, which brought death into our world, and all its woe; and will sink into the lowest hell those who persist

in the commission of it. And especially he shows us the danger, and ingratitude of sin, as committed against a God of infinite goodness, and inflexible justice, and omnipotent power. And having thus made the sinner see his danger, and feel his guilt, he directs him to Jesus, the Saviour's friend, shows him the all-sufficiency of his propitiatory death, presses upon him the freeness of the gospel offer, and persuades, and enables him to embrace Jesus, as his Saviour; and then enabling him to see his covenant interest in the Redeemer, and the security of the foundation, on which he rests his hope for eternity, he enables him to obtain peace, and joy in believing.

But when the sinner has been brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace, how much still remains to be done in him, and for him. He is but a babe in Christ, and as such, being adopted into the family of the Redeemed, he is subjected to the schooling, and training, and provision, which is the portion of the children, till he attains the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus; when the image of God is reproduced upon him, or, in other words, when he is made so to resemble God in character, that the likeness may be recognized by the discerning ones. Then he is said to be sealed. The likeness of God is impressed upon him, as the image graven upon a seal is impressed upon the wax, to which it is applied. The sealing here spoken of refers, doubtless, to something done to the believer, after he has been regenerated, and justified through faith in Jesus. And though it is not very easy to explain the precise meaning of the metaphor here employed by the apostle, the general scope of it is easily understood. In the parallel passage in the fourth chapter of this epistle, the Spirit is represented as the agent, by whom the sealing is done;—"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," it is said, "whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption." And our text might have been so translated, as to represent the Holy Spirit as the agent in this work. It might have been rendered,—“In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise.” As the text stands in our authorized version, the Holy Spirit is represented as the seal applied.

to believers by God. This would amount substantially to the same thing. And, as a seal leaves the exact impression of itself on the substance to which it is applied, so the Holy Spirit, considered as a seal, being applied to believers, would leave the exact impression of himself upon them. I prefer, however, to consider the Spirit here as the agent employed in sealing the regenerate. This is his peculiar work. The image of God may be considered as graven on the seal; and to seal a believer is to stamp the character of God upon him, and mark him out for his. Thus when the Holy Spirit, in the process of sanctification, renews us, after the image of God, he seals us.— This sealing by the Holy Ghost is said to be the earnest of the believer's inheritance; and certainly to have the stamp of the Holy Ghost upon us, is to bear about with us an evidence that we are accepted of God. And the consciousness of this must be an unfailing well-spring of happiness to the believer. But when the Holy Ghost dwells in us, and impresses the image of himself upon us, he fills us with peace, and joy in believing; and this constitutes more fully the earnest, or first-fruits of the heavenly inheritance; for the happiness of heaven begins in the believer's heart on earth. And this he will continue to enjoy, till his happiness is perfected, by the redemption of his body from the grave; and his entering upon the full enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance.

This sealing cannot be explained, with reference to the possession of miraculous powers; "For these were not the pledge, and the foretaste of heaven, as this sealing is declared to have been; for many unsanctified persons exercised miraculous powers." But it referred undoubtedly to that outward holiness, and beauty of Christian character, produced on believers by the sanctifying power of the Spirit, which is so manifest to the intelligent, and impartial observer, that it cannot be mistaken. Even the world can perceive this. Wherever a seal is impressed, the inscription and device can be seen. The sealed ones, mentioned in Revelation, are just true believers sanctified by the Spirit of God. And when the angel, who had the seal of the living God in his hand, commanded the

four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, not to hurt them, till THEY had sealed the servants of God, in their foreheads, it just means that God's desolating judgments were to be suspended, till his elect were sanctified, and made meet for heaven. Now, what I would wish to impress upon you, from this sealing is, that whenever sanctification is genuine, it will be seen. When a seal is impressed upon the forehead of a person, it cannot be hidden.

THE MODE IN WHICH THE PROCESS OF SEALING BELIEVERS IS CARRIED ON.

In interpreting metaphors, we are not to look for a parallel in every particular. It is the general resemblance only that is to be regarded. And here the resemblance is not between the mode, in which the things are done, but as to the general effect produced. When a seal is applied to a piece of wax, a perfect impression is produced at once. It is not so in the sealing of believers. That is a gradual process. But the effect produced in both cases is substantially the same. A perfect image of the seal is left upon the wax: and so, an image or resemblance of the divine character is produced by the Spirit on the soul of the believer.

I.—THE SPIRIT ILLUMINATES THE SOUL OF THE BELIEVER,
CHIEFLY THROUGH A WRITTEN WORD,
AND A LIVING MINISTRY.

In regeneration, the Spirit removes the scales from our mental eyes, and enables us to perceive divine truth, and, through that truth, begets us unto everlasting life:— But the enlightening process is not stopped, when the believer is born from above. It continues, during the whole period of his earthly sojourn, till grace is made perfect in glory. The Spirit continues to shine into the soul of the believer, melting down all obstructions, and strengthening and improving his perceptive powers. But it is mainly, of not exclusively, by enabling us to understand the Scriptures, and recalling Scripture truth to our mind, that he communicates to us the knowledge of divine things, and

guides us into all saving truth. Jesus promised his disciples that, when the Comforter was sent in his name, he would teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them; and that he would guide them into all *the* truth. No doubt, this implied to the apostles the gift of inspiration,—a thing which, in its higher, and peculiar sense, we cannot expect; but the promise, in so far as it is necessary for enlightening believers, extends to God's people in all time. This is one of the very chiefest of the purposes, for which the Spirit is to abide in the Church for ever. Just as the Spirit was to teach the apostles all necessary religious doctrine, and bring all Christ's statements to their remembrance, so he teaches us, through the Scriptures, all necessary religious truth. In other words, he enables us to understand the Scriptures, which to the natural man, are a sealed book, and he brings Scripture truths to our remembrance, according as circumstances require. However important, and indispensable the Scriptures are, in themselves, they are not enough. All saving truth is in them, but blind eyes cannot see it, and dead hearts cannot feel it. The character of Jesus is plainly enough delineated there, but the natural man can neither understand nor appreciate it; for no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. No man can feel his need of him or see his all-sufficiency, as a Saviour, and so embrace him as his, and from the heart call him Lord, till the Spirit take of the things that are Christ's, and show them to him, and manifest them to his soul, in another way than he doth unto the world. And hence it is, that, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; for without the Spirit of Christ, he cannot believe in Jesus, nor accept him, as his. Thus the Spirit and the word cannot be dissociated, in the economy of grace, any more than the Spirit and the Bride can, if she is really to be the Lamb's wife, arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of Saints.

Paul terms the gospel "the ministration of the Spirit." All its ordinances are appointed by him, and they are rendered effectual only, when accompanied with divine power. The minds of all true believers he illuminates

directly, and enables them, as they have capacity and opportunity, to understand the Scriptures. But in ordinary circumstances, he operates upon them to a large extent, through the ministers of the Gospel. These are among the gifts which he has given to men;—"For he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Wherever the Spirit of God *calls* men to the ministry, and sends them to a people, he confers upon them, in greater or less measure, the gifts necessary to fit them for carrying on the work of the Lord. To *all* such he gives the gift of preaching, as well as the gift of prayer, though in different degrees, and manners. "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit," and to all "the Spirit of grace and supplications." These gifts must be cultivated, that they may be exercised with the most extensive, and beneficial effect. And then, when such men preach "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," accompanying them, their preaching cannot fail to be efficacious, in enlightening the understandings, and impressing the hearts of men. Such are the men who, speak with the "tongue of fire," words of power, deeply expressive of the sublime and solemn truths, and profound convictions, and ardent emotions, which have been infused into their own souls by the Spirit of God. It is the ministry of such heaven-taught, and divinely commissioned men alone, that will be extensively useful; for men cannot excite feelings, which they have not themselves felt, or give that, which they have not themselves received. And whenever such men labor in faith, and prayer, and with earnest desires to promote God's glory, and save souls, their labors will never be altogether in vain. There may be obstructions among a people, which hinder the circulation of spiritual life among them, but when life descends, with power, from the pulpit to the pew, it will generally,

sooner or later, sweep away these obstructions. But where men run without being sent, they shall not profit God's people at all.

Knowing, as we do, what unregenerate man is, ignorant, sensual, worldly-minded, and full of enmity against God, well might the minister of the Gospel despair of success, if he labored in his own strength; and tremble to go forth into such a world, with such a message as he has to bear. But with the arm of Omnipotence to lean upon, what has he to fear? And with the assistance of *him* to depend upon, under whose control are the hearts of all men, why should he doubt that success, sooner or later, in larger or smaller measure, will ultimately crown his labors? It is this ministry of the Spirit, "which gives unto the ministry of the gospel both its glory, and its efficacy. Take away the Spirit from the gospel, and you render it a dead letter, and leave the New Testament of no more use to Christians, than the Old Testament is to the Jews. It is therefore, a mischievous imagination, proceeding from ignorance, blindness, and unbelief, that there is no more in the gospel, but what is contained under any other doctrine, or declaration of truth,—that it is nothing but a book for men to exercise their reason upon, and to improve the things of it by the same faculty; for this is to separate the Spirit, or the dispensation of the Spirit, from it, which is, in truth, to destroy it; and therewith is the covenant of God rejected, which is, that his word and Spirit shall go together."*—Isa. lix. 21.

**II. THE SPIRIT IMBUES US WITH THE LOVE OF HOLINESS,
STRENGTHENS OUR MORAL PRINCIPLES, AND
ENABLES US TO RESIST TEMPTATION.**

Having manifested the perfections of the divine character to us, through the word, and enabled us to appreciate the beauty of holiness, the Spirit imbues us with a love of it. He presents to us realizing views of the goodness and love of God, and especially of his love to us, as manifested in the work of redemption; and thus he enkindles reciprocal emotions of love to God in our souls. And

*Owen.

loving God, we learn to love his character,—his holiness, justice, and truth, as well as his goodness and love. And loving God, we endeavour to be like him, and keep his commandments. And in proportion as we love God, and study to be like him, and endeavour to obey him, we hate sin and resist temptation, and struggle against the evil propensities of our nature. From the knowledge which we obtain of the consequences of sin, and the rewards of holiness, we are furnished with the most powerful motives to war against all that is sinful, both in us, and around us, and to seek to be adorned with the beauty of holiness. And here happily we are not left to struggle alone; for the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, and strengthens us with all might in the inner man. We have many enemies to contend against the evil propensities of our fallen nature, the principalities and powers of darkness, and a corrupt and ensnaring world; but mightier is he that is for us, than all that can be against us. He fosters all that is good in us, strengthens our moral principles, and helps us in the evil hour, making his grace sufficient for us, and perfecting his strength in our weakness. What a beautiful encouraging idea is that, which is given of the Spirit's watchfulness over the church, when it is said,—“I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” And every true member of the church shares in the care, which the Lord, the Spirit, constantly exercises. In endeavouring therefore, to subdue all sin in our souls, and to prevent all outbreaks of it in our lives, and to be perfectly conformed to the image of God, whilst strenuously exerting all our own powers, let us be constantly looking to God, the Spirit, for help, and praying earnestly, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God, so shall we be conquerors in the fight of faith, and more than conquerors through him that loved us.

III. THE SPIRIT SUSTAINS AND COMFORTS THE SOUL, IN TIMES OF TEMPORAL DISTRESS AND SEASONS OF SPIRITUAL WEAKNESS.

In the process of sealing us, or perfecting our conformity to the divine image, the Spirit often needs to sustain

and comfort us, both in the dark and stormy day, when hopes are blighted, and prospects clouded; or, when death looks in at our windows, or enters our dwellings, and takes away the sight of our eyes with a stroke; or, in that still darker season, when the iniquities of our heels do compass about, and Satan stands as an accuser, in the court of conscience, and tries to drive us to despair, by raking up all our iniquities, and enlarging on their aggravations; and arguing that those who have been guilty of such crimes, cannot be the true children of God. It is often in vain, that the poor heart-stricken one "puts in its plea,—that he is a child of God, that he belongs to God's family, and for this end produceth all his evidences,—every thing whereby faith gives him an interest in God. Satan in the meantime, opposeth with all his might; sin and law assist him; many flaws are found in his evidences; the truth of them all is questioned; and the soul hangs in suspense, as to the issue. In the midst of the plea, and contest, the comforter comes, and by a word of promise, or otherwise overpowers the heart, with a comfortable persuasion, that his plea is good, and that he is a child of God; and therefore, it is said of him that he 'witnesseth with our Spirit.' When our Spirits are pleading their right and title, he comes in and bears witness on our side; at the same time, enabling us to put forth acts of filial obedience, kind and child-like; which is called crying, 'Abba, Father.' Remember still the manner of the Spirit's working,—that he doth it effectually, voluntarily and freely. Hence sometimes the dispute hangs long,—the cause is pleading many years. The law seems sometime to prevail, sin and Satan to rejoice, and the poor soul is filled with dread about its inheritance. Perhaps its own witness, from its faith, sanctification, former experience, keeps up the plea with some life and comfort, but the work is not done, the conquest is not fully obtained, until the Spirit, who worketh freely and effectually, when and how he will, comes in with his testimony also; clothing his power with a word of promise, he makes all parties concerned to attend unto him, and puts an end to the controversy."*

*Owen.

When the Spirit thus makes us feel assured that we are the children of God, and safe forever, within the bonds of the everlasting covenant, how bright the prospects which open up to us! how glorious the hopes which revive within us! and how ardent the love which our bosoms cherish to our heavenly Father! Being recognized as his children, we are made to feel that we are heirs of God, the Omnipotent Sovereign of the Universe; and the happiness arising from all this is heightened by the sublime idea, that we are not only heirs of God, but joint heirs with Christ, our elder brother. No wonder that the contemplation of all this fills God's people sometimes, with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. And surely of all things, this consciousness of sonship to God is calculated to fill us with a self-respect, which will tend most powerfully to preserve us from everything mean, and impure, and dishonorable. Surely, when a man is elevated with the idea that he is a son of God, he will not stoop to anything which would dishonor his parentage. Surely, when a man is admitted into the presence of the God of infinite holiness, and purity, and permitted to enjoy communion with him, he would not forfeit that communion, by indulging in anything unholy, or impure. And having thus obtained a relish for what is so pure and elevating, he will come to loathe what is impure and debasing. And surely, when a man lives in the prospect of entering upon the inheritance of an everlasting kingdom, when the troubles and trials of this life are over, he would not grieve the Saviour, who died to procure it for him, by indulging in any of those sinful pleasures, which he hates, and will not tolerate. And thus you can see how the comforting influences of the Spirit helps forward the sealing process, and tends to cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh, and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

IV. THE SPIRIT HELPS THE INFIRMITIES OF THE SAINTS,
 ESPECIALLY AIDS THEM IN PRAYER, EXCITING EAR-
 NEST DESIRES IN THEM, AND DIRECTING
 THEM ARIGHT IN THE EXERCISE.

How manifold the remaining imperfections, and how

great the weaknesses and infirmities of God's dear children! But how comforting the thought that the Spirit helps our infirmities. He does not supersede our own efforts; but he prompts and directs them; sustains us under them, and strengthens us to continue them. Paul specifies the mode in which the Spirit helps our infirmities; Rom. viii. 26, 27. It is in reference to prayer. So much in the dark are we, as to what it would be consistent with God's honor and purposes to grant, or our own welfare to receive, that we knew not what we should pray for; and we know little of the Spirit, in which we should approach God; but the Spirit excites in us such earnest desires, and intense longings, for pardon and reconciliation to God, and restoration to his favor and friendship, and the enjoyment of communion with him,—such longings for these, as cannot be expressed in words, and which the full heart can give vent to, only in inarticulate groanings. But the great searcher of hearts knoweth what are the feelings, and desires, and earnest longings of our hearts, on such occasions:—he knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, who exciteth these longings, and who may therefore be said to make these intercessions for the saints. And coming, as these intercessions do, from the inspiration of the Spirit, they are, of course, for things agreeable to the will of God. Such I believe to be the true meaning of that famous passage, regarding the intercession of the Spirit. The apostle does not countenance the idea, that the Spirit himself formally intercedes for us. That is Christ's office. But, in his own forcible way, he teaches us that the Spirit so works in us, excites in us such intense desires for things according to God's will, as cannot find utterance in words, but that God, who searches the heart, and forms his estimate of the man, according to its condition, reads these thoughts and desires, and sees them struggling for utterance there. And these desires and heart-prayers, being inspired by the Spirit, may be regarded as his. And no doubt, all such prayers are answered by God. "Thus it is *our* hearts that groan, but the operation and emotion is from the Holy Spirit; for the subject of these, and he who produces them, must not be confounded. In this way, the

apostle speaks in the fourth chapter to the Galatians;— ‘Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying—‘Abba, Father.’ And in Romans viii. 15, he shows that it is we who cry ‘Abba, Father,’ in order that we may observe, that it is not the Spirit, who cries, who prays, who groans, but that he *causes us* to cry, and pray, and groan.”*

So fallen and corrupt are we by nature, so spiritually blind and enfeebled, that, in ourselves, we cannot think a good thought, or conceive a pure desire, or express a proper petition to God, in prayer, or carry out consistently a good object, or bear up with patience, and submission, under the inevitable ills of life, but O what comfort in the thought, that in the Holy Spirit, we have an ever present, Omnipotent friend, to help our infirmities, to inspire our prayers and direct us, in our approaches to the Eternal, the infinitely Holy, and Omnipotent Sovereign of the Universe. Well may he be regarded as the inspirer of prayer; for he is “the Spirit of grace and of supplications;” and so excites holy and earnest desires in us, that he is said to intercede for us, because he is the inspirer of the supplications, which we present to God. Thus it is clear that unless we “pray in the Holy Ghost,” our prayers will be cold, formal addresses, which can never penetrate heaven, and find acceptance with God.

Since then it is by prayer that we get access to God, and enjoy communion with him, and obtain that grace, and strength, and consolation, through which alone we can be fitted for every duty, and prepared for every trial, of what importance is it that the Saints should be much at a throne of grace, praying always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit! And how earnest should they be in prayer for the continuance of the Holy Spirit with them, that they may be prevented from ever doing any thing to grieve, or quench him; and that his gracious influences may be poured out more copiously upon them.— There are some good people, who think there is an impropriety in the regenerate praying for the Spirit inasmuch as they have already obtained him. But this feeling

*Haldane.

proceeds from a one-sided view of the subject. They need to pray for the continuance of the Spirit, with them, and that his gracious influences may be poured out more copiously upon them. And have they not times of darkness and desertion, when they need to implore God to "restore to them the joys of his salvation, and uphold them with His free Spirit?"

It is thus that the Spirit works *with* us, and *in* us, in carrying on the sealing process, till the image of the divine Redeemer is perfected in our souls. Happy ye who are conscious of this work going forward within you. In the presence of the Spirit, ye have a well of living water,—of heavenly consolation,—within you, springing up unto everlasting life. And this foretaste of heaven's joy is an earnest,—a sure pledge, that after the redemption of the body from the dust of death, ye will enter upon the possession of the everlasting inheritance in heaven.

THE END.