

# Sermons on Colossians



Excerpts from *Horae Homileticae* vol. 18

# Charles Simeon

# HORÆ HOMILETIÆ:

OR

## DISCOURSES

(PRINCIPALLY IN THE FORM OF SKELETONS)

NOW FIRST DIGESTED INTO ONE CONTINUED SERIES,

AND FORMING A COMMENTARY

UPON EVERY BOOK OF

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT;

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

AN IMPROVED EDITION OF A TRANSLATION OF

CLAUDE'S ESSAY ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

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IN TWENTY-ONE VOLUMES.

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# COLOSSIANS.

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MMCLXVI. 2166

PAUL'S COMMENDATION OF THE GOSPEL.

Col. i. 3—6. *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.*

“THE grace of God in truth!” What a beautiful description of the Gospel! It is grace: it is all grace, from first to last: it is the most stupendous grace that ever God vouchsafed to any creature, whether in heaven or on earth. It was marvellous grace to confer on angels such an exalted nature as they possess, together with all the glory and felicity of heaven. It was most astonishing grace also to form man in Paradise; to form him in the very image of his God; and to give him a promise, that if he should hold fast his integrity, both he and all his posterity should participate with the angels in all the blessedness they enjoy. But what is all this to the gift of God's only dear Son to bear the iniquities of fallen man, and, by his own obedience unto death, to restore man to his forfeited inheritance? This is emphatically called, “The Gospel of the grace of God:” and truly it does exhibit the grace of God in

such a view as no creature could ever have anticipated; and in such a view as must fill the whole creation, whether of men or angels, with the profoundest admiration, and gratitude, and love. This is the Gospel which ye “have heard;” which also, through the illuminating influence of the Spirit of God, many of you “know;” and the excellency of which may be seen,

I. By the effects produced in our hearts—

There are three effects mentioned, as produced in the converts of Colosse :

1. “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ”—

[This is the first effect which the Gospel produces, wherever it is received into the heart. It reveals to us our need of a Saviour; and it holds forth the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, sent into the world to bear our sins, and to expiate our guilt by his atoning sacrifice, and thereby to reconcile us to our offended God. It discovers to us the fulness and suitableness of this salvation; and brings us to this Saviour, as our only hope. It leads every one to renounce altogether every other hope, and to trust entirely in the merits and mediation of this adorable Redeemer— — —]

2. Love to all the saints—

[This is the next effect produced on all. Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are brought into a new family, of which Christ is the master: yea, we are incorporated into a new body, of which Christ is the head, and all the saints are members. I add further, we are all penetrated with one spirit; (for “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit;”) and have thus a bond of union, which never did, nor could, exist before. The very instant we believe in Christ, we feel ourselves brought into this relation to all his believing people, whether they be separately known to us or not; and we have, from that moment, somewhat of the same sympathy with them, as every member of our body has with all the rest, the eye with the hand, and the hand with the foot — — —]

3. Hope of happiness in heaven—

“The hope laid up for us in heaven” is that for which the Apostle principally gives thanks in the passage before us<sup>a</sup>. But this, like the two foregoing principles, is wrought in the heart by the Gospel: by which, as St. Peter says, “we are

<sup>a</sup> See the Greek. The faith and love are parenthetically inserted.

begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us<sup>b</sup>." Yes, faith penetrates the highest heavens, and sees there crowns and kingdoms purchased by the blood of Christ, and promised to all who believe in him. An eternity of glory upon the very throne of God, the believer expects as his assured portion — — —]

But the excellency of the Gospel is further shewn,

II. By the effects produced on our lives—

“ It brings forth fruit in all the world ”—

[See the fruits of the Spirit as described by the Apostle: “ The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance<sup>c</sup>.” There is not a grace that was in Christ Jesus himself, which the Gospel does not form in the souls of those who believe in him — — — “ The discovery which it gives us of the glory of Christ transforms us into his image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God<sup>d</sup>.”]

It does this invariably and universally—

[There is not a creature who receives the grace of God in truth, but experiences this effect upon his soul. It matters not whether he be the most civilized man on earth, or a poor savage Indian or Hottentot: he will, from the moment that he receives the Gospel, begin to bear the image of his heavenly Father “ in righteousness and true holiness ” — — — And the man who professes to believe in Christ, and does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness in his life and conversation, is a self-deceiver, and a hypocrite. “ His faith is no better than the faith of devils; ” and, if he die in his present state, his end shall be like theirs also: for God has decreed, that “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord<sup>e</sup> ” — — —]

TELL ME NOW, brethren,

1. Have we not ground to “ give thanks for you ? ”

[Were you all reduced to the most abject state of poverty, and relieved by the Gospel to the utmost extent of your necessities, and enriched with all that the whole world could bestow; or were you all in dying circumstances, and restored to health by the Gospel; it were nothing, in comparison of the blessings ye have received (many of you at least) through the word ministered unto you. You have been brought by it from death to life, from sin to holiness, from hell to heaven.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. i. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

<sup>e</sup> Heb. xii. 14.



O! what inestimable blessings are these! — — — Say, then, whether those who have preached unto you the word of life have not reason to bless God for you, as the “seals of their ministry,” and as destined to be “their joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of that Saviour” whom they have preached unto you<sup>f</sup>? — — —]

2. Have we not encouragement, also, to “pray for you?”

[What will not God confer on those for whom he has already done so much? Surely there is not any thing which Omnipotence can effect, that shall not be bestowed upon you, in answer to the prayer of faith. See what Paul prayed for in behalf of the Colossians<sup>g</sup> — — — That same prayer would I offer for you, and entreat all of you to offer for yourselves. “Open your mouths wide, and God will fill them.” “Be not straitened in yourselves; for ye are not straitened in him.” Only ask in faith; and “according to your faith it shall be done unto you.”]

3. Is there not, however, ground for lamentation, on account of some amongst you?

[Would to God I could say that the change here described had been wrought on all! But there are many of you, I fear, who still remain in your unconverted state; and who, notwithstanding the Gospel has so long been ministered unto you, are yet strangers to the faith, and love, and hope, which it forms in the hearts of those who truly receive it; yes, and whose tempers and dispositions are widely different from the fruits which the Gospel is sent to produce. Dear brethren, I pray you study the Gospel more: pray over it more: beg of God to make it “the rod of his strength,” and to effect by it in you all that it wrought in the Colossian Church, and all that it is ordained to work in all the world — — —]

<sup>f</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

<sup>g</sup> ver. 9—14.

## MMCLXVII. 2167

### PRAYER FOR GROWTH IN GRACE.

Col. i. 9—13. *We do not cease to pray for you . . . . . that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the*

*Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light : who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*

UNIVERSAL benevolence will begin to shew itself wherever Christianity gains a just ascendancy. This is particularly observable in the prayers which the Apostle offered for others ; the fervour and fullness of which clearly proved, that they proceeded from a heart fraught with love, and deeply impressed with the excellency of those blessings which are provided for us in the Gospel. He confined not his attention to the welfare of a few with whom he might happen to sojourn ; but extended it to the whole Church, as well to those whom he had never seen, as to those amongst whom he had ministered. He needed only to be informed that a work of grace was begun in any persons, and he instantly felt an union of heart with them, and took a lively interest in all that concerned them. This remark is strongly exemplified in the prayer before us. He had heard of the blessed state of the Colossian Church ; and, from the instant he had received the glad tidings, he remembered that people in all his stated prayers : and, in the passage before us, he tells them what he prayed for on their behalf. He desired that they might advance

#### I. In the knowledge of God's will—

[The “knowledge of God's revealed will” is the foundation of all acceptable obedience : and every Christian must of necessity be in some degree endued with it. But he will not be satisfied with a scanty measure of it : he wishes to be “filled with it,” so that it may engage all the faculties of his mind. Not that he can rest in a speculative view of Divine truth, however clear or comprehensive it may be : the knowledge which he covets, is a practical and experimental knowledge ; a knowledge that diffuses “a spiritual savour” over his soul, and enables him to conduct himself, “with all wisdom,” as well in his secret conflicts with sin, as in the public exercises of his duty to God and man.

Such then was the Apostle's first request for the converts at Colosse : he desired, that, as they already had some knowledge of God's will, so they might be “filled” with it, enjoying at

the same time its sweet savour, and its practical influence, “in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding.”

And should not such be our prayer also for ourselves? Let us not forget, that, while we aspire after divine knowledge, we must chiefly seek that which brings a feast to the soul, and endues it with a nice and accurate discernment of good and evil.]

## II. In obedience to his commands—

[The more enlarged views the Christian has of divine truth, the more studious will he be to fulfil the will of God. And in his endeavours after holiness he will propose to himself the highest *measure* of obedience, and the noblest *end*. He will not limit himself to the rules prescribed by men; nor will he aim merely at obtaining eternal happiness: but he will consider the relation he bears to God, and the obligations he has received from him, and the expectations which he has of future benefits; and will endeavour to “walk worthy of” such a Father, such a Redeemer, such an unspeakable Benefactor. He will resemble a dutiful and affectionate servant, who does not merely consider what he *must* do in order to escape censure, and receive his wages, but what will please his Master. He inquires with himself, What will please my God? *That* is the great object of his ambition: *that* is the spring of his activity: and with that view he endeavours to be “fruitful,” not in some good works only, but “in every good work,” however difficult or self-denying.

Suited to these dispositions was the Apostle’s prayer: he desired for the Colossians what he knew they desired for themselves, even “that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.” And it is certain, that in proportion as we have attained a just knowledge of God’s will, we shall desire, both for ourselves and others, an increase of righteousness and true holiness.]

## III. In the enjoyment of his presence—

[“The knowledge of God” seems to be different from “the knowledge of his will,” that has been before mentioned: the former relates to a view of his truth, and the latter to the enjoyment of his presence. In this sense the latter is not a mere repetition, but a blessing intimately connected with a holy life. Whom will God meet, and unto whom will he reveal himself, but “him that rejoiceth in working righteousness<sup>a</sup>?” Yes; there are manifestations which such persons shall receive, and such manifestations as the world can form no idea of<sup>b</sup>. God will “shed abroad his love in the hearts” of his

<sup>a</sup> Isai. lxiv. 5.

<sup>b</sup> John xiv. 21, 23.



people; and will testify to them their adoption into his family, and seal them unto the day of redemption. How desirable is this for every saint! and how rich a recompence is it for any self-denial he may exercise in the path of duty! Would to God that all professing Christians might experience this; and that not a single day might ever pass, in which they cannot say with the beloved Disciple, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ<sup>c</sup>!"

#### IV. In submission to his dispensations—

[The more any person lives in the enjoyment of God, and a diligent performance of his will, the more must he expect to be hated and persecuted by an ungodly world. But under all his trials he must be "patient:" to whatever length of time they be protracted, he must be "long-suffering:" nor must he merely possess his soul in patience; he must have it blended "with joyfulness," regarding it as his honour and his happiness that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his Redeemer's sake<sup>d</sup>. But "who is sufficient for these things?" It is not possible for feeble man to maintain such a conduct, unless he be "strengthened with all might" by the Holy Ghost: yea, there must be such an exertion of omnipotence as will serve for a bright display of "his glorious power;" nor can any thing less than this effect so great a work.

Here then again we see the suitableness of the Apostle's prayer: for if we cannot serve the Lord without participating his cross, or sustain by our own power the trials that will come upon us, what alternative remains, but either to abandon our profession, or to implore such help from God as shall make us more than conquerors over all?]

#### V. In thankfulness to him for his mercies—

[There can be no state, however afflictive, in which a Christian ought not to abound in thanksgivings to God. The Israelites, to whom he divided Canaan by lot, were unspeakably indebted to him: but how are *they* indebted, to whom he has given an "inheritance among the saints in light;" even in heaven, where they dwell in the immediate presence of their God! For this they are rendered "meet;" (for it is impossible that they can enjoy it, if they possess not a meetness for it:) their heavenly Father has "delivered them from the power of darkness," even as he did Lot from Sodom, and the Israelites from Egypt, with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm: he has moreover "translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son," and brought them into a cheerful and unreserved obedience to his will. Must not *they* then

<sup>c</sup> 1 John i. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Acts v. 41.



give glory to their God? What if they be burning at the stake, ought they not to rejoice that God has rescued them from hell, and that they are entering on a state of uninterrupted everlasting happiness?

Surely no Christian should rest short of this attainment: but we should all unite in wrestling with our God, till he pour out his Spirit upon us, and form us to the model which was here proposed for the Colossian converts.]

INFER—

### 1. How glorious are the Christian's privileges!

[Did the Apostle incessantly ask of God what God was not willing to bestow? No; "if we opened our mouth wide, he would fill it;" and all these graces should abound in us, to the praise and glory of our God. What then must the Christian be, in whom these things are found! O believer, aim not at low things; but aspire after the highest measures of wisdom, purity, and joy.]

### 2. How dependent are we upon our God!

[It is not at our first commencement only of a religious course that we depend on God, but to the latest hour of our lives. We can have no knowledge, holiness, or joy, but as we receive it from him. Let us then make our requests known to him, and depend on him for all seasonable supplies of grace and strength.]

### 3. How great is the benefit of intercession!

[We certainly are not sufficiently apprised of this. But when we recollect the intercessions of Abraham for Sodom, of Lot for Zoar, of Moses for Israel, how can we be so remiss in this duty! Let us incessantly plead for each other, knowing that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.]

## MMCLXVIII. 2168

### THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

Col. i. 16—18. *By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*

THE pre-eminence he *must* have: the pre-eminence he *shall* have: his title to it is indisputable: and it is at the peril of our souls to withhold it from him. Do you ask, Of whom we speak thus? I answer, Of the Lord Jesus Christ; of whom the Apostles evidently thought that they could never speak enough. Let the Apostle Paul but touch upon his name, and he launches forth in his praise, and scarcely knows when to stop. Mark the passage before us. The Apostle had informed the Colossians what prayers and thanksgivings he daily poured forth before God, in their behalf. He especially praised God for “delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of his dear Son:” and having thus, accidentally as it were, mentioned the Lord Jesus, he goes on to expatiate on his transcendent excellencies, not only as the Redeemer of his people, but as “the image of the invisible God, and the first-born (that is, the Heir and Lord) of the whole creation.” And, lest it should be thought that he was speaking too highly of the despised and persecuted Jesus, he proceeds yet further to establish his claim to these high titles, by declaring what he had done for the world at large, and for the Church in particular; and that the pre-eminence thus given him was no more than his due.

In opening to you this sublime passage, I shall be led to shew,

I. On what grounds pre-eminence is due to Christ—

In all things he must take the lead. This priority is due to him, on account of,

1. His personal dignity—

[He, though born into the world a little infant, after that the world had existed four thousand years, was the Creator of all, the Preserver of all, the End of all. “By Him were all things created,” both in heaven and earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers. Whether they be “visible,” as the heavenly bodies and the earth, with the things upon it; or whether they be “invisible,” as the holy angels and the souls of men; he formed them all: whatever rank or order they possess in their respective spheres,

(for it seems that in heaven, as well as on earth and in hell, there are beings of different ranks and orders,) from his creating hand they have derived their existence, and from his sovereign will their station. Nor is there any thing in the whole creation which is not upheld by him. He directs the stars in their orbits, and causes the sun and moon to know their appointed seasons. The smallest insect too, which is so small as to be invisible to the naked eye, is as much noticed and supplied by him, as if it were the only work of his hands. For himself too, as the supreme God, he made these things: and all of them, whether wittingly or unwittingly, subserve his glory. If we could suppose that God had delegated to him the work of creating every thing, and of upholding it in its order, (though, as he was the Creator of *all* things, he could not be himself a creature,) still it would be impossible for God to devolve on him the honour of being the *end* of all things: *that* is incapable of being communicated to any creature: it is the prerogative of God alone: nor could he divest himself of it, without giving a licence to his creatures to alienate from him the most essential rights of Godhead.

Behold, then, the Lord Jesus Christ, in this his personal dignity, as the author and end of all; and then say, whether he be not entitled to a pre-eminence above all? The highest archangel has no such claims. In respect of these things, he is on a level with the meanest clod of earth; and must unite with all the rest of the creation in giving glory to our blessed Lord.]

## 2. His official excellency—

[In his mediatorial capacity he is no less glorious. He is “the Head of the Church, which is his body:” he is the *Head of vital influence*, from which every member receives his supply of grace; and he is the *Head and Representative* of all his members, who at this very moment “are risen, as it were, in him, and sitting in heavenly places in him<sup>a</sup>.” This I conceive is meant by his being “the beginning, the first-born from the dead.” It is true that he existed before all; and that he was the most distinguished amongst those who have risen from the dead; having raised himself by his own power, whilst all others have owed their restoration to life to the miraculous exertion of God’s power. But, as he is called “the first-born of the whole creation,” not because he was himself created, but because the rights of the first-born all centred in him, and he was, as mediator, the *Heir and Lord* of all<sup>b</sup>; so his being called “the beginning, the first-born from the dead,” imports, that in his risen state the rights of primo-

<sup>a</sup> Eph. ii. 6.

<sup>b</sup> Heb. i. 2.



geniture still attach to him; and that he is, in heaven, the Head and Representative of all his members, who, in due time, shall participate the glory which he there enjoys. This is what the Apostle elsewhere distinctly states; saying, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become *the first-fruits of them that slept*<sup>c</sup>."

Consider him, then, in this his mediatorial character; and say, whether he does not in this view, also, justly claim the pre-eminence? To him are all in heaven, and all on earth, indebted for their happiness; even as the moon and stars, no less than this terrestrial globe, are indebted to the sun for all the light which they enjoy. The angels around the throne, no less than ourselves, are all collected under him as their Head<sup>d</sup>; and, through his all-powerful aid, retain the blessedness, of which we, in due season, are destined to participate. Yes, in heaven, at least, is he glorified as he ought to be; for "in that celestial city the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof<sup>e</sup>."

But as, in ascribing pre-eminence to him, we must be active, let us consider,

## II. In what way and manner it should be assigned him—

It is not sufficient that we "call him, Lord, Lord:" we must honour him, "not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." We must give him the pre-eminence,

### 1. In our regards—

[Go up to heaven, and see how he is honoured there. There is he "as a Lamb that has been slain;" and there, "as a Lamb, he sits upon his throne;" and all the hosts of heaven, those who never fell, no less than those he has redeemed, are singing day and night, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing<sup>f</sup>." Now, thus it should be on earth. We should be so filled with views of his excellency, and so penetrated with a sense of his love, that the whole creation should be a mere blank in comparison of him. Parents, children, life itself, should be of no account, where his honour is concerned. What the Psalmist said, should be the continual language of our hearts, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee<sup>g</sup>." As for the poor things of time and sense, we should

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20.

<sup>d</sup> Eph. i. 10.

<sup>e</sup> Rev. xxi. 23.

<sup>f</sup> Rev. v. 11—13.

<sup>g</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 25.

be ashamed that they have ever been suffered to occupy one single thought, except in subserviency to him. In a word, the Lord Jesus should be to us now, what he will be in a better world—our light, our life, our joy, our All.]

## 2. In our affiance—

[As God, who created all things, he is able, and, as our living Head, who is interested in our welfare, he is willing, to do all that our utmost necessities can require. Stretch your imagination to the uttermost; and think whether there be any guilt too deep for his blood to expiate, or any corruption too inveterate for his Spirit to subdue. To limit him, either in relation to his power or his grace, or to rely on any other besides him, were to deny his Godhead, and to cast him down from his mediatorial throne. Our whole soul should go forth to him; our every want be cast on him: and fear, except that which is truly filial, should be dismissed, and find no more place in our bosoms than it does in heaven. O, the holy glorying that becomes us! Rise to the occasion, my beloved brethren; and rest assured, that he who created and preserves the universe can new-create and preserve you; and he who redeemed the Church with his blood, and united it to himself as his own body, can redeem, and sanctify, and save, yea, “save to the very uttermost, all those who come unto God by him.”]

## 3. In our services—

[That was an unanswerable appeal which was made to the Jewish rulers, “Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye<sup>h</sup>.” We should know no rule of conduct but his revealed will: nor, in the execution of his will, is there any limit to be assigned. If we had a thousand lives, they should all be devoted to him: nor, if we could die a thousand deaths, should they be accounted too much to be endured for him. “His love should constrain us,” and carry us away as a mighty torrent in his service. It is said of the angels in heaven, that “they do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word<sup>i</sup>,” and so should it be with us: the very first intimation of his will should call into activity our utmost powers: nor should we ever rest, till we can say of the work committed to us, “It is finished.”]

Suffer ye now, brethren, a word of EXHORTATION—

1. Contemplate the excellency of your incarnate God—

<sup>h</sup> Acts iv. 19. and v. 29.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. ciii. 20.

[Survey the heavens, with all the diversified and stupendous bodies contained in them: and inspect the minutest insect, which nothing but the greatest magnifying power can render visible: and see, both in the one and in the other, his creating hand, and his preserving power. Then say with yourselves, 'The Maker of all these things is my Friend, my Beloved, yea, my very Head, one with me; not merely as a subject is one with his political head, the king, but as any member of my body is with my own head. Not any powers which I myself possess are more used for the good of my own members, than all the powers of this Saviour are for me. For me he became incarnate: for me he died upon the cross: for me he rose, and ascended up where he was before: for me he orders every thing in heaven and earth: for me "he has prepared a place" in the mansions of his Father: and for me is he shortly coming again, to "take me to himself, that where he is I may be also.'" Shall I cease for a moment to think of him? Shall any thing for a moment stand in competition with him? My dear brethren, let him have the pre-eminence: let him be seated on the throne of your hearts: let every Dagon fall before him: and let him "be all your salvation and all your desire."]

## 2. Awake to the performance of your duties towards him—

[Are you not ashamed that this adorable Saviour has held so low a place in your esteem, that even the most contemptible things that can be imagined have had a pre-eminence above him? There is not a base lust which has not more power to sway you, than love to him, or zeal for his glory. There is not a vanity which you have not more desired, nor an object whom you have not more feared, nor a device you have not more relied upon, than he. Would you not have thought it impossible, that a Being so glorious in himself, and so gracious unto you, should ever be so despised by you, as he has been? O! humble yourselves before him; and now set yourselves with all diligence to honour and to glorify his name. Let it no longer be a doubt, either in your own minds or in the minds of any that behold you, who has the pre-eminence in your souls. Give yourselves wholly to him: live altogether for him: let your daily and hourly inquiry be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In short, endeavour to begin the life of heaven whilst you are yet upon earth. When once you are there, "you will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth<sup>k</sup>." Follow him now: follow the footsteps which he trod on earth: follow him, in your affections, to the

<sup>k</sup> Rev. xiv. 4.



highest heavens<sup>1</sup>: and look forward to the time when he, who has ascended as your Forerunner, shall come again to take you to himself, and “seat you with him upon his throne, as he sitteth on his Father’s throne.”]

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 1, 2.

## MMCLXIX. 2169

### THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

IT is scarcely possible to read with attention the Epistles of St. Paul, and not to be struck with the energetic manner in which he expatiates on the glory and excellency of Christ, not merely when he professedly treats of his work and offices, but oftentimes when he only incidentally, as it were, makes mention of his name. We notice this particularly in the passage before us, where he puts forth all the powers of language to exalt his character to the uttermost.

Confining our attention to the expression in the text, we shall shew,

I. What is that fulness which resides in Christ—

There is in him,

1. An essential fulness—

[Christ, though apparently a mere man, was the first cause and last end of all things, even “God over all, blessed for ever<sup>a</sup>.” His people are said to be “filled with all the fulness of God<sup>b</sup>,” but “in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead<sup>c</sup>.” Men are made to enjoy all the gifts and graces of God’s Spirit; and, in this sense, are “partakers of the Divine nature<sup>d</sup>,” but Christ was really “God manifest in the flesh<sup>e</sup>.” The Godhead dwelt in him, not symbolically as in the temple<sup>f</sup>, or spiritually as in us<sup>g</sup>, but truly, “bodily<sup>h</sup>,” substantially. The fulness of the Godhead was essentially his from all eternity; nor was he any more dependent on the Father than the Father was on him: but his assumption of our nature was the result of the Father’s counsels, and the fruit of the Father’s love<sup>i</sup>.]

<sup>a</sup> ver. 16. with Rom. ix. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. iii. 19.

<sup>c</sup> Col. ii. 9. in this place it is not Θεοῦ, but Θεότητος.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Pet. i. 4.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16. John i. 1, 14.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. lxxx. 1.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 16.

<sup>h</sup> σωματικῶς, Col. ii. 9.

<sup>i</sup> John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 10.



## 2. A communicative fulness—

[He has a *fulness of merit to justify the most ungodly*. Christ, by his obedience unto death, perfected whatever was necessary for the restoring of us to the Divine favour. His atonement was satisfactory; his righteousness was complete. Under the Mosaic law, there were many sins for which no sacrifice was provided: but the one sacrifice of Christ was all-sufficient; and “*all who believe in him, are justified from all things<sup>k</sup>:*” his “*righteousness shall be unto them, and upon them all<sup>l</sup>:*” and, however great their iniquities have been, they shall be without spot or blemish in the sight of God<sup>m</sup>.

He has also a *fulness of grace to sanctify the most polluted*. With him was “*the residue of the Spirit<sup>n</sup>.*” The oil that was poured out upon him was to descend to the meanest of his members<sup>o</sup>. “*He was constituted Head over the Church, that he might fill all things<sup>p</sup>:*” and he received gifts on purpose that he might bestow them on the rebellious<sup>q</sup>. His grace is still sufficient to support us in all temptation<sup>r</sup>, and to sanctify us throughout in body, soul, and spirit<sup>s</sup>. No lusts are so inveterate as eventually to withstand its influence<sup>t</sup>; nor is any heart so vile but it shall be “*purged by him from all its filthiness, and from all its idols<sup>u</sup>.*”]

It will not be presumptuous, or unprofitable, if we inquire,

## II. Why it pleased the Father that all fulness should reside in Christ?

Many reasons might be mentioned; but the principal of them may be comprehended under the two following:

## 1. For the honour of his own Son—

[As Jesus was to become a sacrifice for us, it was meet that he should have all the honour of our salvation. Accordingly we are told, that God exalted him on purpose that at his name every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess him to be the sovereign Lord of all<sup>x</sup>. By this appointment of Christ to be the head of vital influence to the Church, all are necessitated to come to him, and to “*receive out of his fulness<sup>y</sup>,*” and to live by faith upon him from day to day<sup>z</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> Acts xiii. 39.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. iii. 22.

<sup>m</sup> Eph. v. 27.

<sup>n</sup> Mal. ii. 15.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

<sup>p</sup> Eph. i. 22, 23. and iv. 10.

<sup>q</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 18.

<sup>r</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

<sup>t</sup> Luke viii. 2.

<sup>u</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

<sup>x</sup> Phil. ii. 9—11.

<sup>y</sup> John i. 16.

<sup>z</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

All are necessitated to depend on him for a constant communication of grace and peace, as much as to depend on the sun for the periodical returns of light and heat. Hence, both on earth and in heaven<sup>a</sup>, all are constrained to give him all the glory of their salvation. No one can ascribe any thing to his own goodness; seeing that all are cleansed in the blood of Christ, and arrayed in the spotless robe of his righteousness<sup>b</sup>: nor can any glory in his own strength; since no one has any sufficiency in himself even to think a good thought<sup>c</sup>; and much less to renew his own soul. The merit that justifies, and the grace that sanctifies, are all of him: “*he is ALL, and IN ALL<sup>d</sup>:*” and he is made ALL unto us, *on purpose* that all may be compelled to glory in him alone<sup>e</sup>.]

## 2. For the security of our souls—

[There never was but one man to whom a stock was entrusted; and he soon (if we may so speak) became a bankrupt. And if *we* had grace committed to us in such a manner as to be left wholly to ourselves for the improvement of it, we should lose it again, as he did. For our more abundant security therefore the Father treasured up all fulness in his Son; that, however our broken cisterns might fail, there might be an inexhaustible fountain secured to us. In this view we are reminded, that “God has laid help upon One that is mighty<sup>f</sup>;” and that “because he liveth we shall live also<sup>g</sup>.”

We are further told by the Apostle, that this appointment of Christ to be our head, with the consequent necessity of living by faith on him, and of receiving out of his fulness, was ordained of God on purpose that the promises might be finally secured to all the seed<sup>h</sup>; and he himself declares, that this very constitution of things was the one ground of his assurance respecting the salvation of his soul: “Our life is hid with Christ in God: and (therefore) when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory<sup>i</sup>.”]

This passage, duly considered, **SHEWS** us clearly,

### 1. The excellency of faith—

[How can we receive any thing from Christ except by faith? No other method can be conceived whereby we can obtain any thing at his hands. But faith interests us in all that he has done and suffered for us, and in all that he has received to communicate unto us. It is that whereby alone we can “draw water out of the wells of salvation:” it is that,

<sup>a</sup> Gal. vi. 14. Rev. v. 12, 13.

<sup>b</sup> Isai. lxi. 10.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 5.

<sup>d</sup> Col. iii. 11.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 19.

<sup>g</sup> John xiv. 19.

<sup>h</sup> Rom. iv. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Col. iii. 3, 4.

in the exercise of which we may be “filled with all the fulness of God.” Let all of us then cultivate this precious grace, and, as the best means of receiving every other blessing, let us pray with the Apostles, “Lord, increase our faith.”]

### 2. The evil of self-righteousness—

[Self-righteousness is a practical denial of the assertion in our text. It refuses to Christ the honour put upon him by the Father, and ascribes to *self* that which belongs to him alone. And shall it be thought a small evil to rob Christ of his glory? Shall it appear a light matter to thwart the eternal counsels of the Father, and to set ourselves in direct opposition to his blessed will? Let none henceforth suppose, that the trusting in our own wisdom, righteousness, or strength, is a venial offence: for surely God will be jealous for his own honour, and the honour of his dear Son; and will look with scorn on every proud Pharisee, while he will receive with boundless compassion the vilest of repenting publicans.]

### 3. The true nature of evangelical piety—

[Vital godliness, especially under the Christian dispensation, consists in a conformity of mind to the revealed will of our heavenly Father. Now in no respect is that will more sacred than in reference to the glory designed for Christ; nor is there any thing wherein a conformity to it is more characteristic of true and eminent piety. In one word then, the true Christian is well pleased that all fulness should dwell in Christ: if he might have some fulness in himself, he would rather have it in Christ, that he might receive all from him. Every part of salvation is the more endeared to him, on account of its coming through that channel: and it is his supreme felicity in this world, as it will be also in the world to come, to owe every thing to that adorable Saviour, and to glorify him in all, and for all.

Beloved, let this be your daily experience. Let it be your delight to live upon Christ's fulness; and it shall be his delight to communicate to you all spiritual and eternal blessings.]

## MMCLXX. 2170

### SANCTIFICATION THE END OF REDEMPTION.

Col. i. 21—23. *You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.*



OF all the subjects that can occupy the human mind, there is not one so great and glorious as that of redemption through the incarnation and death of God's only-begotten Son. It is that which occupies incessantly the heavenly hosts; and which the Apostle Paul, whatever be his more immediate subject of discourse, reverts to on every occasion: and when he has, however incidentally, touched upon it, he scarcely knows how, or when, to leave it. This very strongly appears in the passage now before us. Having in the beginning of this chapter thanked God for bringing the Colossians to the knowledge of his Gospel, and informed them what were the peculiar blessings which in his daily prayers he sought for in their behalf, and what thanksgivings he constantly offered up, especially for that which they had experienced in being "translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," he launches forth into the praises of the Lord Jesus Christ for all that he had done in the creation, preservation, and redemption of the world, and particularly for his redeeming love, as manifested to, and exercised upon, the Colossian converts. But, as they were converts from the Gentile world, we may fitly consider his address to them as delivered also to us; and may take occasion from it to shew,

### I. What the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us—

#### 1. Our state was awful in the extreme—

["We were alienated from God, and enemies to him in our mind by wicked works." This is no less true of us than of the idolatrous Gentiles: for though by calling ourselves Christians we have professed a regard for God and his Christ, we have not really sought our happiness in God: we have not even desired his favour, or used any means to obtain it. We have been contented to live at a distance from him, to put the very remembrance of him far from us, and to seek our happiness in things which had no proper tendency to endear either him to us, or us to him. However observant we may have been of outward forms, we have had no pleasure in communion with him. The exercises of prayer and praise have rather been an irksome task, than occupations in which we found our chief delight. And if at any time we have had opportunities

of becoming better acquainted with God and with his holy will, we have not been forward to avail ourselves of them: and if instruction on the subject of his Gospel has been proffered to us, we have rather turned away from it, as distasteful to us, than listened to it as pleasing to our souls. The very light which would have revealed him to us, has been offensive to us; and we have turned our eyes from it, as bringing to our view an object, whose presence was to us a source of pain.

Nor is this all. We have been "enemies to him;" yea, "enemies to him in our mind:" we have had a decided aversion to his law: instead of contemplating it as "holy, just, and good," we have viewed it as imposing a yoke that could not be endured. And this hatred to it has been proved by our actual rebellion against it: our "wicked works" have shewn clearly enough that the service of sin was more congenial with our minds than the service of our God. As for all the sublime duties which it inculcates, we have lived in a wilful neglect of them: and of innumerable evils which it forbids, we have lived in the daily and habitual commission — — — Such had been the state of the Colossians in their time of unregeneracy; and such is the state of every child of man, till he is renewed by God in the spirit of his mind.]

2. But the Lord Jesus Christ has interposed to deliver us from it—

["He has reconciled us to God in the body of his flesh through death." Yes: the Son of God himself has left the bosom of his Father, and assumed our flesh, that in the very nature which had sinned he might bear the penalty that was due to sin, and expiate our guilt by his own blood. The sacrifices under the law were substituted in the place of the offender, and they surrendered up their life as an atonement for his sins: and through the death of the victim in his stead, the sinner was reconciled unto his God. So the Lord Jesus Christ has offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; and effected reconciliation for all who believe in him. No longer does God look with anger upon his enemies, when with penitential sorrow they implore mercy for Christ's sake. Not one of their trespasses will he ever impute to them: their iniquities, how great or numerous soever they may have been, are "blotted out by him as a morning cloud," and "cast behind his back into the very depths of the sea." This we are authorized to declare: for "God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation," and commanded us to proclaim to the whole universe, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them<sup>a</sup>."] ]

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

But, that we may not be deceived by a partial view of this mystery I will pass on from what he has done, to shew,

## II. What was his ultimate design in doing it—

Whatever compassion the Lord Jesus felt for our fallen race, and however desirous he was to deliver us from destruction, he had other objects in view, that were not a whit less dear to him, and without which indeed his dying for us could never have prevailed to make us happy.

The restoration of our souls to the Divine image was in his more immediate contemplation—

Man by the Fall was despoiled of holiness, as well as happiness; and without a restoration to the former, could never repossess the latter. Indeed God could never re-admit him to his presence: nor could he, if admitted into heaven, find any satisfaction in the sight of a holy God, or any pleasure in the employments which constitute the felicity of the heavenly hosts. To restore man therefore to the image which he had lost, was one great end of Christ's incarnation and death; as St. Paul has said, "He gave himself for us to redeem us" not from punishment merely, but "from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works<sup>b</sup>." In another passage the Apostle comes more immediately to the point, and says, "Christ has loved his Church, and given himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish<sup>c</sup>." This passage shews, that the expressions in my text relate not to our justification before God, but to the *sanctification* of our souls; to which Christ has had a view in all that he has done and suffered for us.]

And this he will effect for all whom he reconciles to God—

[He will impart of his Spirit to the soul: he will strengthen the soul for all its conflicts: he will enable all his people to "mortify their earthly members," and to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts:" nor will he ever cease to work in them, till he has transformed them into his own image, and can "present them unblameable and unreprouceable in the sight of God." We are not indeed to suppose that he

<sup>b</sup> Tit. ii. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Eph. v. 25—27.



will so renew them as to render them perfectly sinless; for the flesh will continue to lust against the Spirit, as well as the Spirit against the flesh, to the latest hour of our lives<sup>d</sup>: but he will so make the spiritual principle triumphant in the soul, as to leave in us no *allowed* sin, and so that he may present us to God as “Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile.”]

In this, however, there must be the concurrence and co-operation of the believer himself; as will appear whilst I shew,

III. What is necessary to be done on our part, in order to secure the blessings which he has obtained for us—

Those who are addicted to system would alter the translation here, and read it, not, “*if* ye continue,” but “*since* ye continue.” But this is only one instance of many, wherein the advocates for human systems betray their determination to make every thing bend to their views. The translators of our Scriptures would indulge no such unhallowed partiality. They would in no case wrest the Scriptures to make them favour a party in the Church. They maintained a child-like simplicity; and with scrupulous fidelity laboured to transmit to us the Scriptures in a perfect agreement with the inspired original. Of the propriety of the translation in this place I have no doubt: it is the very language of the Scriptures, in a thousand other places as well as this; and it speaks to us a most important truth, namely, that we never can be presented blameless before God at last, unless we continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

1. It was by faith that we first obtained an interest in Christ—

[It would have been to no purpose that Christ had died to reconcile us to God, if we had not on our part believed in him as our Mediator and Redeemer. The unbelieving world who die in their sins, are rather plunged the deeper into perdition, than delivered from it, by the intervention of Christ. Their rejection of him has aggravated their guilt exceedingly:

<sup>d</sup> Gal. v. 17.



and the word preached to them in his name, will be “a savour of death unto all, to whom it is not a savour of life.” The receiving of him into our hearts by faith, put us into possession of all the blessings which he had purchased for us.]

2. By the continued exercise of the same faith we must ultimately secure the harvest of which we have reaped the first-fruits—

[“As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we must walk in him<sup>e</sup>.” We must “continue in the faith grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel.” It is a fact, that many do make shipwreck of the faith. The Scriptures abound with instances of it: and we also shall feel many temptations, both from without and from within, to follow their sad example. Like the stony-ground hearers, we may through the influence of persecution “fall away:” or, as in the case of the thorny-ground hearers, the good seed in us may be so choked by the cares and pleasures of this life, as to “bring forth no fruit to perfection.” And, from whatever source the defection arises, “if we turn back, we turn back unto perdition,” and “God’s soul shall have no pleasure in us.” Would we then be “presented faultless before the presence of God’s glory with exceeding joy<sup>f</sup>?” we must hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: we must be more and more “grounded” in the faith by a constant exercise of it on every occasion: we must be so firmly “settled” in it, that a man may as well attempt to pluck the sun from the firmament, as to shake either our faith or hope. This is the way to “endure unto the end;” and it is in this way only that we can fulfil that salutary injunction, “Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward<sup>g</sup>.”]

ADDRESS—

1. Are there any who are here yet unreconciled to God?

[O! think what a mercy it is that God’s wrath has not broken forth against you to your utter and everlasting destruction! Think how many of the human race are now suffering the penalty due to their sins in hopeless sorrows, and in torments of which we have no conception. Do not, I entreat you, let the efforts made for your salvation be in vain. Let not “Christ have died in vain;” and “receive not the grace of God in vain:” but “to-day, whilst it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, lest you provoke God to swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest.”]

<sup>e</sup> Col. ii. 6, 7.

<sup>f</sup> Jude, ver. 24.

<sup>g</sup> 2 John, ver. 8.

2. Are there here those whom God has reconciled to himself?

[How can you ever adore him as you ought to do? Can you reflect on the means he has used for your redemption; can you reflect on his laying your iniquities on the person of his only dear Son, and not bless him? The wonder is, how you can find a moment for any other employment; and that you are not, like the lame man whom Peter and John healed, leaping, and dancing, and praising God every day and all the day long.

But, if this were the frame of your mind, I should still point you to a more excellent way of glorifying your heavenly Benefactor. You have seen that the Lord Jesus, in dying for you, sought "to present you to God holy, and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight:" let his object then in redeeming you be the one object at which you shall aim through the remainder of your lives. And remember, that it is not sufficient that you be unblameable and unreprouable *before men*; you must be so "in the sight of God" also, even of that "God who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins." Let your secret walk with God be such as he will approve. Let your every temper, and disposition, and habit, mark the friendship that subsists between God and you. And let every day be so spent, as if at the close of it you expected your soul to be required of you, and to be presented by your Saviour to your reconciled God.]

MMCLXXI. 2171

CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY.

Col. i. 27. *Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

THE Gospel is a "mystery;" "the riches" of which are unsearchable, and "the glory" incomprehensible. But the sum and substance of it is contained in few words: it is briefly this; "Christ in us, the hope of glory." In the margin of our Bibles it is translated, "Christ *among* us, the hope of glory;" and each of these translations has its zealous advocates: but we may easily and properly comprehend both, by saying, that Christ is the hope of glory to us,

I. As revealed in the Scriptures—

The way to the tree of life is guarded by a flaming sword and there is no access to it for fallen man,

but by Christ, as the appointed Mediator. He, as St. Paul says, “is our hope<sup>a</sup>,” and through him there is hope for all: through him,

1. As a dying Saviour—

[It is he who has made atonement for our sins, and “reconciled us to God by the blood of his cross.” Through his vicarious sacrifice every sinner in the universe may come to God; seeing that “he is a propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” However great the debt which we owe to Divine justice, we may regard it all as paid by our Divine Surety; and may assure ourselves, that, if we believe in Christ, “there neither is, nor ever shall be, any condemnation to us” — — —]

2. As a living Saviour—

[It is worthy of particular observation, that in the Holy Scriptures a greater stress is laid upon the life of Christ in glory, than upon his death upon the cross. St. Peter speaks of him as *our hope*, in this particular view: “God *raised him up, and gave him glory*, that our faith and hope might be in God<sup>b</sup>.” St. Paul, too, represents the life of Christ as more efficacious for our salvation than his death: “Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, *rather*, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us<sup>c</sup>.” And still more forcibly, he says in another place, “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<sup>d</sup>.” In heaven we view the Lord Jesus as our advocate with the Father, maintaining continually our peace with him; when we, by our innumerable departures from him, should entirely destroy all our hope of final acceptance with him. We view Him, also, as the one source of all spiritual blessings, the first cause of all the good that is in us, the protector of his people from all their enemies, and “the finisher” of the work of which he has been “the author.” It is from this view of him that the weakest of his people is enabled to say, “Because he lives, I shall live also” — — —]

But he is our hope yet more especially,

II. As dwelling in the heart—

All that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us would be in vain, if he did not also work effectually in us. But this he does,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. i. 1.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. viii. 34.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. i. 21.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. v. 10.



## 1. Purifying our hearts from sin—

[Our blessed Lord is said to “dwell in us<sup>e</sup>,” and to be “one with us, even as he and his Father are one<sup>f</sup>.” Now it is a fact, that his people are universally, and without exception, holy. And whence comes this? Is it from any power of their own? No; it is from the mighty working of his power in us: as the Apostle says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me<sup>g</sup>.” Were we “separate from him, we could do nothing<sup>h</sup>,” but, through the mighty working of his power in us, we “die unto sin and live unto righteousness,” and attain a meetness for our heavenly inheritance.]

## 2. Transforming us into his blessed image—

[This, after all, is the crowning work of redemption. Till this is effected, we may well stand in doubt both of ourselves and others. St. Paul, addressing the Galatian converts, says, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again *until Christ be formed in you*, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for *I stand in doubt of you*<sup>i</sup>.” To say the truth, till this is effected, nothing is done to any good purpose. It is not Christ on the cross, nor Christ in heaven, no, nor Christ in the heart, that will save us, unless his image be there formed in righteousness and true holiness. This is strongly declared by the Apostle Paul, in the third chapter of this epistle; where he says, “Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ (that is, *the image of Christ*) is all, and in all<sup>k</sup>.” But, when this great work is wrought, we need not fear: we may entertain a well-founded hope; yea, we may have “a full assurance of hope,” that, “where he is, there we shall be also;” and that, “when He, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory<sup>l</sup>.”]

## ADDRESS—

## 1. Those who are deluding themselves with false hopes—

[There is not any one who does not conceive himself entitled to indulge a hope of happiness hereafter. But, to entertain any such hope without having received the Lord

<sup>e</sup> Eph. iii. 17.<sup>f</sup> John xvii. 21, 23.<sup>g</sup> Gal. ii. 20.<sup>h</sup> John xv. 5.<sup>i</sup> Gal. iv. 19, 20.<sup>k</sup> Col. iii. 10, 11.<sup>l</sup> Col. iii. 4.

Jesus Christ into our hearts by faith, is a fatal delusion. For the Apostle says, that they who are "without Christ" are also without hope<sup>m</sup>." You will ask, Do I wish to drive you to despair? Yes, I do; so far, at least, as to drive you out of all false refuges, and to lead you to Him who is the only Saviour of the world: and I must declare unto you, that, whatever you lay as a foundation of hope, besides that which God himself has laid, you only deceive your own souls: for "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ<sup>n</sup>." Christ is the only refuge of fallen man: nor can you have a scriptural hope of glory, till you have "fled to him, and laid hold on him<sup>o</sup>," and got his image enstamped upon your souls.]

2. Those who have a "good hope through grace"—

["Let your union with Christ be more and more confirmed, becoming daily more intimate and more abiding. It is by this that the work of grace must be carried on, and perfected within you. It is by this that the justness of your hopes must be made to appear: for "every one that has a good hope in Christ will purify himself as Christ is pure," and be progressively "changed into his image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In proportion as this work advances, your hopes may well increase: and if this work decline within you, your evidences will be the less clear, and your hope be less assured. Press forward, then, for the highest possible conformity to the Saviour's image; that you may already breathe, as it were, the atmosphere of heaven, and live in the constant anticipation of your future inheritance.]

<sup>m</sup> Eph. ii. 12.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. vi. 18.

MMCLXXII.

2172

PREACHING CHRIST.

Col. i. 28. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

THE mystery of the Gospel was first made known to Adam in Paradise: but in process of time the real scope of it was forgotten; and nothing of it remained but the rites whereby it was shadowed forth. To Abraham a plainer revelation of it was given; and to Moses, a complete system of types, which were to illustrate the Gospel in all its parts. Still, however,

the views which men had of it were obscure: the design of the ceremonial law itself was very imperfectly understood; and the idea of all men being saved through the crucifixion of the incarnate Deity, was almost as new to the Jews, in the apostolic age, as to the heathens themselves. Hence St. Paul speaks of it as “hid from all preceding ages and generations,” and as then for the first time “manifested to the saints.” That the memory of it might continue to the end of time, and its benefits be universally diffused, our blessed Lord appointed an order of men, whose sole business should be to spread the knowledge of it throughout the world. Amongst these St. Paul was a very distinguished instrument. He both laboured more abundantly, and suffered more severely, than any other of the Apostles.

In our text we see,

#### I. The ministrations of this great Apostle—

He specifies distinctly, first of all, the *subject* of his ministrations—

[This, as he tells us in the words preceding our text, was Christ in us the hope of glory. The words might be translated, “Christ *among*<sup>a</sup> you the hope of glory.” But whether we change, or retain, the present translation, we are sure that the death of Christ, as an atonement for sin, was that which he chiefly insisted on. He expressly tells us so in another place<sup>b</sup>, and declares that he had fully “determined to know and preach nothing else<sup>c</sup>.”

This he affirmed to be the only hope of sinful man: that it was that which made satisfaction to divine justice, and procured our reconciliation with his offended Father<sup>d</sup>: that nothing could be added to it to render it more effectual<sup>e</sup>: and that if ever we attained to happiness and glory, it must be entirely through the merit of his all-atoning sacrifice<sup>f</sup>. But though the sufficiency of the death of Christ for our salvation was the principal subject of the Apostle’s preaching, yet the in-dwelling of Christ in the soul by his blessed Spirit was necessarily connected with it; and the two points together formed the sum and substance of all his ministrations. He

<sup>a</sup> ἐν is so translated, a few words before, “*among* the Gentiles.”

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.

<sup>d</sup> ver. 21, 22.

<sup>e</sup> Gal. v. 2, 4.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.



often speaks of Christ "dwelling in us<sup>g</sup>," and "living in us<sup>h</sup>," and "being our life<sup>i</sup>;" and in the text he says, that "Christ *in* us is the hope of glory."

The necessity of this he urged with as much care and earnestness as the atonement itself: because without Christ we could do nothing<sup>k</sup>, yea, we must continue reprobates<sup>l</sup>, and for ever destitute of any interest in his salvation<sup>m</sup>.]

He next mentions the *manner* in which he conducted them—

[He left nothing undone which could promote the reception of the Gospel: he "warned every man:" he was faithful to the trust reposed in him; and, without either courting the favour of men or fearing their displeasure, he boldly commended himself to the consciences of all. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, he persuaded men<sup>n</sup>. He told them freely of their lost estate, and their utter incapacity to help themselves. He set before them the provision which God had made for them in Christ Jesus; and in the most pointed terms assured them, that "if they neglected that great salvation, they could never escape" the wrath of God<sup>o</sup>. If any, yea if even an angel from heaven should attempt to substitute another Gospel, or alter in any respect that which he had preached to them, he did not hesitate to pronounce them accursed<sup>p</sup>. Nor had he any respect of persons. When preaching before kings, he spake so plainly as to make them tremble on their throne<sup>q</sup>: and when addressing those who professed godliness, he warned them frequently with tears, that carnal and worldly-minded Christians, whatever they might profess, were "enemies of the cross of Christ; and that their end would be destruction<sup>r</sup>." He also "taught every man in all wisdom." Being himself instructed beyond any of the sons of men, he laboured to impart what he had so freely received, and to make known to his hearers "the whole counsel of God." Yet in this he exercised discretion. He administered milk to babes, and strong meat to those only who were able to digest it<sup>s</sup>. As, on the one hand, he accommodated himself to the infirmities of the weak, so, on the other hand, he "withheld nothing that could be profitable" to the strong<sup>t</sup>. As far as he could with a good conscience, "he became all things to all men, that by all means he might save some<sup>u</sup>."

<sup>g</sup> Eph. iii. 17.

<sup>h</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>i</sup> Col. iii. 4.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 5.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Cor. v. 11.

<sup>o</sup> Heb. ii. 3. and 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

<sup>p</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xxiv. 25.

<sup>r</sup> Phil. iii. 18, 19.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2. Heb. v. 13, 14.

<sup>t</sup> Acts xx. 20.

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 19—22.



Hence it appears with how much justice he called himself “a wise master-builder<sup>x</sup> :” indeed the whole of his ministrations prove him to have been “a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth<sup>y</sup>.”]

He further declares the *scope* or end at which he continually aimed—

[The Apostle considered himself to be nearly in the situation of Abraham’s servant, who was sent out to procure a wife for Isaac<sup>z</sup>: and, like him he laboured to accomplish his mission in the best and most successful manner<sup>a</sup>. He wished to present all, whether Jews or Gentiles, perfect in Christ Jesus.]

He wished to present them perfect in his righteousness. All who believe in Christ are freely justified from all their sins<sup>b</sup>. They are clothed in the unspotted robe of Christ’s righteousness, and are “presented faultless before the presence of the Father’s glory<sup>c</sup>.” Whatever iniquities may have been committed by them in their former life, they are all “blotted out as a morning cloud, and cast into the depths of the sea.” From the moment that they believe in Jesus, they are perfectly reconciled to God; they are “accepted in the Beloved<sup>d</sup>,” and are “complete in him<sup>e</sup>.”

He sought to present them also perfect through his grace. This was the end at which our blessed Lord aimed in dying for sinners<sup>f</sup>: and the very same was the Apostle’s end in preaching to them. He would not have his converts to continue in a low state of holiness, but to attain the fullest conformity to the Divine image: he would have them to “be holy, even as He which had called them was holy<sup>g</sup>.” This is the more usual acceptation of the term “perfect” in the sacred volume: it means that growth which Christians in general may be expected to attain: it imports maturity, in opposition to infantine weakness. And so anxious was the Apostle to bring his converts to this state, that he continued “travailing, as it were, in birth with them,” till it was fully accomplished: and this was the true reason of his so often “changing his voice” towards them<sup>h</sup> in a way of consolation or reproof.]

From hence we see unquestionably,

II. The line which mutually becomes us in the relation in which we stand—

<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 10.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 2.

<sup>d</sup> Eph. i. 6.

<sup>f</sup> ver. 22.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Acts xiii. 39.

<sup>e</sup> Col. ii. 10. and Rev. iii. 18. middle clause.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

<sup>z</sup> Gen. xxiv. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Jude, ver. 24.

<sup>h</sup> Gal. iv. 19, 20.

## 1. Me, as your minister—

[St. Paul is doubtless the best model for a Christian minister; and, consequently, *he* is most likely to labour with effect who follows him in *the subject, the manner, and the scope* of his ministrations. What then becomes *me* but to be a follower of him in these respects? God helping me, this is what I have endeavoured to be, and hope to continue even to the end. I must know nothing but Christ, and him crucified; I must warn or comfort men with all faithfulness; I must not relax my labours as long as I can have access to one who is not yet presented perfect in Christ Jesus; and I must regard the turning of many unto righteousness as the best and richest reward of all my labours — — —]

## 2. You, my stated hearers—

[The preaching of Christ is generally called enthusiasm: the warning of men respecting their guilt is deemed harshness: the labouring to instruct men is ascribed to an officious impertinence, or ostentatious vanity, or perhaps designing hypocrisy. A solicitude to bring men to a state of spiritual perfection is reckoned, I had almost said, among the most unpardonable of crimes; insomuch, that the drunkard, the whoremonger, and adulterer, shall meet with more favour from the world at large, than a faithful, diligent, conscientious minister. But if we revere the person and ministry of Paul, we ought also to honour those who resemble him; and to concur with them to the uttermost, by a submission to their rebukes, a following of their instructions, and an entire devoting of ourselves to the service and enjoyment of God. We should have the same end in hearing which they have in preaching to us; we should not be satisfied with any low attainment, but desire and labour to be “perfect in Christ Jesus.” This is what, through the tender mercy of my God, I have long experienced at your hands; and this is what I pray God I may ever see in you, as long as our mutual relation shall subsist, and till we be summoned to give an account of ourselves at the judgment-seat of Christ.]

Let me however both “teach and warn” you. The time is shortly coming when I must present you all before God, either as having answered the end of my ministrations, and as having attained perfection in Christ, or as having disregarded and defeated all my efforts for your salvation. The Lord grant that I may not in that day prove “a swift witness against you,” but may have you as “my joy and crown of rejoicing” to all eternity.]

## MMCLXXIII. 2173

## MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL TO BE SEARCHED OUT.

Col. ii. 1, 2. *I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*

NOTHING is more odious than a boasting spirit. Yet are there occasions on which it may be proper for a minister to declare to his people the greatness of his affection for them, and of his solicitude in their behalf. St. Paul, than whom no man was ever further from indulging this hateful spirit, judged it right, in almost all his epistles, to assure his converts of his remembrance of them night and day in prayer; and of his willingness to impart to them, not the Gospel only, but even his own soul, because they were dear to him<sup>a</sup>. This tended to beget in them a reciprocal affection, and to open their ears to his instructions; and, at the same time to commend to them the Gospel, which had generated in his heart these feelings towards them. True it is, indeed, that he abounded in love far beyond any ministers of the present day: but still every faithful minister may, without pride or arrogance, adopt towards his people the language of our text, and say, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have in my soul for you."

That we may enter fully into the Apostle's words, I will shew you,

I. What he desired in behalf of the Colossian Church—

His object was, "that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus<sup>b</sup>." With this view, he sought,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Thess. i. 2, 3. ii. 7, 8. and iii. 9, 10.

<sup>b</sup> Col. i. 28.



1. To bring them to a clear knowledge of the Gospel of Christ—

[The Gospel is here called a mystery, even “the mystery of God:” and throughout all his writings he designates it as a great stupendous mystery. It is the mystery of God, *even* of the Father, and of Christ. It must be viewed as from all eternity concerted between the Father and the Son in the covenant of redemption; wherein the Father agreed to accept the mediation of his Son, in behalf of man; and the Son agreed to assume our nature, and to bear our sins, and to work out a righteousness for us by his own obedience unto death; and so to watch over those whom the Father gave him, that they might all, without exception, attain to everlasting life<sup>c</sup>.

Now all this he would have them “understand;” and not in a mere superficial way, but with such “a full assurance” as should leave not a doubt upon their mind either of its truth or excellency. In it are “riches” that are utterly unsearchable: riches *of wisdom*, which no finite mind can comprehend: riches *of love*, which can never be explored: riches *of mercy*, which eternity will never suffice to celebrate. He would have them see how harmoniously all the divine perfections unite in this mystery, and how wonderfully they are glorified. In a word, he would have them see in it a salvation so worthy of God, and so suited to man, as to carry with it, independently of all other considerations, a satisfactory evidence of its divine origin, and a pledge of the happiness of all who embrace it.

Now this is precisely what every pious minister wishes, and labours to accomplish. Those who are themselves ignorant of this mystery will be satisfied with some loose general statement about Christ, if they do not leave him out altogether. But not so the man who is taught of God: he will endeavour to exhibit to his people all the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ<sup>d</sup>: and he never will rest, till God has shined into their hearts, to give them a clear, a rich, an assured knowledge of it.]

2. To bring them to an open “acknowledgment” of it—

[“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness: but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation<sup>e</sup>.” Whatever we may know of this mystery, it will be ineffectual for eternal happiness, if we do not confess Christ openly before men. He will never acknowledge those who are afraid to

<sup>c</sup> John xvii. 2, 6, 9—12. with 22—24.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 6.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. x. 10.

acknowledge him ; but will surely “ deny them in the presence of his Father and of his holy angels.” Hence St. Paul laboured to effect this also ; even to impress their minds so deeply with this mystery, that they might rejoice and glory in it, and be willing to bear all the sufferings that could ever be inflicted on them for their adherence to it.

And for this we also would labour. Against a timid concealment of men’s convictions we would bear the most decided testimony. We know, indeed, that a confession of Christ before men will bring persecution with it. But if any man be unwilling to bear his cross after Christ, or even to lay down his life for his sake, we declare that he is not, nor can ever be, accepted of him. “ If he love father or mother more than Christ, he cannot be Christ’s disciple :” “ if he love his own life,” so as to save it here, “ he shall assuredly lose it” to all eternity. Amongst those for whom a place is prepared in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, “ the fearful and unbelieving ” are no less numbered, than those who have been guilty of idolatry or murder<sup>f</sup>. “ If we would approve ourselves the servants of Christ, we must not only bear our cross after him, but rejoice that we are accounted worthy to suffer shame, or even death, for his sake.” “ We must be faithful unto death, if ever we would obtain the crown of life.”]

3. To bring them to an union of heart with each other, by means of it—

[“ Knowledge,” were it as great as that of angels, would be of no value, without love. Nor would zeal itself, even though it led us to endure the flames of martyrdom for Christ’s sake, be accepted of our God, if it were destitute of love. An union of heart amongst the disciples of our Lord is that by which, in a pre-eminent degree, they are to be distinguished. By love they are to be “ knit together ;” even as beams of timber, when joined and compacted by the builder of an edifice. In the whole universe, there exists no other bond like this. The ties of nature are feeble, when compared with it. It resembles, as far as any thing can resemble, the union that subsists between the Persons of the Godhead : and by it, more than by any thing else, is the power of religion displayed. “ I pray for them,” says our Lord, “ that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may know that thou hast sent me<sup>g</sup>.” This, then, the Apostle sought : and this would we seek : nor would we ever be satisfied, till we see it attained and exercised amongst you.]

<sup>f</sup> Rev. xxi. 8.

<sup>g</sup> John xvii. 20, 21.

Having seen what the Apostle desired for them, we will proceed to shew,

## II. Why with such intensity he desired it—

In the close of the preceding chapter he speaks of “labouring and *striving*” according to the working of the Holy Spirit, who wrought in him mightily. The word, before translated “striving,” he here repeats; conveying to us, thereby, the idea that he exerted himself, for the attainment of these things, with such a kind of “conflict” as wrestlers, racers, or fighters, maintained in the Grecian games. His whole heart and soul were engaged in behalf of all his Christian brethren, whether personally known to himself or not, that these great things might be accomplished in them. And for this end he laboured,

### 1. Because these things were essential to their comfort—

[In truth, there is no happiness in religion, unless it have its perfect work within us. A superficial and general view of the Gospel calls forth no admiring and adoring thoughts: nor does it gender in the soul those ardent affections which bind together the members of Christ’s mystical body, and make every one of them ready to “lay down his life for the brethren<sup>h</sup>.” But when all the riches of the Gospel are opened to our view, and the incomprehensible mystery of redemption, in all its inscrutable provisions, in its execution at the appointed period, in the mode of its application to the soul, and in all its stupendous consequences, is unfolded to us, so that we can behold our own interest in it, and are enabled to bear witness to it before an ignorant and ungodly world—what is all this, but heaven already begun in the soul? The glorified saints around the throne have no higher sources of joy than these, no higher theme of praise: and they are only happier than we, because their discovery of these things is more complete, and they are freed from all those infirmities which, in our present state, interrupt our enjoyment of them. To this I may add: when the soul, by virtue of this mystery, is filled with love, even with such love as Christ himself bears to his saints, such love as is the very image of God within us—this is happiness: the man that lives in the exercise of this

<sup>h</sup> 1 John iii. 16.



divine principle breathes a purer atmosphere than others; and can say, "This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven."

Now the Apostle was anxious that "the hearts" of all his brethren "might be thus comforted." And what *more* can I wish for you? or rather I should say, what *less* than this should satisfy my desires in your behalf? Brethren, this is the state in which I would have you live: this is the comfort which I would have you all enjoy. And for this end it is, that from time to time I endeavour to unfold the mysteries of the Gospel, and to encourage amongst you that communion of saints which is a foretaste of heaven upon earth.]

2. Because, by nothing short of this could the full ends of his ministry be attained—

[A parent would not be satisfied if his children continued year after year in a state of infantine weakness: he would desire to see their stature increased, and their faculties enlarged. Thus the Apostle felt, in behalf of all his spiritual children. He longed that they might "grow up into Christ in all things, as their living Head;" daily increasing in the knowledge of God, daily brought into closer communion with him, daily assimilated more and more to his blessed image.

And this is what we would desire in your behalf. We are thankful when "your understandings are opened in any measure to understand the Scriptures;" and, from being blind, you are able to see, though it be only "men, as trees, walking." But we cannot be satisfied with this: no; we would "put our hands on your eyes again," till you should "be restored, so as to see every man clearly<sup>i</sup>." In truth, whether in respect of faith or love, we never would rest satisfied, till you have attained "the full measure of the stature of Christ." We would never cease to labour, till we have "perfected that which is lacking in your faith<sup>k</sup>," and till we see you "standing perfect and complete in all the will of God<sup>l</sup>."]

BEHOLD, then <sup>m</sup>,

1. What you should desire for yourselves—

["Who will shew us any good?" says the Psalmist: and then adds, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us<sup>n</sup>!" Truly, there is nothing in the universe worthy of

<sup>i</sup> Mark viii. 24, 25.      <sup>k</sup> 1 Thess. iii. 10.      <sup>l</sup> Col. iv. 12.

<sup>m</sup> If this were a subject at an *Ordination* or a *Visitation*, it would be proper to insert here a distinct observation to this effect;—behold what course we ministers are bound to pursue — — —

<sup>n</sup> Ps. iv. 6.

a thought in comparison of this. What can worldly knowledge do for you, in comparison of the knowledge of Christ? or what can the fondest endearments of mere human affection do, in comparison of the love that is divine? If St. Paul's judgment may be taken, he "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." And this is the mind which I would wish to be in you. This, beloved, is your duty: this is your privilege. O! beg of God, that you may rise to this. Be not satisfied with low attainments, when such prospects are before you. You see what exertions men make for the attainment of knowledge, and the acquisition of honour: and will ye be less earnest in the pursuit of heavenly things? In a contest for earthly honours, you might feel discouraged by a consciousness of your inferiority in point of talent and capacity: but no such discouragement need be felt by any one in the conflict to which I call you. The very babe and suckling stands on a level with the wise and prudent; or rather, is raised above him, in proportion to his docility, and his willing submission to the truth of God. It is the *heart*, and not the *head*, that is the seat of divine knowledge, and the region of love. I pray you, brethren, let these things become the objects of your ambition, and never account any labour too great for the attainment of them.]

## 2. With what ardour you should seek after them—

[You have seen "what great conflict" your minister, if faithful, will have for you, in relation to these things: and will ye feel less for yourselves? Go, look at those who are engaged in the race, the wrestling, the combat; do you not see how they put forth their energies? Have they any disposition to look about them, or any time to relax their efforts? Yet is the object of their contest light in comparison of yours, and the consequence of a failure unworthy of a thought. Come, brethren, and be in earnest. Study the sacred volume: study it with much and fervent prayer: entreat of God to reveal his dear Son in your hearts: implore the Holy Spirit to "guide you into all truth:" and see to it, that you "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Thus will you have in yourselves an evidence of the Gospel, which no human learning can give you; and conviction of its excellency, which nothing but experience can impart.]

## MMCLXXIV. 2174

## THE FULNESS THAT IS IN CHRIST.

Col. ii. 3. *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

“WISDOM,” we are told, “is the principal thing ; and therefore we should get wisdom.” In all civilized countries, wisdom has been held in the highest repute : and institutions have been set on foot for the cultivation of it. How highly it was esteemed amongst our ancestors, we may judge from the provision which they made for the education of youth in all succeeding ages. Not that the establishments in this seat of learning were intended merely to reward those who distinguished themselves by early attainments : they were designed to give them also an opportunity of bestowing an undivided attention to literature and science throughout the remainder of their days : and if they be not improved for this end, the fault is not in the institutions themselves, but in those who have been admitted into them. We can have seen but little of the world, if we have not noticed the superiority which a cultivated mind possesses over one that is rude and uninstructed. And though it must be granted, that human learning will not change and sanctify the heart, yet we assert, that it will give a very great advantage for the understanding and explaining of the Holy Scriptures.

We say not that God *could* not, or *did* not, make use of weak and unlettered men for the diffusion of his Gospel : but, as he selected Moses, a man “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” for the instruction and government of the Jewish Church, so he selected Paul, who had “been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel,” to be his messenger of grace to the Gentile world : and, if he was pleased so to adapt the instrument to the work in that age of miracles, much more is such a qualification desirable for his chosen servants, now that miracles have ceased. We must



not however forget, that the Scriptures are the fountain of true wisdom. We should ever bear in mind, that the heathen sages, though wiser than their contemporaries, were deplorably ignorant in comparison of those who live under the Christian dispensation : and even the light which some of the most learned amongst them possessed, was most probably obtained, either immediately or remotely, from the inspired volume. There, and there alone, is true wisdom to be found ; and therein are contained “ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

To open and unfold these to you, is an employment worthy of the occasion on which we are assembled<sup>a</sup>.

St. Paul in my text is expressing his ardent desire in behalf of the Christians at Colosse, whom he had never seen, that they might be fully instructed in the great mystery of the Gospel of Christ, “ in *whom*, he observes, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;” but, in the margin, the word mystery is considered as the antecedent ; and the translation is, “ *wherein* ;” *i. e.* “ in *which* mystery are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;” and this we consider as the better rendering, though the sense will amount to nearly the same either way.

In illustration of these words we shall,

I. Open to you these treasures of wisdom and knowledge—

II. Commend them to your diligent pursuit—

I. We are to open to you these treasures of wisdom and knowledge—

But “ who is sufficient for such ” an undertaking ? Who can enter on such a task, without a fear, not only that he shall betray his own ignorance, and disappoint your expectations, but that he may even expose the Gospel itself to contempt ? Indeed, if I were capable of doing justice to my subject, such is

<sup>a</sup> Preached as a *Commemoration Sermon* in King’s College Chapel, Cambridge.

the impatience of modern auditories, that I could not have time to do more than merely open to you the casket, and give you a superficial view of its contents : but feeling how incompetent I am to unfold all the hidden mysteries of the Gospel, I must entreat you to make up for my deficiencies by your candour ; and to be contented with treasuring up for your benefit what you do hear, when you cannot be gratified with all that you would wish to hear.

There are three points to which I will call your attention ; and which may give you some little idea, that the subject, however unworthily handled by me, is at least deserving of the deepest investigation. The points I refer to are at all events such as the most enlightened heathens had no idea of ; namely, *The real state of man—The eternal counsels of God concerning him—and the stupendous effects produced by those counsels.* Let these things be for a while considered by us.

*The real state of man* was altogether unknown to the heathen world. That he was a weak, guilty, and polluted creature, they knew ; but how weak, how guilty, how polluted, they had no conception ; much less did they know how he was brought into such a state. It is from the inspired volume alone that we learn the perfection of his original nature, and the loss of that perfection through the fall of his first parents. From thence alone do we learn that obvious truth, that we “cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean.” Behold then, at the very onset, what a stupendous mystery is here ! that we died in Adam ! that “those who have never sinned after the similitude of his transgression,” are yet partakers both of his guilt and corruption ! that we are “born in iniquity, and conceived in sin,” and are “by nature children of wrath !”

To this I beg your particular attention, because it is the very foundation of all spiritual knowledge ; it is the very threshold, by stumbling at which, multitudes are kept from ever entering into the deep recesses of the Gospel. You cannot but know, that

men in general, and even learned divines, endeavour to soften down the Scripture declarations of man's guilt and misery : some deny that we are fallen at all ; and assert that we come into the world as pure as Adam did from his Creator's hands. Others allow that we are fallen, but deny that we are involved in the guilt of our first parents, or that the corruption which we inherit from them is any thing more than what we have an innate power to subdue. They think that the descriptions given of us in the inspired volume are not to be taken in a literal sense ; and that to say that we are "*dead* in trespasses and sins," is only a metaphor, importing that we are not quite so much alive to God and holiness as we ought to be.

And now mark how entirely such sentiments obstruct the way to true wisdom and knowledge : man being in so good a state, there was no occasion for the counsels of the Most High to suggest a method of deliverance from it : a way of deliverance was obvious enough : there was no necessity for God himself to become incarnate, and to expiate the sins of men by his own blood ; (man might be saved without any such sacrifice :) there was no need that the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity should undertake to dwell in the hearts of men, to enlighten their minds, to draw them unto Christ, to renew their nature, and to make them meet for heaven ; (man of himself, by the aid of his own reason and resolution, was sufficient for these things :) the obligations conferred upon us by this work of redemption are not such as to call for all the powers of our souls to be consecrated to God in the way of holy obedience ; (such a life is needless, enthusiastic, and absurd :) in a word, there is no great cause for alarm to any of us ; for we are all in the way to heaven ; and when we get there, shall have no great wonders to celebrate, but only to thank God for that which he could not justly or consistently have withheld. Yes, brethren, *this* it is which obstructs the entrance of light into the souls of men : *this* it is which makes every



one suppose that he understands the Gospel well enough: *this* it is that leads men to deride all idea of mystery, and to reduce the Gospel to a system of heathen ethics. *This view of our state by nature supercedes all occasion for the Gospel*; every part of which supposes man to be a *guilty, polluted, helpless* creature; so *guilty*, that he deserves the everlasting wrath of God; so *polluted*, that he must be made an entire new creature before he can have any enjoyment of God, either now or in the eternal world<sup>b</sup>; and so weak, that he cannot of himself either do a good act, or think a good thought<sup>c</sup>: and I do not hesitate to affirm, that the very first step towards true wisdom and knowledge is, to renounce all idea of our being “rich and increased in goods, and in need of nothing;” and to confess, from our inmost souls, that we are “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

Next, let us contemplate *the counsels of the Most High respecting man*. From all eternity, God foresaw the state to which the human race would be reduced, and concerted with his only dear Son how to effect their recovery. The Father proposed to his Son to become our Surety and Substitute; to assume our nature; to bear our sins; to expiate our guilt; to fulfil the law which we had broken, and to satisfy the justice which we had offended; and thus to restore us to happiness, without dishonouring God as the Moral Governor of the universe. The Son accepts the proposal, and undertakes to accomplish the redemption of a ruined world<sup>d</sup>: and the Holy Spirit also undertakes to impart to the souls of the redeemed all that the Lord Jesus should purchase for them<sup>e</sup>. To these counsels the Apostle also constantly refers,

<sup>b</sup> John iii. 3.                    <sup>c</sup> John xv. 5. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. ii. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Isai. xlix. 6. and liii. 4, 5, 10, 11.

<sup>e</sup> See the account given us of this in Ps. xl. 6—8. “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.”

as the true source of our redemption: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory<sup>f</sup>:" and he declares that the manifestation of them to the world under the Christian dispensation was eminently committed to him, and was to be a source of knowledge, not to men only, but to the angels themselves: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches* of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of this mystery, which *from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God*, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, *according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*<sup>g</sup>."

Behold then here what treasures of wisdom and knowledge are unfolded to us! We see the veil torn away from before our eyes, and the Sacred Three sitting, as it were, in council, to provide for man's recovery, myriads of ages before his fall: we behold the Father proposing to lay our iniquities on his only-begotten Son; his Son accepting the office of our Substitute; and the Holy Spirit engaging to render those mysterious plans effectual for the salvation of man! Can we see nothing wonderful in all this? Does not this "love surpass all knowledge," and all conception? Is there not in it "a length, and breadth, and depth, and height" that can never be explored? Yes; and hence St. Paul speaks of "riches of glory" as contained in this mystery<sup>h</sup>; and, in reference even to a subordinate part of it only, exclaims, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out<sup>i</sup>!"

Let us now pass on to *the effects of these counsels*, and see whether they also do not unfold the most stupendous mysteries.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 7.

<sup>g</sup> Eph. iii. 8—11. See also Col. i. 26, 27.

<sup>h</sup> Col. i. 27.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. xi. 33.

From these counsels results all *the work of Christ*. He in due time left the bosom of his Father, took our nature, was born of a pure virgin, fulfilled the law, offered himself a sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended up to heaven to carry on and perfect the work which he began on earth. Think of all this as *necessary* for our salvation: think of it as *concerted from eternity*, and executed in time, and *at this very moment accomplishing* by means of his continual intercession at the right hand of God: Is there nothing wonderful in all this?

From these counsels also results *the salvation of man*. Not a human being to whom the Gospel comes is ever saved, but by virtue of this work which Christ wrought out for him: and by means of this the vilest of the human race are saved. Those who seek an interest in this Saviour are accepted of him, even though they may have committed sins of a scarlet or crimson die: but they "who, going about to establish their own righteousness, will not submit to the righteousness of God," are rejected; and the very Saviour who would have been a sanctuary to them, becomes a rock of offence, over which they fall to their eternal ruin. Here is a plain way of salvation for all. In vain do men dispute about the efficacy of their own good works to save them: here is a door; and they who will enter in by it are saved; and those who obstinately stand without, perish. The very builders of the ark themselves perished, because they did not enter into it: and so will all who do not flee for refuge to this hope that is set before them. Is this wisdom, or this knowledge of small value?

Further, from these counsels results *the glory of God himself*. It is in this way alone that God is, or can be glorified, by any child of man. If man were saved in any other way, every one of the Divine perfections would be dishonoured. What evidence would there be that God is *holy*, if he suffered his laws to be violated with impunity? What would become of all the rights of *justice*, if no sacrifice were offered for



sin? How could the *truth* of God be preserved, if his threatenings were not executed, either against the sinner himself, or against one who should be substituted in his place? Men speak of God's mercy as if that was the only attribute to be displayed, and as if it was of no consequence whether his other attributes were honoured or not: but God will not suffer one of his attributes to be exalted at the expense of all the rest: and therefore has he opened for us a way of salvation whereby all might be displayed and all be glorified. Not only is mercy now exalted, but justice too; and *that*, not only in the condemnation, but in the salvation also of sinful man: nor is it a whit less glorified in the salvation of a penitent believer, than it is in the condemnation of the impenitent, and unbelieving. Is here then no mystery? are here no treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Verily the angels themselves are made wiser by the revelation of them to the Church; and they are justly represented as "desiring daily to look into them," in order that their admiration of God may be augmented, and their felicity increased.

We have been constrained to speak only summarily on these points; but enough has been said to shew, that in this subject there are treasures which will amply repay the most laborious investigation.

We proceed, therefore,

## II. To commend these treasures to your most diligent pursuit—

Much as we revere human knowledge, we must declare, that, in comparison of that which we have been considering, the wisdom of philosophers is of no account: for this knowledge is at once the *most sublime*, the *most certain*, the *most attainable*, the *most useful*.

What is there so *sublime* as this? We grant that many human sciences, and astronomy in particular, are very sublime; and appear to be out of the reach of mortal man: but it is well known that philosophy, in many of its branches, was carried to as high, if

not a much higher pitch among the unenlightened heathen, than amongst ourselves. But who amongst the heathen could ever find out God? Who could ever dive into his counsels? Who could account for the actual state of things as they existed in the world? Who could tell how a sinful man might be accepted of his God? Truly, "the world by wisdom knew not God:" this knowledge was "too wonderful and excellent" for unassisted reason to explore: nor can we, even with the Bible in our hands, attain it, unless God by his Spirit open the eyes of our understanding, and shine into our hearts to give it us. We are expressly told, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for us;" and the things there spoken of are those which are revealed to us in the Gospel. It is not of heaven that the Apostle speaks, but of the Gospel, and the mysteries contained in it. These are the things which are called in Scripture τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the wonderful works of God<sup>k</sup>." And they are "the things of the Spirit, which the natural man cannot receive, nor even know, because they are spiritually discerned." Well therefore may we covet knowledge which was "hid in God from the foundation of the world," which the wisest philosophers could never attain, which even the learned among ourselves cannot possess, unless God himself be their teacher, and "open their understandings to understand it."

In point of *certainty*, there is nothing that can be compared with it. There are indeed in it many things which we cannot comprehend: but there is much known, and known on the authority of God himself. Most other knowledge is involved in doubt and obscurity; insomuch that hypotheses which have been established for ages, have yet been overthrown by the penetration of a Copernicus or a Newton: but the truth of God is unchangeable; and whether viewed in the promise to Adam, or in subsequent

<sup>k</sup> Acts ii. 11.

prophecies, or in the types and shadows of the law, or in the fuller revelation of the Gospel, is ever the same; nor can all the subtilty of men or devils invalidate so much as one single point. Indeed, though received on the credit of the inspired writers, it so commends itself to the believer, as to approve to him its divine origin, as soon as ever it is received into his heart: he there finds a counterpart of every truth he has received, and "hath the witness in himself" that it is indeed from God. Now one great discouragement in the pursuit of human knowledge is, that after having laboured for many years, we know not but that we may, after all, be found wrong, in things which we deemed of considerable moment. But here, we never need to fear a disappointment: God's word, like himself, abideth for ever; nor shall one jot or tittle of it ever fail.

Nor is there any other so *attainable*. Thousands have not ability to investigate the depths of human science: if they should bestow ever so much labour, for ever so long a time, it would be in vain. But not so the knowledge of the Gospel: for though it is so deep, that no man by the efforts of unassisted reason can enter into it, yet it is so easy of acquisition, that "he who runs may read and understand it." If God "open our eyes, we shall see wondrous things out of his law:" if he shine into our hearts, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall be seen by us. The qualification for this knowledge consists, not so much in the head, as in the heart: "God opened the *heart* of Lydia to attend to the things that were spoken by Paul." Here then every one is encouraged to pursue it: for "none teacheth like God:" he can "ordain strength in the mouth of babes and sucklings." I grant indeed that it is a "hidden knowledge;" it is "a treasure hid" in a field. But it is revealed *to* us in the word, and shall be revealed *in* us by the Spirit, if we desire to be taught of him. The promise is, "All thy children shall be taught of God:" and, if only we obtain his teaching, we shall "be guided into all truth;" nor



shall "a way-faring man, though a fool, be left to err therein."

Lastly, What can be compared with it in point of *utility*? We deny not but that knowledge of various kinds is replete with benefit to man: but *that* benefit is bounded by this world, and the present state of things. Not so the knowledge of which we are speaking: that extends to the eternal world: in the knowledge of God and of Christ, are all our hopes centered. By this we are *justified*: as it is said, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." By it also we are *sanctified*: as it is said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." By it also we shall be *exalted to glory*; for it is said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." What is there then that can be compared with this? Will earthly knowledge save you? If you could travel the whole round of science, and grasp in your mind all that ever was comprehended by human intellect, would it pacify a guilty conscience? Would it take away the sting of death? Would it enable you to look forward with comfort to the eternal world? Would it prepare you to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, and to give up your account with joy? No; nothing can do this but the knowledge of God as reconciled to us in the Son of his love: this is the sole property of the Gospel, even of that Gospel which is so neglected and despised. If then you would view these things aright, you must study the Gospel, and "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord."

Must we then lay aside our earthly knowledge? you will ask. No; but you must get it sanctified by the Spirit of God. The spoils of the Midianites were consecrated to the Lord; but before they were suffered to be brought into his tabernacle, "every thing that would abide the fire, must pass through the fire; and whatsoever would not abide the fire, must be made to go through the water:" for then only could

they be an acceptable offering to him, when they were cleansed and purified from their corruption<sup>1</sup>. Thus also must your learning be sanctified: it must not be set in competition with the word of God, but be made subservient to it. Beware then lest it blind your eyes, and fill you with a conceit that you do not need to be taught of God: for what the Apostle says is alike applicable to the philosopher and the peasant, "If any man will be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." We must have the docility of "little children, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and if we will not humble ourselves in that manner, God has told us, that "he will take the wise in their own craftiness." In subserviency to the Gospel, your learning will be an invaluable blessing: but in opposition to it, it will prove a curse; for God will "confound the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Are we then desirous of attaining these heavenly treasures? Let us seek after them in the Holy Scriptures: and whilst we seek for knowledge as silver, and "search for it as for hid treasures, let us cry to God for it, and lift up our voice to him; since it is the Lord alone that giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding<sup>m</sup>." Let us beg of God to "give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from from the dead<sup>n</sup>." In this way we may hope to "acquaint ourselves with God," and to attain the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Then we may hope also to "shine as lights in a dark world," and "be as cities set upon

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxxi. 23, 54.    <sup>m</sup> Prov. ii. 1—6.    <sup>n</sup> Eph. i. 16—20.

a hill." Or, if our sphere be circumscribed within narrower limits, we shall at least have this benefit, that we are "made wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

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THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS.

Col. ii. 6, 7. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

THE greatest joy of a faithful minister is to see his people flourish. The Apostles were eminent examples to us in this respect<sup>a</sup>. St. Paul was as solicitous for the welfare of those whom he had only heard of by report, as for those who had been converted by his ministry<sup>b</sup>. Hence he took occasion from what they had attained to urge them on to increasing watchfulness and assiduity. Mark here,

I. The Christian's character—

Christ is the gift of God to man<sup>c</sup>. That gift the Christian has received—

[He has felt his need of it; he has implored of God to bestow it on him, and has received it for all the ends and purposes for which it has been conferred on sinful man — — — He has received Christ in all his offices, as "Christ Jesus, the Lord."]

He is the only person in the universe that has received it—

[Others regard it not: yea, they rather refuse it, and pour contempt upon it. They would rather earn salvation by some efforts of their own, than stand indebted for it to the free gift of God in Christ Jesus — — — But the Christian values nothing in comparison of it; and, in obtaining it, considers himself richer, than if the whole world were conferred

<sup>a</sup> St. Paul was no less comforted with the piety of some, 2 Cor. vii. 4. than he was grieved with the want of it in others, Rom. ix. 2. Gal. iv. 19. See also 3 John, ver. 4.

<sup>b</sup> ver. 1, 5.

<sup>c</sup> John iv. 10.



upon him — — — Let him only be able to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his," and he desires no more. In possessing Christ, he possesses all things<sup>d</sup>."] ]

In connexion however with this gift we must notice,

## II. His duty—

Privilege and duty are inseparable. Though we receive all from God as a free gift, we yet have duties to perform. If we have received Christ, we must "walk in him :"

### 1. In dependence on him—

["In Christ is every thing treasured up for us:" and "we must receive every thing out of his fulness." There must be no dependence whatever upon ourselves, but an entire reliance "on him for wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Our whole life must be one continued act of "faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us<sup>e</sup>."] ]

### 2. In conformity to him—

[As he is to us a source of all spiritual blessings, so is he unto us an example to which we must be conformed. His zeal for God must be transfused into our souls, and his love to man be copied in the whole of our intercourse with mankind<sup>f</sup>. If we profess to "abide in him, we must walk in all things as he walked<sup>g</sup>."] ]

But this duty is, in fact,

## III. His privilege—

The diversity of metaphors in this passage greatly enriches the subject, without at all distracting our minds. Our duty and our privilege are to walk in Christ,

### 1. Firmly—

[The use of a root is, not only to convey nourishment to the branches, but to keep the tree steadfast amidst all the storms and tempests by which it may be assailed. And we, so far from being cast down by all the storms that may assault us, must take occasion from them to shoot our roots more deeply into this divine soil, and to take more firm hold of him by whom alone we can be upheld.] ]

### 2. Progressively—

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

<sup>f</sup> John iv. 34. 1 John iii. 16.

<sup>e</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>g</sup> 1 John ii. 6

[The idea of walking necessarily imports progress, as does that of building also. Now, no man is content with laying a foundation: he will go on to build upon it a superstructure, till at last he has completed the edifice. Thus must we also do when we receive Christ into our souls: we must build upon him all our hopes, and never cease to increase in love to him, till we have attained that complete form and size, which the all-gracious Architect has ordained<sup>h</sup>.]

### 3. Triumphantly—

[Grounds for sorrow we shall have, no doubt, whilst this great work is carrying forward; but we shall have abundant cause also for praise and thanksgiving. Be it so; our trials are great both from within and from without. But can we reflect on the gift bestowed upon us, and not be thankful? or can we contemplate the blessings attached to that gift, and not be thankful? I say then, that “thanksgiving and the voice of melody” should be heard from us, every step we take, from the beginning of our course even to the end<sup>i</sup>.]

#### APPLICATION—

To you, even to every one amongst you, is offered this inestimable gift—

[They who have received this gift were once as destitute and unworthy as any of you: and there is not any one amongst you, however destitute and unworthy, but may be enriched with it, if only you cry unto your God, and seek the Saviour with your whole hearts<sup>k</sup>— — —]

If you possess it, see that you labour to walk worthy of it—

[Never imagine that privilege either is, or can be, unconnected with duty. Nor ever imagine your course of duty closed, till you shall have attained the full measure of that piety, which your union with Christ was ordained to convey.]

<sup>h</sup> Eph. ii. 20—22.

<sup>i</sup> Isai. li. 3.

<sup>k</sup> Isai. lv. 1—3.

Col. ii. 9. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

THE Church of Christ in the first ages was composed of Jews and Gentiles. Now, the Jews were at all times fond of their own superstitions, as the Gentiles were of the dogmas of philosophy: and the two,

meeting together upon one common ground, were ready to incorporate their respective peculiarities with the Gospel of Christ. To what extent this has been done in the Church of Rome, is well known. In truth, the whole system of the Catholics is little better than a mixture of heathen rites with Jewish superstitions. And those corruptions, which have prevailed to such an awful extent in the Church of Rome, began at a very early period to make their way into the house of God. Symptoms of an alarming nature had already appeared in the different Churches of Asia: and against them the Apostle put the Colossian converts on their guard; reminding them, that, whatever they might hope to add to Christ and his Gospel, their efforts would be in vain; since “in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” and, consequently, without any addition from the conceits of philosophy, or the traditions of Judaism, he was amply sufficient for the work assigned him, and was “able to save to the uttermost all that should come unto God by him.”

From this assertion of the Apostle, I shall take occasion to set before you,

### I. The doctrine of the Divinity of Christ—

It will be proper to consider it,

#### 1. As expressed in the text itself—

[There are some texts, which, to a superficial observer, bear somewhat of a similar aspect with that before us. For instance, it is said in this very epistle, “It hath pleased the Father, that in Christ should all fulness dwell<sup>a</sup>.” And, “Out of his fulness we are said to receive even grace for grace<sup>b</sup>.” There is yet a stronger expression in the Epistle to the Ephesians, wherein we are exhorted to contemplate the love of Christ, till we are “filled with all the fulness of God<sup>c</sup>.” nay, more: we are said ourselves to be “the fulness of Him who filleth all in all<sup>d</sup>.” From such Scriptures as these it is argued by many, that the fulness spoken of in my text is only a fulness of gifts committed to Christ for the use of his Church; and that we may as well assume to ourselves the character of

<sup>a</sup> Col. i. 19.

<sup>b</sup> John i. 16.

<sup>c</sup> Eph. iii. 18, 19.

<sup>d</sup> Eph. i. 23.



the Godhead, as give it to him; since we, no less than he, are said to be "filled with all the fulness of God." But, on a closer inspection, there will be found a wide difference between all the foregoing passages and our text. The fulness spoken of in the text is the fulness of "the Godhead;" residing in Christ, not symbolically, and for a season, as the Shechinah did in the tabernacle, but corporeally, substantially, permanently. There is no doubt a reference here to the Shechinah, which was a shadowy representation of the Deity. But the reference is rather in a way of contrast than of comparison: for, in my text, it is not *God* who is spoken of, and who is frequently said to dwell in his people, but the *Godhead*. Nor is Christ said to "*be filled*" with it, but to have it *essentially dwelling* in him; and *this*, not in a type or shadow, but really, vitally, necessarily, immutably: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Suppose, now, the Lord Jesus Christ to be truly and unquestionably *God*: suppose, too, it is God's purpose to make this known to us: then, I would ask, can we conceive of any words that would more clearly convey that truth than the language of my text? I must say, that if the words of my text do not clearly and decidedly declare the Godhead of Christ, no words whatever can express it. Nay, more; if Christ be not truly and properly God, the Apostle has done more, by his unguarded expressions, to lead us to idolatry, than all the most impious sophists in the universe could have done by their most ingenious arguments.]

## 2. As confirmed by other passages of Holy Writ—

[To enter fully into this subject, would embrace too large a field for one discourse. I shall therefore confine myself to a few passages only, which establish the Divinity of Christ in connexion with his humanity, And here let me call to your remembrance that prophecy of Isaiah, where it is said, "To us a child is born; to us a son is given: and his name shall be called, The Mighty God<sup>e</sup>." This is quite decisive upon the point. Again, in another part of the same prophecy, it is said, "A Virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son; and they shall call his name Emmanuel<sup>f</sup>;" which St. Matthew informs us, is "God with us<sup>g</sup>." In the New Testament, St. John, who seems to have been peculiarly attentive to this point, and, more than all the other inspired writers, anxious to impress it on our minds, says expressly, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us<sup>h</sup>." St. Paul also, to the same effect, says, "Great is the

<sup>e</sup> Isai. ix. 6.    <sup>f</sup> Isai. vii. 14.    <sup>g</sup> Matt. i. 23.    <sup>h</sup> John i. 14.

mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh<sup>i</sup>." What shall I say more? It is clear, that it was "God, who purchased the Church with his own blood<sup>k</sup>:" and that He who wrought out for us a righteousness wherein we are to be accepted before God, is Jehovah himself<sup>l</sup>. Know ye then, assuredly, that the glorious Person spoken of in my text was no other than our incarnate God, even "God over all, blessed for evermore<sup>m</sup>."]

The peculiar caution given by the Apostle, in relation to this doctrine, leads me to shew you,

II. The importance of it to the welfare of our souls—

"Beware," says the Apostle, "lest any man spoil or rob you, through philosophy and vain deceit." So will I say to you: "Beware, lest any deceiver rob you of your hope founded on the divinity of your Lord and Saviour:" for,

1. On that depends the efficacy of his atonement—

[Supposing the Lord Jesus Christ to have been a creature, how could he make atonement for sin, or work out a righteousness that should be imputable to us? He could do no more than what, by the law of his creation, he was bound to do; and, after having done it, he would have been only "an unprofitable servant." Supposing him to be capable of meriting any thing, he could have merited only for himself. If it be said, that the Divine appointment was sufficient to make his sufferings available for us also, I answer, that, according to that argument, the same value might as easily have been stamped on the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, if God had seen fit to do so. But the Apostle has said, that "it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins." And why not possible? If a Divine appointment were to stamp on one sacrifice a value which it possessed not, it might as well do so on another. But, if the impossibility arise from the inefficacy of a *creature's* blood, then it must attach to one creature as well as to another. For how remote soever two creatures may be asunder, their distance is but finite: whereas, to take away sin, the value of a sacrifice must be infinite: it must satisfy the demands of infinite justice, and entail upon the sinner all the blessings of infinite love and unbounded mercy. The divinity of our blessed Lord renders all this practicable to him. And it is this consideration which

<sup>i</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>l</sup> Jer. xxiii. 6.

<sup>k</sup> Acts xx. 28.

<sup>m</sup> Rom. ix. 5.

emboldens us to deliver our message to sinful men. We believe "that *God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" and therefore, "as ambassadors from God, we beseech men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God<sup>n</sup>."] ]

2. From that arises his ability to supply our every want—

[To Him is committed the entire government of his Church<sup>o</sup>. But if He be not God, we shall be in a state little better than the worshippers of Baal. It may be, that he is occupied about the concerns of some other person at the opposite side of the globe; and I must wait till he can hear me, and come to me, and help me: but, whilst he is delaying, I may perish. If he be a mere creature, he cannot be omnipresent, nor omniscient, nor omnipotent. These are the perfections, the incommunicable perfections, of Deity: and if he be not God, he does not possess them: and, if he possess them not, he cannot be sufficient for my wants. But he does possess them. He knows every want and every desire of my soul. "Unto Him all things, both in heaven and earth, are naked and opened:" and there can be no possible situation wherein "his grace shall not be sufficient for me<sup>p</sup>." "He is the true God; and therefore he is, and shall be, to me eternal life." ]

3. It is that which will give the chief zest to all our blessedness for evermore—

[If my sins were pardoned, though by a mere act of sovereign mercy, I should be happy any where. But when in heaven I contemplate every thing as the fruit of redeeming love, as procured for me through the blood and righteousness of my *incarnate God*; with what wonder must I be filled! I see now, why all the glorified saints fall upon their faces before God. They have reason to do so: they would be unworthy of a place in heaven, if they did not. How can they sing, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;" and remember, that He who so loved them was "King of kings and Lord of lords;" how can they sing thus, I say, and not be lost in wonder and amazement? And what are those hosannas which I hear offered to "God and to the Lamb?" What! is a creature joined in one common song of praise with the Creator? and that in heaven, too, in the very presence of the Deity? No; the Lamb is no other than our

<sup>n</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

<sup>o</sup> Eph. i. 22.

<sup>p</sup> 1 John v. 20.



incarnate God, "the first and the last, who lived, and was dead, and is alive for evermore<sup>9</sup>."

CONCLUSION—

1. Let this doctrine, then, be deeply fixed in your minds—

[Hold it not slightly and superficially; but acquaint yourselves with it, and with the irrefragable proofs whereby it is established. Those who are adverse to it, will bring forward passages which speak of him as inferior to the Father. But we must remember, that the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of under different characters in Scripture, as God, as man, and as Mediator between God and man. As God, he is altogether, in the highest sense, "one with the Father<sup>r</sup>." In the two latter characters he was inferior to the Father; and must, of course, be spoken of in that light. But these passages no more disprove his *divinity*, than the passages which speak of him as God disprove his *humanity*. Man himself is mortal, and immortal; mortal in his body, and immortal in his soul. Who ever thought of putting these in opposition to each other, and of making an affirmation of the one to be a denial of the other? Yet this is what is done by those who deny the divinity of our Lord. But be on your guard against them: and let neither men nor devils rob you of a truth so essential to your happiness both in time and in eternity.]

2. Let it make a suitable impression on your hearts—

[So astonishing is this truth, that it is a wonder we can ever think of any thing else. O, what prostration of soul is it calculated to produce! What admiring and adoring thoughts of God! What a zeal in his service! What a contempt of every thing that can come into competition with him! What boasting of him to our fellow-creatures! What commending of him to all! Verily, if we lived under a suitable impression of this truth, we should, as far as human infirmity would admit of it, resemble the very hosts around the throne. Let us, then, aspire after this experience. Let admiration, and love, and gratitude, and thanksgiving, occupy, as it were, our whole lives. And let us be looking forward to that blissful period, when we shall see him as we are seen; and "know him, even as we are known."]

<sup>9</sup> Rev. i. 17, 18.

<sup>r</sup> John x. 30.

## MMCLXXVII. 2177

## THE CHRISTIAN'S COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST.

Col. ii. 10—12. *Ye are complete in him, which is the Head of all principality and power : in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ : buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

MAN is prone to corrupt whatever proceeds from God. He himself came pure out of his Maker's hands : but he soon corrupted his way ; as it is said, " God made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions<sup>a</sup>." As man has effaced the law originally written upon his heart, so has he, by imaginations of his own, obscured the revelation which God has given to the world. The Mosaic code was perverted by the Jews : the Christian code has been no less perverted by those who have called themselves Christians. Even in the apostolic age, and whilst the Apostles were yet in the full exercise of their ministry, persons arose to mutilate and destroy the faith of Christ. The very professors of Christianity, instead of receiving implicitly the truth as it was revealed, introduced into it their own corrupt notions : the heathen converts retaining their predilection for their former idolatry ; and Jewish converts striving to encumber it with their former superstitions. It is against such persons that St. Paul is cautioning the Colossian Church : " Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ<sup>b</sup>." The heathen philosophers having multiplied their deities, and assigned to them a variety of ranks and offices, those who had been converted from amongst them still felt inclined to look to subordinate deities as their mediators and protectors : whilst others from among the Jews, who

<sup>a</sup> Eccl. vii. 29.

<sup>b</sup> ver. 8.

had, or pretended to have, a great veneration for Moses, could not part with the traditions which they had received from their fathers, and which they supposed to be highly conducive to their spiritual benefit. But St. Paul tells both the one and the other, that they needed no help from the creature, since “in Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead;” and no created power could do any thing for them, any farther than he was expressly commissioned by Christ to do it: in a word, that “they were complete in Christ;” and all attempts to add any thing to him, would retard, rather than advance, their conformity to his will, and would ultimately deprive them of all the benefits which they were thus erroneously labouring to secure.

This being the scope of the whole passage, we will draw your attention to the two things mentioned in our text; namely

#### I. The Christian’s completeness in Christ—

In Christ we have all that we can possibly need or desire—

[As God, he has “all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily;” and consequently is an almighty and all-sufficient Saviour. But as man also, he has, by virtue of his mediatorial office, a fulness committed to him for the supply of his believing people; according as it is said, “It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell<sup>c</sup>.” In our corporeal frame there is, if I may so say, a fulness imparted to the head for the use of all the members, *that* being the chief depository of all the senses: so there is in Christ, for the use of all his members: all that we need is treasured up in him: and he of God is made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption<sup>d</sup>” — — —]

Nor can the creature add any thing to us—

[What, I would ask, can “philosophy, with all its vain deceits,” add to us? Can it suggest one single truth which is not contained in the Holy Scriptures, or give us one atom of spiritual discernment? — — — Can it devise any other way for a sinner’s justification before God, besides that which the Scripture reveals, through the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ? — — — Can it add any thing to the

<sup>c</sup> Col. i. 19.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.



operations of the Holy Spirit for the transformation of our souls into the Divine image? — — — Can it further, in any one respect, the everlasting redemption of our souls, so that we shall say, this is the work of philosophy, and not of Christ? — — — If the *maxims* of philosophy cannot effect any thing, can its *deities*? Can they help us, either by their personal efficiency, or by their mediation with any other? I ask further, can Jewish rites, whether those that have been devised by man, or those which were originally ordained of God, add to us in any of these respects! No; we confidently say, that the Christian is "complete in Christ:" he has in Christ all that he can stand in need of; and to confide in any other is to rob him of his glory, and fatally to deceive our own souls.]

But besides the Christian's completeness in Christ, we are called to notice,

## II. His conformity to Christ—

That Christ is *an example* to us, is what every Christian well knows. But there is a distinction which is not generally adverted to, which yet it is of importance to remark; namely, that as he is an *example* to us in his *life*, so is he also, if we may so express it, an *exemplar* or *pattern* to us in his *work*. We will explain our meaning.

Christ having undertaken to redeem our souls, submitted to all that was necessary for that end: he *was circumcised*, as being made under the law for us: he *died* under the curse of that law; and after having been *buried* in the grave, he *rose again* for our justification before God. Now all this which was done *in him corporeally*, is to be done *in us spiritually*: the one was intended to be a *pattern* of the other. This is very minutely set forth by the Apostle Paul, who tells us that the power exercised towards us who believe, exactly accords with that which was exercised towards our Lord Jesus Christ in all the fore-mentioned particulars: his quickening from the dead, his rising from the grave, his ascension to heaven, and his session at the right hand of God far above all the principalities and powers of heaven or hell, have all a counterpart in us, wrought by the same divine Agent<sup>e</sup>.

<sup>e</sup> Compare attentively Eph. i. 19—22. and ii. 4—6.

Consider distinctly wherein this conformity consists—

[Was he circumcised? We have the true circumcision of the heart; that “which is made without hands, and which consists in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh:” and this we have by virtue of our own union with Christ, *in whom* we have experienced this *mystically*, and *through whom* we derive it *spiritually*. Was he buried? We also, in our baptism, were, as it were, buried with him; and coming up also from the water, (for here immersion seems to be referred to, as sprinkling evidently is in other places, the mode being not determinate to either, but left optional according to circumstances,) we are risen with him to a new and heavenly life. That this is the true import of the passage is beyond all doubt; as any one will see by comparing what the same writer has stated in his Epistle to the Romans<sup>f</sup> — — — Here, I say, the parallel between what was *corporeally* wrought *in Christ*, and *spiritually* to be wrought *in his members*, is clear and manifest: we, “by faith in that power which raised him from the dead,” experience a similar resurrection to newness of life — — —]

In reference to this then, as well as to the former, we ask,

What can philosophy add to us?

[Has philosophy any principles whereby we can be stimulated more entirely to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, than we are led by the Gospel of Christ; or can it impart to us any strength beyond that which we derive from Christ? Did it ever operate thus in any instance from the foundation of the world? No; it never did, nor ever can. We further ask, Is there any such virtue in Judaizing principles, that we should have recourse to any of them for aid? No; we are expressly told, that by seeking aid from philosophical conceits or Jewish superstitions we shall not only not add to our safety, but shall actually be “beguiled and robbed of our ultimate reward<sup>g</sup>.” It is to Christ alone that we must look, and from Christ we must receive all that is necessary for the carrying on and perfecting of our everlasting salvation.]

To IMPROVE this subject, we say to all,

1. Be thankful to God that your lot is cast where the Gospel is plainly and faithfully dispensed—

[The corruptions which began in the apostolic age have since been carried to such an extent as altogether to subvert

<sup>f</sup> Rom. vi. 3—11.

<sup>g</sup> ver. 18.

the Gospel of Christ. If I be asked before God, what popery is; I am constrained to answer, that, whatever it be *in theory*, it is *in practice* little better than a compound of Pagan idolatry and Jewish superstition. For want of seeing it before our eyes, we are apt to conceive of it as differing but little from the religion we profess: but it is in all its masses, penances, indulgences, such a system of delusion and impiety as makes one's very blood run cold. It is inconceivable how such a system of tyranny and imposture should have ever gained footing in the world. Little do the Protestants of the present day reflect on the obligations which they owe to their forefathers, and on the responsibility attaching to them for the advantages they enjoy. But could your eyes see in what darkness and bondage those who are of the Roman Catholic persuasion are held, you would never cease to bless God, that you have been born in a Protestant land, and been brought up members of a Church that is alike free from the errors of fanaticism, and the bonds of superstition. I know indeed that even in our Protestant Church there is still, in some places, as there was even in the apostolic age, a leaven of these deadly evils: but we speak to those who have learned to seek a completeness in Christ and a conformity to Christ, as the unalienable privilege, not of themselves only, but of every true believer.]

2. Beware of that false humility which would lead you to intrench upon the sufficiency of Christ—

[It was a false humility that led those in the apostolic age to seek other mediators or protectors besides Christ, and other means of obtaining his blessings than by faith alone. But whilst they assumed this "voluntary humility," they in reality were "vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind<sup>h</sup>." So it is with those in the present day, who look for something to recommend them to Christ, whilst they should be receiving all out of his fulness as a free unmerited gift. Their principle is precisely that of which the Apostle complained in the Colossian Church. They think it would be presumption in them to go directly to Christ, and to expect to be admitted by him with such a load of guilt and corruption as they feel: and therefore they hope to make themselves better before they go, that so they may find a readier acceptance with him. But this is to dishonour Christ, and to take from him both the sovereignty, and the riches, of his grace. We must never forget the terms on which alone we are to obtain the blessings of his salvation: we are to buy them, it is true; but we are to "buy them all without money and without price" — — —]

<sup>h</sup> ver. 18.



## 3. Live simply by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—

[It is “through faith in the Divine power” that all our completeness in Christ, or conformity to Christ, is to be obtained; and to exercise that faith, we are encouraged by the recollection of what that power has effected “in raising Christ from the dead<sup>i</sup>.” Take a view then of the Lord Jesus after his crucifixion: see him dead, and buried, and guarded by a host of enemies who were determined in a few hours to prove him an impostor. Is he beyond the reach of Divine power? No; at the appointed moment he rises, and ascends to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, far above all the principalities and powers of earth and hell. Are you then in a more desperate state than he? or is not the power of God alike able to effect this change for you? Yea, is it not as much pledged for you as it was for him? Fear not then, “nor stagger at the promises of God through unbelief;” but as Abraham before you was, “be strong in faith, giving glory to God.”]

<sup>i</sup> The text.

## MMCLXXVIII. 2178

## TRIUMPHS OF THE CROSS.

Col. ii. 13—15. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

THERE is one great mystery spoken of throughout the Scriptures, connected indeed with innumerable other truths, but itself the centre and substance of them all: this mystery is Christ crucified. St. Paul in particular insists upon it in all his epistles; he declares that it was the one only thing which he deemed necessary for him to preach, or for his people to be acquainted with. He takes every occasion of magnifying its importance, and of urging his converts to maintain the strictest regard to it. This appears remarkably in the preceding context<sup>a</sup>; wherein

<sup>a</sup> See Col. i. 27, 28. and ii. 1—4, 6, 7.

not only the mystery itself is stated, but the rich benefits arising from it are largely recited. Having in general terms said, "We are complete in Christ," he enters more minutely into the subject, and declares that we have communion with him in the whole of his humiliation and exaltation, being "circumcised in him, and buried with him, and risen with him," and, in short, partakers of all his victories and triumphs.

In the text, three benefits are enumerated as conferred by him upon his believing people, and which we propose for our present consideration. If we were to adhere strictly to the order of time in which these benefits were procured for us and imparted to us, we must take the latter clauses of the text first: but, as this is not necessary, we shall rather notice them as they stand; and observe,

I. He has "quicken'd us when dead"—

The state of the Gentile world fitly represents the state of every unregenerate man—

[We are dead before God, and doomed to everlasting death, on account of our sins<sup>b</sup> — — — We are also under the habitual influence of the most corrupt desires, the mortifying of which was signified by the rite of circumcision, and the indulgence of which characterizes those who are uncircumcised in heart<sup>c</sup> — — — We have no spiritual life whatever; nor are we even conscious of our own guilt and corruption; so justly may we be said to be altogether "*dead* in our sins."]

But God has quicken'd us with, and by, his Son—

[There is a *federal relation* subsisting between Christ and his people; so that when he was circumcised, they were circumcised; when he died, they died; when he rose, they rose. In all that he did and suffered, he was their representative, and they had communion with him as members with their head.

But besides this, they have a *vital union* with him, so as actually to receive life and vigour from him, whereby they rise to newness of life<sup>d</sup> — — — In this restoration to life they are conformed to his likeness; they come forth from the grave of sin and corruption, and soar in their affections to the highest heavens, where from thenceforth their conversation is, and where they shall have their everlasting abode.]

<sup>b</sup> Gal. iii. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Tit. iii. 3. Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

In addition to this benefit,

II. He has cancelled our obligation to punishment—

This he has done in reference to,

1. Past sins—

[The trespasses which we commit in our unregenerate state are as numerous as the sands upon the sea shore: yet, on our believing in Christ, they are all forgiven. Whether they have been more or less heinous, they are all pardoned. This is not spoken of as a blessing that shall be enjoyed in the eternal world, but as actually possessed at this time. God has “cast our sins behind him into the very depths of the sea<sup>e</sup>” — — —]

2. Present infirmities—

[We must not be understood to say that believers have obtained a licence to commit sin with impunity; for nothing can be more contrary to truth: *this* would make “Christ himself a minister of sin.” But our meaning is this: the moral law denounces a curse against every one that transgresses it even in the smallest point. The ceremonial law illustrates and confirms those penal sanctions. The very sacrifices which were the appointed means of expiating sin, declared that the offerer deserved to die, and that he could not be saved but by the sufferings and death of an innocent victim. From hence it appears, that “the hand-writing of ordinances,” which, in its external obligation, related only to the Jews, did, in its spiritual and more enlarged sense, declare the state of all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles: and in this view it was equally “against *us*, and contrary to *us*.”

Now this hand-writing Christ has “blotted out,” and, by “nailing it to his cross,” has “taken it out of the way.” There were different ways of cancelling a bond: sometimes it was blotted out; and sometimes it was pierced with a nail, and rendered thereby of no effect. Both these ways, if we may so speak, has Christ adopted, that we might have the fullest security that we shall never be dealt with according to the rigour of the law; and that the debt we owe on account of our unhallowed infirmities shall never be required at our hands.]

A further obligation he has conferred upon us, in that,

III. He has defeated all our spiritual enemies—

Satan and all his hosts are combined against us—

<sup>e</sup> Mic. vii. 19.



[They have usurped a power over us, and governed us with most despotic sway<sup>f</sup> — — —]

But Christ has completely triumphed over them upon his cross—

[As a conqueror, he invaded the empire of Satan, and rescued millions of the human race from his dominion. He “spoiled the principalities and powers” of hell, and seized as his prey the souls of which they had so long held an undisturbed possession<sup>g</sup>. It was upon his cross that he effected this: for there it was that he satisfied divine justice; there it was he fulfilled and cancelled the obligations of the law; there it was that he paid the price of our salvation. “He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us<sup>h</sup>.” His triumph was then complete. Like a victorious general leading in chains the distinguished personages whom the chance of war had put into his hands, our blessed Lord exhibited, as it were, to the view of God, of angels, and of his believing people, the vanquished powers of darkness: “he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them upon his cross.” He did not indeed, like earthly conquerors, exult in victories gained by the sword of others, and at the expense of their blood: his triumphs were gained by no sword but his, and with the loss of no blood but his: “His own arm brought salvation; and he trod the wine-press of God’s wrath alone<sup>i</sup>.”]

INFER—

### 1. What a wonderful sight is the cross of Christ!

[The eye of sense can behold nothing in it but an instrument of punishment, and a person suffering upon it as a malefactor. But what will the eye of faith behold? It will discern, not a sufferer, but a conqueror; not one raised on an accursed tree, but exalted on a triumphant car: not one crowned with thorns, but wearing a wreath of victory: not one nailed and bleeding, but one blotting out with blood, and cancelling with nails, the bonds that were against his chosen people: not one himself a spectacle, but exhibiting to view his vanquished enemies: not the despised Nazarene, but “the Lord of glory.” Strange as it may sound, we affirm, that it was not Jesus, but the prince of this world that was then judged<sup>k</sup>, cast out<sup>l</sup>, destroyed<sup>m</sup>: for it was *then* that Jesus “bruised the serpent’s head<sup>n</sup>.” “by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who till that hour had been all their life-time subject to

<sup>f</sup> Eph. ii. 2. and 2 Tim. ii. 26.

<sup>h</sup> Gal. iii. 13.

<sup>k</sup> John xvi. 11.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

<sup>g</sup> Luke xi. 22. Isai. liii. 12.

<sup>i</sup> Isai. lxiii. 3, 5.

<sup>l</sup> John xii. 31.

<sup>n</sup> Gen. iii. 15.

bondage<sup>o</sup>." Prostrate before him lay the principalities and powers of hell. Yes, Satan, it was thy power that was then broken, thy shame that was then exposed, thy doom that was then irrevocably sealed. Thou art now an object of our contempt; and the weakest amongst us will set his feet upon thy neck, and tremble at thee no more<sup>p</sup>. "Thou art fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning;" "thou art fallen from heaven like lightning;" and lower still shalt thou fall; for we thy once infatuated vassals can triumph over thee now; and thou shalt "ere long be bruised under our feet<sup>q</sup>."

Beloved brethren, "turn aside and see this great sight,"—your triumphing Lord, and your despoiled enemies! Nor cease to contemplate it, till you are filled with admiration, and gratitude, and joy.]

2. What folly is it to suffer ourselves to be diverted from it!

[This is the particular improvement which the Apostle himself makes of the passage. He had guarded the Colossians against the sceptical pride of philosophers<sup>r</sup>; and he proceeds to guard them against the self-justifying pride of Judaizing teachers<sup>s</sup>. To the one of these the cross of Christ was a stumbling-block, and to the other foolishness; but to those who viewed it aright, it was "the power of God and the wisdom of God<sup>t</sup>." Thus at this time we are particularly in danger of being led away from the simplicity of the Gospel, either by the conceits of philosophy, falsely so called, or by the observance of a formal round of duties. But let nothing draw your attention from the cross of Christ. It is *by that only* that you can be quickened: *by that only* you can be forgiven: *by that only* you can obtain deliverance from the penal sanction of the law, or victory over the enemies of your salvation. When you can find another object, or other principles, that can effect these things, then we consent that you shall disregard the cross of Christ. But till then, determine to know nothing<sup>u</sup>, trust in nothing<sup>x</sup>, glory in nothing<sup>y</sup>, but Christ, and him crucified.]

<sup>o</sup> Heb. ii. 14. and Ps. lxxviii. 18.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. xvi. 20.

<sup>r</sup> ver. 8.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.

<sup>y</sup> Gal. vi. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Josh. x. 24.

<sup>s</sup> ver. 16.

<sup>x</sup> Phil. iii. 9.

## MMCLXXIX. 2179

## THE NATURE AND USE OF THE TYPES.

Col. ii. 17. *Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

MAN is naturally addicted to superstition; partly from a consciousness of his needing mercy from God, and partly from a desire of reconciling himself to God by some meritorious services of his own. The Jewish economy had rather a tendency to foster this disposition, inasmuch as it prescribed many rites and ceremonies as means of acceptance with God. But from these the Gospel has set us free; and, in so doing, has introduced a more free and liberal spirit. Nevertheless, even under the light of the Gospel, we are prone to indulge the same servile desires, and to prefer a yoke of bondage to the freedom of God's children. Such was the case with many even in the apostolic age. St. Paul is cautioning the Colossians against two sorts of teachers, who were endeavouring to mislead them; against the advocates for heathen philosophy<sup>a</sup>, and against the Judaizing brethren, who insisted on the observance of the Mosaic ritual<sup>b</sup>. In opposition to the latter of these, he bids the Christians to assert their liberty from the observances of the ceremonial law, *that* being, in fact, no more than a shadow, of which they now possessed the substance.

We shall take occasion from his words to shew,

## I. The nature of the types—

The Scripture sets before us several kinds of types—

[Christians are in general but little acquainted with the types: yet the scripture abounds with them, and mentions various kinds of them. They may be reduced to three classes; *natural*, *historical*, and *legal*. The *natural* are such as may be seen in the works of nature (in this view, the creation of the universe is a type of the new creation, which the regenerate soul experiences through the word and Spirit of God;) the *historical* are such as Moses, Joshua, David, and others; and the *legal* are all the ceremonies of the Jewish law.]

<sup>a</sup> ver. 8.

<sup>b</sup> ver. 16.



These are shadowy representations of Christ and his benefits—

[All of them relate to Christ in some view or other; either to his person and offices, or to his Church and the benefits he confers upon it. They are the shadow, whereof he is the substance: and as a shadow represents, though but faintly, the image of the substance, so they portray, though in a very indistinct manner, the character and work of Christ.]

In fact, they were instituted of God for this end—

[The paschal feast, with all its attendant observances, was not merely commemorative of a deliverance that was past: it was to shadow forth an infinitely greater deliverance that was to come; as St. Paul says, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth<sup>c</sup>.” In like manner, we are told, that all the ordinances relative to the priestly office “served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: For, see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewn to thee in the mount<sup>d</sup>.” The Law was the shadow; the Gospel the substance: the Law was the model; and the Gospel the edifice erected in perfect accordance with it<sup>e</sup>.]

The text, in connexion with the context, leads us further to declare,

## II. Their use—

God would not have appointed them, if they had not been beneficial to his Church. But with respect to the Jewish and the Christian Church, we shall, as they subserved different purposes, notice their use to each:

### 1. To the Jews—

<sup>c</sup> Heb. viii. 5. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

<sup>d</sup> Heb. viii. 5.

<sup>e</sup> We are not at liberty to consider every common similitude as a type, or to launch into the boundless ocean of conjecture: in some instances indeed observations drawn from analogy may be almost as convincing as the declarations of God himself: but it is safest to adhere to those points which Scripture has determined for us: in them we are in no danger of erring, and therefore can speak with precision and authority. Nor should we ever forget, that, as those things alone are *sacraments to us* which God has appointed to be so, so those things alone were *types to the Jewish church*, which God instituted for that express purpose.

[*The types served to shew them what sort of a person their Messiah should be: he was to be a Prophet, like unto Moses, a Priest, like Aaron, a King, like David. He was to be a suffering no less than a reigning Messiah. They further kept up the expectation of him in the world. The first promise had been nearly forgotten; and most probably the repetition of it would have made but a transient impression: but the multitude of observances, daily repeated, and continually directing the eyes of the worshippers to him, could not fail of exciting a general and increasing expectation of his advent. They moreover led the people to exercise faith on him. Every intelligent worshipper must see that the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin; and therefore (as we are sure Abraham, David, and others did) the devout Jews must look through the ordinances to Christ, and rely on him who was to come, just as we rely on him who is come.*]

## 2 To us—

[*The types are of signal use to us, in that they testify of Christ as the person promised from the foundation of the world, and prefigured in the whole of the Mosaic ritual. When we compare the account of Christ in the New Testament with the various ordinances of the Old, we see how impossible it was that such a coincidence of character should ever happen, but by the express ordination and appointment of God. But they are of further use to us also, in that they wonderfully illustrate the fulness and excellency of Christ. As there are myriads of stars, yet all of them together are no more than a taper in comparison of the sun; so all the typical exhibitions of Christ are but a shadow in comparison of him: and “though they are exceeding glorious in themselves, yet have they no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth<sup>f</sup>.” To this effect the Apostle says, “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God<sup>g</sup>!” This is the view which we are to take of the types, this the improvement we are to make of them. We could not have formed any adequate idea of Christ’s work and offices, if we had not been assisted by the typical institutions: these serve to embody our notions, and to make them, like a picture, visible to the eyes of men, and therefore intelligible to the meanest capacity: whereas, if we could not thus invest them, as it were, with matter, we could only offer to our hearers some abstract ideas, which, after all, would convey but little meaning, and leave no abiding impression.]*

<sup>f</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 9—11.

<sup>g</sup> Heb. ix. 13, 14.

## INFER—

1. How great are the privileges of the Christian Church!

[The Jews were oppressed with a yoke of ceremonies, which they were not able to bear—the import of which they could very faintly discern—and the observance of which yielded no permanent satisfaction to their consciences<sup>h</sup>: but we are freed from that yoke, and enjoy a dispensation of light, and liberty——Let us be thankful for our privilege, and “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.”]

2. What spirituality of mind should we possess!

[Our superior privileges doubtless demand a correspondent pre-eminence in our spirit and conduct. If we are “no longer servants but sons,” we ought to manifest a filial affection towards God, and a delight in his service. But do not many of the pious Jews reproach us? O let us walk worthy of our high vocation, and shew forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light<sup>i</sup>.]

<sup>h</sup> Heb. x. 1, 2.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 9.

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HOLDING THE HEAD.

Col. ii. 19. *Not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*

WHILST the Apostles were yet in the full exercise of their ministry, all manner of heresies sprang up in the Church. The Jewish converts brought with them their partiality for the Mosaic ritual, and insisted on the continued observance of it: and the heathen converts introduced the dogmas of their philosophy; on which they insisted, as rendering Christianity more conformable with the sentiments to which they had been accustomed. Hence the Apostle Paul, in the chapter before us, repeatedly cautioned the Colossian saints against both the one and the other of these heretical deceivers. “Beware,” says he, “lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments



of the world, and not after Christ<sup>a</sup>." Again, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-days; which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ<sup>b</sup>." And then, in reference to both the characters, he says, "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head." It seems that some of the Jewish converts were inclined to rely on angels, as their mediators with God; for God having employed them in the dispensation of his law, they thought it probable that he would make use of them as his instruments also in communicating the blessings of the Gospel. With the heathen converts, the idea of an intermediate kind of deity was quite familiar; and, consequently, coalescing easily with the Jewish teachers in their veneration of angels, they formed, in the Church, a party, which it required all the zeal and authority of the Apostle to suppress. It was to counteract their influence that the Apostle suggested, in the words of my text,

I. A solemn caution not to depart from Christ—

It is here taken for granted, that Christians are all united to Christ by faith, as their living Head. But the Apostle declared, that the persons who were thus endeavouring to subvert the faith of the Colossians did not hold Christ as their Head; and that to embrace their sentiments would, in effect, be to renounce Christ. And

This was true with respect to them at that time—

[To worship angels, and employ them as mediators with God, was indeed proposed under an idea of "humility;" since it was supposed, that it would be presumptuous in man to apply directly to God, except through the intervention of some creatures of a higher stamp and order; but if they came to him through them as their mediators, they could not then fail of obtaining the Divine favour. But, whilst this was

<sup>a</sup> ver. 8.

<sup>b</sup> ver. 16, 17.

recommended as an indication of humility, it proceeded, in fact, from nothing but pride: for, by "intruding into things which they had not seen," and presuming to go beyond what God had revealed, they shewed that they were "vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind." And, in recommending the adoption of these sentiments, they did eventually "rob men of their reward," instead of securing it to them by any additional bonds. In truth, they did not themselves "hold fast the Head," the Lord Jesus Christ; and, so far as they prevailed, they actually severed persons from Christ; and thereby ruined their immortal souls.]

And it is equally true with respect to many at this time—

[The whole Romish Church sanctions the worshipping both of saints and angels: and, not content with having Christ as their mediator, they make use of the Virgin Mary as their intercessor; and place as much confidence in her, as in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Need I say, what is the origin of this, or what its effect will be? It is recommended under a pretence of "humility:" but it is the offspring of pride and carnality; it is recommended in order to secure the reward of heaven; but it beguiles of that reward all who embrace so fatal a system.

And what are they better, who require some internal qualifications in us, as a warrant for us to apply to Christ? The *Papists* commend *new mediators to us*, in order to our obtaining of acceptance with Christ; and these other deceivers require *new qualifications in us* for the same end. And these, no less than the former, go beyond the Scriptures, requiring of us what God himself has never required. All the qualification which God requires for our approach to Christ is, that we thirst after him, and be willing to accept his proffered benefits: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and *drink*:" and "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." The substitution of any other terms, whatever men may pretend, is the fruit of pride: for it is an avowal, that we look for mercy at his hand as the reward of some kind or degree of goodness in ourselves; and, in effect, it transfers a portion at least of his glory to ourselves. It denies the entire freeness of divine grace, and makes salvation in part to be of works. The consequence of this will be, that all who are thus led to renounce their hold of Christ, must perish. They are beguiled of their reward, and betrayed to their everlasting ruin.]

To this solemn caution is annexed,

II. A most urgent reason for adhering to him—

It is by union with the Lord Jesus Christ that the whole Church subsists—

[There is the same union betwixt Christ and his Church as there is betwixt the head and members of the natural body. From the head the vital spirits may be said to flow throughout the whole body: nourishing every part, diffusing strength throughout the whole system, and combining all the members, so as to call forth and concentrate their respective offices for the good of the whole. Thus it is that all the members of Christ's mystical body receive life and strength from him: all are fitted for the discharge of their several duties: all are made to possess one common interest, and to act for one common end. There is not one life in the head, and another in the members: it is one life that pervades them all: and *this*, too, in the mystical body of Christ, no less than in our own natural body. It is “not *we* that live, but Christ that liveth in us<sup>c</sup>” yea, “Christ himself is our life<sup>d</sup> :” and by his continued agency within us, we “increase with the increase of God.”

What then must be the event, if we be cut off from him? We perish of necessity, as the members when severed from the head. Is this, then, no reason why we should guard against the introduction of error, especially of such errors as will have the effect of separating us from him?

But we may further observe, that,]

It is by union with Christ that the whole work of grace is carried on in the soul of every believer—

[As there is “a body of sin, called the old man,” in us by nature, so is there “a new man” in us by grace: and all the different graces, of which this new man consists, are nourished by the same divine principle; and either decline or grow together, according as this is communicated to us, or withheld. A man may have in his natural body a greater measure of force and vigour in some one organ or member than in others: the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, may possess some appropriate and distinguished excellence: but, whatever affects the system generally, must affect the body in every part, and produce a corresponding diminution or increase of its powers. Now, if our connexion with the Lord Jesus Christ is kept close, and our communications from him abound, we shall have all our graces lively, and vigorous, and active: but if there be any thing to intercept the communications of his grace, every grace will languish and decay.

Say, then, whether in this view also we are not concerned

<sup>c</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>d</sup> Col. iii. 4.



with all care and diligence to “hold fast the Head?” Whether we consider the interests of the Church collectively, or the welfare of every individual believer, there does appear a necessity to watch against any interruption of our union with Christ, and to seek from him incessant supplies of grace and strength: for “through him we can do all things<sup>e</sup>,” but “without him we can do nothing<sup>f</sup>.”]

BEHOLD from hence,

1. How wonderfully simple is the Gospel of Christ!

[If we enter into the deep mysteries of religion in an abstract way, the wisest and most acute are soon out of their depth: but if we take them as represented by Scripture images, the weakest and most ignorant Christian has as clear a conception of them as the most learned in the universe. The connexion between the head and the body, and the dependence of the members on the head, may be more scientifically described by a learned man; but they are not a whit more justly apprehended by him, than by the poorest of mankind. Yet does this image contain the whole of vital Christianity; which consists in this one thing, “a life of faith on the Son of God, as having loved us, and given himself for us.” Beloved brethren, take with you this image: conceive of the Lord Jesus Christ as your head, from whom all vital influence proceeds. Look to him for a communication of that influence to your soul. Bear in mind, that, except as aided by power from him, you can do no more than your members could if separated from your head. Remember, that as every member of your body is alike under the influence of your head, so must every disposition of your soul be under the controul and influence of Christ: and, as there is no schism in the body, no member affecting independence, or living regardless of the head, so let there be no want of attention to any individual grace; but go to Him for a supply of all, that all may be strengthened, and that you may grow up in all things into Christ, your living head. Let your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your complete redemption, be all viewed as *in him*, and all be derived continually from him, according to the measure of the gift which he sees fit to impart.]

2. The danger of departing from it in the least degree—

[The persons who proposed the worshipping of angels did not *mean* to renounce Christ; and had they been told that their conceit was in reality a separation of themselves from him, they would have denied that any such consequences could

<sup>e</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>f</sup> John xv. 5.

follow. And so it is when persons are looking for some goodness of their own whereon to found their hope, or *to warrant their application to Christ*; they have as little idea of the evil which they commit, or of the consequences that must ensue. But remember, that *self* must be altogether renounced; must be renounced by us, as much as it must by the fallen angels, if salvation were at this moment offered to them. All that we ever can have, is in Christ: it is treasured up in him for our use, and must be received from him. There is not any thing which must not be "received out of his fulness:" and, if you will not come to him for it, you must inevitably and eternally perish. He is a jealous God: he will not admit of rivals: he will not endure that his glory should in any respect or degree be given to another. Whatever, therefore, any man may pretend, or whatever specious appearance any sentiment may assume, whether of superior wisdom, or deeper humility, or more ardent zeal, admit nothing, for one moment, that may interfere with the honour of the Lord Jesus: but be contented to receive all from him, to depend altogether upon him, and to give him the glory of all that you either receive or do. In a word, be to him what your members are to your head. This idea is extremely simple. Suffer nothing to set it aside, or to interfere with it. Carry it into effect in your daily life and conversation: and fear not, but that if you glorify him in this world, you shall be glorified with him in the world above.]

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OUR RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST A MOTIVE TO HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

Col. iii. 1. *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

ONE of the most distinguished peculiarities of our holy religion is, that it suggests entirely new motives to action. The inducements which reason could offer, were (as all antiquity proves) altogether weak and inefficient — — — Those alone which Christianity proposes are capable of restraining the passions of men, and of regulating their conduct. Beg of God then that you may feel the power of his word, whilst I set before you,

I. The duty here inculcated—

I by no means must be understood as intimating, that we are at liberty to neglect our earthly concerns. Circumstanced as we are, we must of necessity devote much time and labour to the pursuit of worldly things : and, if we neglected them, we should offend against the order of Divine Providence, who has said in reference to them, “Six days shalt thou labour.” But

“The things which are above” are most worthy of our pursuit—

[Amongst these we must number the *favour of our offended God*, the *manifestations of his love to our souls*, the *attainment of his image*, and the *possession of his glory*.

Which of these things can be dispensed with? — — — or which can be attained by a mere inactive wish, or by a formal and faint endeavour? — — — These things, in point of value and importance, as far excel all earthly things, as the splendour of the meridian sun eclipses the faint radiance of the glow-worm.]

These therefore we are to seek with our whole hearts—

[They are to have the first place in our esteem, and to be sought with a diligence proportioned to their value<sup>a</sup>. *Seeking* only will not suffice; we must *strive* to enter in at the strait gate; for we are told that “many shall *seek*, and not be able<sup>b</sup>.” “The kingdom of heaven must be taken by violence<sup>c</sup>,” even by the holy violence of faith and prayer. The things *above* must be sought with the same constancy and zeal as are employed by the world in the pursuit of things *below*. Worldly men are never weary in the pursuit of *their* objects. From the earliest dawn to the very hour when they retire to rest, their appetite for earthly things continues; nor, whatever they may attain, are they ever satisfied. Their *energies* may be enfeebled by labour; but their *taste* is still the same: they savour the things which pertain to time and sense<sup>d</sup>,—them constantly, them supremely, them only. Now this is the way in which we should “seek the things that are above:” and, in comparison of these, all earthly things should be to us as dung and dross. Even life itself should be of no value, if by sacrificing it our eternal interests may be improved<sup>e</sup>.]

If this appear “an hard saying,” attend while I lay before you,

<sup>a</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xiii. 24.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xi. 12.

<sup>d</sup> Rom. viii. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33.



## II. The considerations with which it is enforced—

The Apostle urges upon us our duty *on the ground of consistency*. Mark,

## 1. Your professions—

[The word “If” does not express any doubt in the Apostle’s mind, but imports *an acknowledged fact*, viz. that the Christian *is* risen with Christ. It is the same as if he had said, “*Since ye are* risen with Christ.” Now every Christian *is* risen with Christ both *federally*, and *spiritually*. Christ is his federal Head and Representative: and all that *He* experienced, *we* experienced *in him*. Was he circumcised when a child? Was he at the close of life crucified, dead, and buried? Did he rise, and ascend to heaven? And is he now sitting at the right hand of God? In the whole of this we had, not an interest only, but a direct participation<sup>f</sup>. Exactly as we died in Adam, partaking, as it were, with him in the sin which, as our head and representative, he committed, so all which Christ did and suffered is imputed to us, as though we had ourselves done and suffered it in him<sup>g</sup>. *Spiritually* also are we risen in Christ. All that he did and suffered is, if I may so speak, accomplished personally in every one of us, his *corporeal* acts and sufferings being *the model* of what we experience in our souls. This is by St. Paul stated with great accuracy. In his prayer for the Ephesian Church, he desires that they may “know what is the exceeding greatness of God’s power in all his believing people, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” And then he marks distinctly and separately the work which God accomplishes in his people, quickening them from the dead, raising them up to newness of life, and setting them together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus<sup>h</sup>.”

Now then I ask, Is not this what *as Christians* you profess? Do you not profess to be thus risen with Christ, interested in all that he did and suffered for you, and bound to be conformed to him in the whole of this his mediatorial work and office. *You do profess it*, whether you intend it or not. And *this profession binds you* to an entire devotedness of heart and life to God. You must of necessity “thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, *that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again*.”

But you shall see this on authority that cannot be disputed, and *actually urged in the very way suggested by my text*.

<sup>f</sup> Col. ii. 10—12.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 22. 2 Cor. v. 21.

<sup>h</sup> Eph. i. 19, 20. with ii. 4—6.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

“What shall we say then; Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. *How shall we that are dead to sin* (as we all profess to be) *live any longer therein?* Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? *Therefore* we are buried with him by baptism into death; that *like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*<sup>k</sup>.”

The point then is proved. CONSISTENCY requires that you should seek primarily and with your whole hearts the things above.

If yet you entertain a doubt of this, I ask you, what judgment you yourselves pass on a carnal, sensual, worldly-minded professor of religion? Do you not condemn *him* as inconsistent? Then in so doing you pass judgment on yourselves.]

## 2. Your expectations—

[The words, “Where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,” are not added casually and without design: they give exceeding great weight and emphasis to all that precedes. These words express the *expectations* of the Christian, as the former do his *professions*. “Christ is at the right hand of God,” the seat of honour and of power. But he is not there as a mere individual for his own happiness only. He is there prosecuting still the work which he began on earth, and in which we are as much interested as we are in what he did and suffered here below. We look to him to afford us all needful aid by the constant supplies of his Spirit and grace<sup>l</sup>.” We look to him to obtain for us the acceptance of our poor imperfect services<sup>m</sup>. We look to him to come again and take us in due season to a full participation of all the glory which he himself possesses<sup>n</sup>. But in which of these shall we succeed, if we do not live to him? If we were to tell you, that a worldly and carnal life was the way to obtain these blessings, would you not cry out against us as “blind leaders of the blind?” Then behold what your expectations are, and how powerfully they proclaim and enforce your duties. If “your faith and hope depend altogether upon the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God<sup>o</sup>,” your duty must of necessity be to look to him continually, that you may receive out of his fulness all that your necessities require.]

And now SEE,

## 1. How few real Christians there are upon earth—

<sup>k</sup> Rom. vi. 1—11.    <sup>l</sup> John xvi. 7—11.    2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5.

<sup>n</sup> John xvi. 23. and xvii. 24. and Rev. iii. 21.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Pet. i. 21.

[If *they* were Christians who were conformed to Christ in his *entombed* state, and who sought only the things *below*, there would be no lack of them in every place: but if those only be Christians who in heart and life are *risen* with Christ, and who seek only the things *above*, then are they few indeed. Brethren, try yourselves by these marks, and you shall soon find your real character before God — — — But know ye this of a truth, that, whatever you may think to the contrary, they only who live *to* Christ in this world, shall ever live *with* him in the world to come.]

2. How blessed are they who are Christians indeed—

[Being risen with Christ, their lives are hid with Christ in God, beyond the reach of men or devils<sup>p</sup>. While they are engaged in heavenly pursuits, they may enjoy the security which God has ordained for them. Oppositions, indeed, and difficulties they must expect; but Christ will not lose one member of his mystical body. He derides the vain attempts of his enemies and ours. We too may defy the confederate powers of earth and hell<sup>q</sup>: for, however they may obtain a temporary triumph, their efforts shall terminate in their own confusion. With Christ we shall rise victorious; and “when he who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory<sup>r</sup>.”]

<sup>p</sup> ver. 3.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. viii. 33, 34.

<sup>r</sup> ver. 4.

MMCLXXXII.

2182

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

Col. iii. 2. *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*

IT seems harsh and paradoxical, to say that Christianity is very imperfectly understood amongst us. Respecting its mysterious *doctrines*, perhaps, the allegation would be admitted without difficulty: but respecting its *precepts*, scarcely any one would suspect that the observation could have any foundation in truth. But it is to the preceptive part especially that I intend the remark to be applied: and I think that, before I have closed my present subject, the greater part of you will agree with me, that the sentiment is just. The morality of Christians in general



goes only to the conduct of men so far as it is visible to those around us: but the Christian code extends to the inmost feelings of the soul; and requires a conformity to the Saviour himself, not only in the dispositions of his mind whilst he sojourned upon earth, but in the change wrought upon him in his exaltation to heaven: it requires us to be dead *to* sin as truly as ever he died *for* sin; and to live as truly and entirely to God as he did, and yet does, in his risen state in glory. The precept which you have just heard will fitly illustrate this truth. I will endeavour to mark,

I. Its import—

Directions in Scripture are often put in a way of contrast, when they are to be understood only in a way of comparison. Such, for instance, is the declaration, “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” We are not to understand that passage as prohibiting sacrifices, which had been expressly enjoined, and were yet of necessity to be offered; but only as expressing an approbation of acts of mercy, even though they should supersede the observance of some positive injunction. When our Lord says, “Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life,” he must not be understood as discouraging an attention to worldly business: for God has authoritatively commanded, “Six days shalt thou labour.” It is in a comparative sense only that his words must be understood: and in the same manner must we interpret also the words before us. Mark,

1. The things here contrasted—

[“The things which are on earth” are those which relate to this present life. Even intellectual pursuits must be included, no less than the pleasures, or riches, or honours, of the world. On the other hand, by “the things which are above,” we must understand every thing relating to the soul, its first acceptance with God, its progressive restoration to the Divine image, and its final possession of the heavenly glory. The latter of these we are to pursue, if not exclusively, yet supremely, so as to shew that they have no rival whatever in our souls.]

The term here translated "*Set your affections on things above,*" is more literally rendered, in the margin, "*Mind the things that are above.*" The term imports, not an exercise of the intellectual powers only, but also of the will and the affections; and such an exercise of them as demonstrates the supreme attachment of the soul. Perhaps it was on this account that our translators preferred the translation; which, though less proper in itself, more exactly conveyed the sense to those who were unacquainted with the original. But, not to separate the words, let us take them in their collective import; and consider,]

## 2. The precept relating to them—

[I have said, that *all* concern about earthly things is not forbidden: on the contrary, there are many things which require an ardour and intensity in the pursuit, and cannot be attained without. But they must not engage the affections of the soul; they must not be permitted to stand in competition with heaven and heavenly things. In comparison with the knowledge of Christ, all that the world contains must be in our eyes no better than "dung and dross." The favour of an offended God — — — the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in all its sanctifying operations — — — the witness of the Holy Spirit testifying of our adoption into his family, and of our interest in Christ — — — and, finally, the eternal possession of his glory — — — What deserves to be sought after, like these? What will bear any comparison with these? These, then, are to occupy our supreme regard; and every thing else must give way to them. Earthly satisfactions of any kind, if they stand in competition with them, must all be sacrificed without hesitation and without regret. So permanent must be the ascendancy of these things in our minds, that no labour for them shall appear too great, and no suffering too intense. In comparison of them, even life itself must be of no value in our eyes, and the whole world be only as the small dust upon the balance.]

This precept does indeed appear to impose a duty that is quite impracticable: but, to shew that it deserves our most attentive regards, I will display,

## II. Its reasonableness—

Let us take a more distinct survey of the two different objects which are here contrasted; and the preference required in behalf of heavenly things will be found precisely such as it becomes us to manifest. For,

### 1. They are more excellent in themselves—

[What is there truly valuable in the things of this world? They have no intrinsic worth: they are only good as being high in the estimation of men: an angel would disregard them all, as much as we should the dirt under our feet. Crowns, kingdoms, empires, what are they all, but the baubles of children, which a man in his senses would despise? Beyond food and raiment there is nothing worth a thought: and *they* derive their value, not from any thing in themselves, but from the necessities of our nature, which render them important in our eyes. But is there nothing real in the favour of God, the grace of Christ, the witness of the Spirit, and the glory of heaven? Yes, verily: these elevate our nature, and ennoble it, and raise it to its primitive perfection and blessedness. These things the highest angel in heaven cannot but approve; yea, he must account them as objects on which it is impossible to bestow too great, or too undivided, an attention.]

### 2. They are more satisfactory to our minds—

[They who possess the most of this world are the very persons who most feel the emptiness and vanity of it all. Go to those who have attained all that their hearts could desire, and ask them whether they have not grasped a shadow? A name, a title, a ribbon of distinction, what contemptible things, in comparison of those which belong to the soul! Who that possesses them does not feel an aching void in his bosom, unless with them he possesses also the favour of God? “In the midst of his sufficiency, he is in straits.” But the blessings of which we have before spoken, are solid; and the person who enjoys them, possesses rest in his soul. “Having drunk of the living waters, he thirsts no more” for any thing besides.]

### 3. They are more conducive to our happiness—

[Are the rich and great happier than other people? Not a wit. A Lazarus, with God’s love shed abroad in his heart, is happier than the Rich Man amongst all his banquets. Search the Scriptures, and see whether those who have revelled most in their wealth, and drunk most deeply of the cup of pleasure, have not pronounced it all, not merely vanity, but vexation of spirit also? But look at the possessors of spiritual good: take them in their lowest state; view them poor, and weeping, and mourning, and hungering and thirsting after degrees of holiness unattained: what says the Scripture respecting them? What? Our Saviour himself declares them “blessed,” “blessed,” “blessed,” “blessed.” If, like Paul and Silas, they are reduced to the most pitiable condition that can be conceived, they have ample ground for the most exalted joy: and even in martyrdom itself they have no cause for any thing but self-congratulation, thanksgiving, and praise.]



## 4. They are more easily to be attained—

[Multitudes, however much they were to labour, could never gain earthly distinction: and multitudes who do labour for it with a reasonable hope of success, are left a prey to the most painful disappointments. But who that has the heart of a man is incapable of acquiring heavenly blessings? or who ever failed in attaining them, provided he only sought them in humility and faith? Methinks this is one of the chief excellencies of spiritual things, that they are open alike to all, and never are sought in vain. Of them, in all their fullness, we may say, “Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”]

## 5. They are more lasting—

[Let a man possess the whole world; how long shall he retain it? Every moment his happiness is drawing nearer to a close: no sooner is the breath departed from his body, than he surrenders it all to some new possessor, who shall, like him also, retain it but a little time: for “we can carry nothing away with us when we die:” we came naked into the world, and naked must we depart from it. But is it thus with the man who has sought his happiness in God? No, verily: “he has treasures in heaven;” and at death he goes to the full possession of them. His happiness, instead of being terminated at death, is then consummated: he then, as it were, comes of age, and enters on the full possession of “his inheritance, which is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.”]

And now let me ask, Is it unreasonable that *these* things should occupy your minds, in preference to the vanities of time and sense? these things, which are so excellent in themselves, so satisfactory to us, so conducive to our happiness, so certain to be attained, and so lasting in the enjoyment? Surely the poor empty vanities of time and sense cannot, for a moment, stand in competition with these; nor do they deserve so much as a thought, in comparison of them.]

Let me now COMMEND this precept to you,

## 1. As a test to try your character—

[In this view it is particularly set before us by St. Paul: “They that are of the flesh, do *mind* the things after the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit<sup>a</sup>.” Now, here the very same term is used as in our text: and it forms a line of distinction between the carnal and the spiritual man, between “him who is in a state of death, and him who

<sup>a</sup> Rom. viii. 5.

is in the enjoyment of life and peace<sup>b</sup>." It may be thought, indeed, that the adoption of evangelical sentiments, and the making an open profession of piety, will supersede this test: but nothing can ever set it aside. The Philippian converts judged that they were in a state of acceptance with God, because they professed faith in Christ: but, respecting many of them, St. Paul said, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and tell you now even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction:" and then, assigning the reasons for his judgment, he combines with other things this charge; "They *mind* earthly things<sup>c</sup>." I call every one of you, then, to try yourselves by this infallible mark. It is a point easily ascertained. You need only examine your lives from day to day; and see what it is that interests you most, and forms the leading objects of your pursuit. You may be deeply engaged about earthly things, and yet be right in the sight of God, provided heavenly things be regarded by you with supreme and paramount affection. Bring then, I pray you, this matter to a trial; and never cease to implore of God that spiritual discernment which He alone can give, and that uprightness of heart which is indispensable to the forming of a right judgment.]

## 2. As a rule, to regulate your conduct—

[Verily, *this* must distinguish every child of God: though *in* the world, we must not be *of* it: "our conversation must be in heaven." This is our *duty* — — — our honour — — — our happiness — — — our security — — — There is no standing still in religion. If we advance not, we recede. Be not contented to rest in a low state, but "press forward for the highest attainments in holiness; forgetting all that is behind, and reaching forward to that which is before, till you have fully attained the prize of your high calling.]"

<sup>b</sup> Rom. viii. 5.

<sup>c</sup> Phil. iii. 18, 19.

## MMCLXXXIII.

2183

### THE EXALTED STATE OF A CHRISTIAN.

Col. iii. 3, 4. *Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

INNUMERABLE are the advantages which revelation gives us over the heathen philosophers: for, whilst it discovers to us a much sublimer rule of conduct than they were able to devise, it affords motives

sufficient to incline us to duty, and teaches us where to obtain strength for the performance of it. The duty it enjoins is nothing less than a supreme delight in heavenly things: but at the same time it animates us by the consideration of the privileges we enjoy and the prospects we have in view. What the Christian possesses in these respects may be seen in the words before us: in which we notice,

### I. His exalted state—

The Christian is a paradox; being both dead and living at the same time. He is “dead”—

[Once he was alive wholly and entirely to *legal hopes* and *carnal enjoyments*: but now is dead to both. He now sees that he has no righteousness of his own for his justification before God, and no strength of his own for the fulfilment of God's holy will: he therefore renounces all dependence on himself, and seeks righteousness and strength in Christ alone<sup>a</sup> — — —]

As for the enjoyment of the things of time and sense, he has the same capacity for it as ever; but he has lost his inclination for it, and no longer seeks his happiness in it. He feels the emptiness and vanity of all sublunary good: and, whilst he is thankful for the portion of it that is committed to him, he regards the whole world as an object that is crucified, and is himself crucified unto it<sup>b</sup> — — —]

Yet is he alive in a far higher sense than ever he was before—

[He has in Christ a “life,” whereby he is enabled to live unto his God, and to walk in the paths of holiness and peace — — — This life is “hid with Christ in God;” so that, whilst the world seeth it not, Satan is not able to destroy it. When Adam had life, so to speak, in his own possession, his great adversary prevailed over him and slew him: the believer therefore is placed beyond the reach of Satan's efforts, and has his life treasured up in heaven, whither Satan has no access, and in God, over whom he can have no power — — — Indeed Christ himself liveth in the believer<sup>c</sup>, and is “his very life.” What the soul is to the body, that is Christ to the believer's soul, acting in all its faculties, and operating in all its energies — — — And hence the believer, however dead he is in himself, is enabled to live in a way that no other creature in the universe can live.]

<sup>a</sup> Isai. xlv. 24.

<sup>b</sup> Gal. vi. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Gal. ii. 20.



But the believer must be yet further viewed by us in,

## II. His glorious expectations—

The Saviour, though once as unknown by the world as they, and still more despised, shall one day appear again in glory—

[The time is fast approaching, when he shall descend from heaven in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father and his holy angels. Whilst he was upon earth, his glory was, for the most part, veiled. A little of it shined forth on Mount Tabor; and his own more immediate followers “ beheld somewhat of his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father.” But “ the world knew him not:” “ the darkness could not apprehend his light:” but in the day of judgment his appearance will be such as becomes his august character, so that he will be equally acknowledged by all, whether friends or enemies, as “ King of kings and Lord of lords ” — — —]

Then will the whole assembly of believers appear with him in glory—

[They will be gathered from every quarter of the globe “ to meet their Lord in the air,” every one of them with “ bodies like unto his glorious body,” and souls like unto his glorified soul: for they will be altogether “ like him, when they shall see him as he is<sup>d</sup>.” They will then appear as *monuments of his grace*, as *trophies of his victory*, as *heirs of his glory*. Truly he will be admired and glorified in them, when it shall be seen what sovereignty he has exercised in the choice of them, and what power he has put forth for their salvation<sup>e</sup>. It will then be seen, not that *they* triumphed, but that *he* triumphed *for* them, (upon his cross<sup>f</sup>,) and *over* them, (by his converting grace<sup>g</sup>,) and *in* them, by the sanctifying efficacy of his Word and Spirit<sup>h</sup> — — — Then will they be seated with him upon his throne, and as “ joint-heirs with him ” be partakers of his kingdom for evermore — — —]

Of this the present state of their souls justifies an assured expectation—

[The connexion between the two parts of my text must on no account be overlooked. Both “ the death ” of the saints, and “ their life ” warrant an assurance, that they shall reign with Christ in glory. Who can hurt the soul of one that is dead? So neither can any one destroy a soul that is

<sup>d</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Thess. i. 10.

<sup>f</sup> Col. i. 15.

<sup>g</sup> Ps xlv. 5. 2 Cor. x. 5.

<sup>h</sup> John x. 28.

“dead to sin:” in both cases, the soul is hid with Christ in God. Again, when our life was committed to the keeping of the first Adam, he, though perfect, and in Paradise, suffered it to be wrested from him by the subtilty of Satan. To prevent a recurrence of such a calamity, our renewed life is not committed to our own care, but is treasured up in the second Adam, and is hid with Christ in God, out of the reach of any enemy. Who then shall prevail against us? Not all the powers of earth or hell shall effect our ruin: “our life being hid with Christ in God,” we are placed beyond the reach of evil; and *therefore* may be sure, that when he shall appear again to judge the world, we also shall appear with him in glory. *This* seems to be the true import of the passage; and nothing less than this will adequately convey to our minds the security and blessedness of a believing soul — — —]

ADDRESS—

1. Let believers be sensible of the distinguished mercy vouchsafed unto them—

[“Who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord?” Behold the unregenerate world: they are “dead,” it is true; but to what are they dead? Not to self, but to God and to every thing that concerns the soul; whilst you are dead to the law, and to sin, and to the world, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ. Light and darkness are not more different from each other, than is the spiritual from the natural man, and the regenerate man from him that remains dead in trespasses and sins. And who has put the difference between you and the unbelieving world? Who has made you children of God and heirs of glory, whilst so many millions of your fellow-creatures have the wicked one for their father, and everlasting misery as their portion? Verily, if you do not bless and adore your God, and rend the air with your hosannahs, the very stones will cry out against you.]

2. Let them endeavour to walk worthy of their high calling—

[*This* is the entire scope both of the preceding and the following context. “Set your affections on things above,” “for ye are dead,” &c. Then after the text it is added, “Mortify *therefore* your members upon earth.” *This* should be the effect of all God’s mercies to us: and I call on every one who professes to have received life from Christ, to give evidence of that life, by “walking in all things as Christ walked” — — —]

## MMCLXXXIV.

2184

CHRIST IS ALL.

Col. iii. 11. *Christ is all, and in all.*

MEN are ever ready to value themselves upon their natural endowments, their civil distinctions, or their religious privileges; and to imagine that a pre-eminence in these things gives them some kind of claim to honour and respect, even from God himself. But nothing which a natural man can possess, will give him any such advantage over others as shall entitle him to boast, as though his salvation were in any measure of, or from, himself: the most learned "Greek" must be indebted to divine teaching as much as the unlettered "Scythian;" and the Jew that has been admitted into covenant with God by "circumcision," be as much saved by the blood and righteousness of Christ as an "uncircumcised" or idolatrous "barbarian:" the "free-man" has no superiority above the "slave;" all stand upon the same footing with respect to salvation; all without exception are dependent upon Christ for all their mercies: in all cases, relating to all persons, and to all the circumstances of each, the creature is nothing, and Christ is all; "he is all in all." We shall,

I. Illustrate this truth—

If we consult the Scriptures, or our own experience, Christ will be found ALL in procuring, imparting, maintaining, and completing our salvation.

1. In procuring it—

[Who amongst the sons of men first *suggested* to our Lord the plan of saving our ruined race through the sacrifice of himself? Who *assisted* him *in* performing the mighty work which he had undertaken? "Did he not tread the wine-press of God's wrath alone<sup>a</sup>?" When he "finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness," "there was none with him;" "he looked and there was no man; therefore his own arm brought salvation<sup>b</sup>." Who can *add* to the work

<sup>a</sup> Isai. lxiii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Isai. lix. 16.



which he has accomplished? Who can bring forth any works of supererogation or perfection that shall eke out his righteousness, or give weight and efficacy to his sacrifice? Surely Christ alone must be acknowledged as "the author of eternal salvation<sup>c</sup>."

## 2. In imparting it—

[The state of mankind may be fitly compared to the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision<sup>d</sup>: they are altogether incapable of exerting themselves in the way of godliness, or of performing the functions of the spiritual life. He who commanded Lazarus to come forth from the grave, and who calls himself "the resurrection and the life," must quicken them, or they will remain to all eternity "dead in trespasses and sins." If "we choose him, and love him, it is because he has first chosen us, and loved us<sup>e</sup>." There is not a saint on earth that must not say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am<sup>f</sup>." "It is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, that we are born, but of God<sup>g</sup>." Through the pride of our hearts indeed, we are too apt to boast: but "who amongst us has any thing which he has not received<sup>h</sup>?" Who must not trace up to God both his "disposition to will, and his ability to do" what is right and good<sup>i</sup>? Nothing but the most consummate pride can hinder us from confessing, that "salvation is, not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy<sup>k</sup>:" and that, "if we have been saved and called with an holy calling, it has not been according to our works, but according to God's eternal purpose and grace<sup>l</sup>."

## 3. In maintaining it—

[Nothing is more evident than our inability to maintain our natural life: however careful we be in the use of means, we cannot secure our bodies against the effects of disease or accident. The preservation of our spiritual life is yet further beyond the reach of our foresight or our skill. If left by God for one moment, we shall fall. If Adam, even in Paradise, yielded to temptation, notwithstanding he was a perfect man, how much more shall we, who are full of evil? St. Paul acknowledges that, notwithstanding all the grace he had received, he "had not in himself a sufficiency even to think a good thought<sup>m</sup>." As water ceases to flow when its communication with the fountain is cut off, or as light is instantly extinguished as soon as the rays of the sun are intercepted, so all spiritual life would cease in us for ever, if "*Christ, who is our*

<sup>c</sup> Heb. v. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Ezek. xxxvii. 1—3.

<sup>e</sup> Jer. xxxi. 3. John xv. 16.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.

<sup>g</sup> John i. 13.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

<sup>i</sup> Phil. ii. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. ix. 16.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Tim. i. 9.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 5.

life<sup>n</sup>," should for one instant withhold his quickening influence<sup>o</sup>. From hence it is that we are necessitated to "live entirely by faith in the Son of God," and to "receive continually out of his fulness<sup>p</sup>."] ]

#### 4. In completing it—

[While we continue in the body, we shall be as dependent upon Christ for every thing, as we have been at any period of our existence. He who has been "the author, must also be the *finisher* of our faith<sup>q</sup>:" the same "Zerubbabel who laid the foundation of this spiritual work, must finish it with his own hands, in order that, when the head-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, we may cry, Grace, grace unto it for ever<sup>r</sup>." Indeed, it is not only to the end of life that Christ will carry on his work, but long after we have mouldered in the grave; "he will raise us up again at the last day<sup>s</sup>," appoint us our proper portion, exalt us to his throne of glory, and be the continued source of our happiness through all eternity<sup>t</sup>.]

This being a truth of infinite importance, we shall endeavour to,

#### II. Improve it—

It is not a mere assent to this doctrine that will profit our souls, but the application of it to our hearts and consciences. Let us then apply it—

##### 1. For reproof—

In how strong a light does the guilt of *worldly* men appear when viewed through the medium of this truth! God assures us that no distinctions of whatever kind will effectually make us happy; and that the happiness of all must be altogether in, and through Christ. The worldling, on the contrary, declares, by his practice at least, that the world, and not Christ, is the true source of rational enjoyment. What is this but to "make God a liar?" and shall this be deemed a light offence in the day of judgment?— — — But this subject more particularly condemns the *self-righteous*. These, instead of looking to Christ for the free, unmerited, and continued exercise of his grace, are ready to boast that they are not as other men, and to go forth in a dependence on their own strength and goodness: instead of regarding him as their entire "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," they transfer much of his glory to themselves; instead of making

<sup>n</sup> Col. iii. 4.

<sup>o</sup> John xv. 5. Χωρὶς ἐμοῦ.

<sup>p</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>q</sup> Heb. xii. 2.

<sup>r</sup> Zech. iv. 7—9.

<sup>s</sup> John vi. 39, 40.

<sup>t</sup> Rev. vii. 17. and xxi. 23.

him their ALL, they make him almost NOTHING. Do such persons honour Christ? or can they expect to be honoured by him before the assembled universe? — — — Even *true believers* will see much cause to be ashamed, when they reflect how low their thoughts of Christ have been, and how cold their devoutest affections towards him — — — Above all, *the ministers of the Gospel*, even the most faithful amongst them, have reason to be ashamed. They know that they, who neglect Christ, neglect their *all*; and that the consequences of that neglect will be inexpressibly dreadful: should not then their “eyes run down with tears day and night for the pride” and ignorance of their people? Should they not “beseech them,” yea, and entreat God for them, with floods of tears, if that by any means they might prevail on some to embrace the Saviour? Have they not reason to tremble lest the blood of multitudes who perish should be required at their hands? Surely they, who are ready to condemn their zeal, should rather pity them, and pray for them, and encourage their activity to the utmost.]

## 2. For direction—

[*They who are inquiring*, what shall we do to be saved? have here the shortest and plainest direction that can be given them: if they remember that “Christ is all,” and heartily endeavour to make him *their* all, they can never perish. Their danger arises not less from their aversion to exalt the Saviour, than it does from the love of worldly and carnal lusts; yea, it is far easier to mortify any vicious habit whatever, than to bring the soul to an unfeigned acquiescence in Christ as our ALL: we are always wanting to retain some ground of self-preference, and self-complacency: but, if ever we be saved by him, we must lie in his hands as new-born infants, and be contented to be “washed, justified, and sanctified by him” alone” — — — *The drooping and doubting Christian* may also find in these words the very direction which he most of all stands in need of. Doubts and fears arise, either from a defective view of Christ’s all-sufficiency, or from an apprehension of our own want of meetness to participate his benefits: we wish to see ourselves purified in some measure, in order that we may be warranted to lay hold on the promises: whereas the Scripture teaches us, first to lay hold on the promises *as sinners*, that “by them we may” become saints, and “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit<sup>x</sup>.” We mean not to encourage sin of any kind; God forbid: but we must go to Christ as having nothing in ourselves, that in him we may have all.]

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 11.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1.



## 3. For comfort—

[Doubtless, to those who determine to abide in sin, no consolation whatever can be administered, for “the wrath of God does, and ever will, abide upon them:” but to those who would forsake sin, though they be now *the very chief of sinners*, our text affords unspeakable comfort. They are not to heal themselves in part, and then to apply to the Physician, but to go to Christ just as they are, and to cast themselves entirely upon him. O that some might be encouraged to flee to him for refuge! for as he *must be ALL* in the very best of men, so he is *willing to be ALL* to the vilest of the human race: “him that goeth unto him he will in no wise cast out” — — — As for *the true believer*, the subject before us is the one ground of all his comfort: if Christ were not to be his *all*, he would absolutely despair; because he knows that “without Christ he can do nothing:” but knowing also the all-sufficiency and faithfulness of Christ, he commits himself cheerfully into his hands, “confident that he who hath begun the good work in him, will perform it to the end<sup>y</sup>,” and “preserve him blameless to his heavenly kingdom.”]

<sup>y</sup> Phil. i. 6.

## MMCLXXXV. 2185

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SANCTIFICATION.

Col. iii. 11. *Christ is all, and in all<sup>a</sup>.*

IN order to ascertain the true sense of any passage of Scripture, two things are to be attended to: we should mark the scope of the context, and compare the terms or phrases with similar passages of Holy Writ. By separating these canons of interpretation, we shall often overlook the true meaning of God's word, and put upon it a forced construction; whereas, if we unite them, we shall almost always find its just import.

<sup>a</sup> The Author, in the preceding Discourse, has treated this text as commentators in general have done, in reference to our justification before God. But he apprehends on further consideration, that it refers rather to our sanctification. In either sense, the position is true, that “Christ is all;” but the latter interpretation seems more exactly to convey the mind of the Spirit in this passage. The reader, by comparing the two Discourses, will be enabled to judge for himself.

It is undeniable that the verses which precede and follow our text refer to sanctification<sup>b</sup>; nor is there any thing which properly relates to our justification: and therefore we have a strong presumptive ground for interpreting the words of our text in reference to the new nature, which is spoken of in the verse immediately before it: nor could any thing but the peculiarity of the expression lead one for a moment to look for any other sense. But it seems that to interpret the word "Christ," as meaning the image of Christ, or the New Man, is to take a great, and almost an unwarrantable, liberty with Scripture. Nevertheless, if we compare some other passages with the text<sup>c</sup>, we shall find that we are fully authorized to put this construction upon it, and that there is no necessity to understand it in any other way than that which the context so evidently requires.

The meaning then of the words before us is simply this. We should be daily putting off our old and corrupt nature, and be putting on a new and holy nature; because nothing else will be at all regarded by God: whatever advantages we possess, we have nothing, if we be not holy: on the other hand, whatever disadvantages we labour under, we shall suffer no loss, if we be holy: for the image of "Christ" on the soul "is all, in all" persons, and under all circumstances: where that is, God will be pleased; and where that is not, he will be eternally displeased.

In order to confirm this momentous truth, we shall shew, that, in the eyes of God, *our restoration to the Divine image "is all in all."* It is,

I. The one scope of all his plans—

<sup>b</sup> See ver. 1—14.

<sup>c</sup> See 2 Cor. xiii. 5. where "Christ in us" must be understood of his image, because it is that whereby we are to ascertain whether we be in the faith. See also Gal. iv. 19. where "Christ formed in us" cannot be understood of Christ *personally*, but of Christ *spiritually*, i. e. of his image. Above all, see Rom. xiii. 14. where the very metaphor which occurs in our context, is used. "Put on the new man," says our context, "for Christ," i. e. the putting on of Christ, or of the new man, "is all." And, in the passage referred to, is the very expression, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

What did he design in the redemption of the world at large ?

[When first he determined to rescue man from perdition, he decreed that he would "create us anew in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, in which he ordained that we should walk<sup>d</sup>."

The means which he used for the accomplishment of our salvation had especial respect to this end, not to save us *in* our sins, but *from* them<sup>e</sup>.

He sent his only dear Son to take our nature, and in that nature to live, to die, to rise again. But in all this he aimed, not at our happiness merely, but our restoration to the image which we had lost<sup>f</sup>." This is specified in terms peculiarly strong and energetic, in order that we may not overlook this truth as if it were only of secondary importance<sup>g</sup>.

He gave his Holy Spirit also for the same end: he gave him to humble us<sup>h</sup>, to renew us<sup>i</sup>, to mortify all our vile lusts and passions<sup>k</sup>, to fashion us after the Divine image<sup>l</sup>, and to perfect that image in our souls<sup>m</sup>.]

What does he design in imparting that redemption to individuals ?

[Wherefore did he choose any of us from before the foundation of the world? It was "that we might be holy, and without blame before him in love<sup>n</sup>." Why has he revealed his grace in our hearts? It was to "teach us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world<sup>o</sup>." If he apply his promises to our souls, or hide his face from us, it is alike "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness<sup>p</sup>." Whatever be his dispensations towards us, "this is his will, even our sanctification<sup>q</sup>;" and this is his ultimate design in all, even to "carry on the good work he has begun<sup>r</sup>," to "sanctify us wholly<sup>s</sup>," and to "perfect that which concerneth us<sup>t</sup>."]

But holiness is also,

## II. The one object of his regard—

<sup>d</sup> Eph. ii. 10.                      <sup>e</sup> Matt. i. 21. Acts iii. 26.

<sup>f</sup> Gal. i. 4. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. and ii. 24. Tit. ii. 14.

<sup>g</sup> Eph. v. 25—27.                      <sup>h</sup> John xvi. 8—11.                      <sup>i</sup> Tit. iii. 5, 6.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. viii. 13.

<sup>l</sup> Eph. iv. 23, 24. with 2 Cor. i. 22. A "seal" is an impress of the Divine image; and an "earnest" is the commencement of heavenly purity and joy.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

<sup>n</sup> Eph. i. 4.

<sup>o</sup> Tit. ii. 11, 12.

<sup>p</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 1. with Heb. xii. 10.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 3.

<sup>r</sup> Phil. i. 6.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

<sup>t</sup> Ps. cxxxviii. 8.



Nothing but that is regarded by him in this world—

[The external ordinances of religion are not only worthless, but even hateful, in his sight, if destitute of solid piety<sup>u</sup>. On the other hand, the smallest particle of genuine goodness is not overlooked by him<sup>x</sup>. Even the semblance of it has sometimes been rewarded by him, in order that he might shew to mankind how great a value he has for it, where it really exists<sup>y</sup>. One single disposition is declared by him to be of great price in his sight<sup>z</sup>. The purposes which have never been realized in act, are highly commended by him<sup>a</sup>. And wherever he sees a person labouring to do his will, he invariably reveals to him his love in a more abundant measure<sup>b</sup>, and communicates to him his richest blessings<sup>c</sup>.]

Nothing but that will be regarded by him in the world to come—

[When we shall stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, the inquiry will be, not, what we have professed, but what we have done<sup>d</sup>: and a Gentile who has served God according to the light that he enjoyed, will be preferred before the Christian, who has not made a suitable improvement of his superior advantages<sup>e</sup>. Apparently trivial occurrences will be noticed in that day; and rewards will be dispensed, not according to the greatness and splendour of our actions, but according to their intrinsic qualities, and to the principle evinced by them<sup>f</sup>. We must not indeed imagine that there is any *merit* in our poor services, for there is imperfection in them all; and, “if we had done all that is commanded us, we should be only unprofitable servants:” but God delights in holiness; and wherever he beholds it, he will, of his own grace and mercy, bestow upon it a proportionate reward, exalting those to the highest thrones in glory, who have made the greatest improvement of the talents committed to them<sup>g</sup>.

There will be no distinction made, except what is grounded on the different degrees of conformity to the Divine image which the different individuals have attained. God will not respect the circumcised more than the uncircumcised, or the rich and learned more than the poor and illiterate. In all persons equally the image of Christ will be sought for; and the possession, or want of it, will determine their eternal state: “Christ will then be, as he now is, all, and in all.”]

We conclude with INQUIRING, *Who amongst you is like-minded with God?*

<sup>u</sup> Isai. i. 11—16.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Kings xiv. 13.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 29.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 4.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings viii. 18.

<sup>b</sup> John xiv. 23.

<sup>c</sup> Isai. lviii. 10, 11.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. vii. 21—23. and xxv. 31—46.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. ii. 25—27.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. x. 42.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xxv. 19—23.

## 1. Ye children of this world—

[How far are ye from according with God. With him, *Christ* is all; with you, *the world*. If ye may but enjoy the pleasures, the honours, the riches of the world, ye care not about the image of Christ: to be rich in faith and good works is not the object of your ambition: *that* you leave to the old, the sick, the enthusiasts. But ah! if Christ be *all*, as indeed he is, think what a vanity you are pursuing: think how poor ye will be in the day of judgment; and how you will then execrate your present ways. Be persuaded to be wise in time: and beg without delay that “Christ may be made unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption<sup>h</sup>.”]

## 2. Ye self-deceiving professors—

[How many are there in the Church, who will talk about Christ, and speak of him as the ground of all their hopes, while yet they are shamefully destitute of his image! Yes, grievous it is to say, that there are “many vain-talkers and deceivers” now, as well as in the apostolic age; many that are proud and passionate; many that are earthly-minded and covetous; many that are unchaste and lewd; many that are deceitful in their words, and dishonest in their dealings; many, in short, whose tempers, and dispositions, and conduct, are a disgrace to their profession. Know ye, if such there be here present, that ye are as unlike to God as Satan himself is; and that all your knowledge, all your experiences, and all your professions, will only aggravate your condemnation, if you die in your present state<sup>i</sup>. You do well to rely on Christ, and to make him your *all* in point of dependence; but know for a certainty, that, however you may pretend to trust in him, you never can be saved by him, unless you become new creatures<sup>k</sup>: for “without holiness no man shall see the Lord<sup>l</sup>.”]

## 3. Ye true believers—

[You can appeal to God that you are like-minded with him in this grand point; and that you desire as much to be saved from sin, as to be delivered from hell itself. This is a blessed evidence that ye are born of God<sup>m</sup>. While ye are thus panting after holiness, ye have nothing to fear: your faith is sound<sup>n</sup>, your hope is scriptural<sup>o</sup>, and saving<sup>p</sup>. Go on then from grace to grace, from strength to strength<sup>q</sup>. Be daily

<sup>h</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>i</sup> Job xxxvi. 13.

<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

<sup>l</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

<sup>m</sup> 1 John iii. 10.

<sup>n</sup> Jam. ii. 22.

<sup>o</sup> 1 John iii. 3.

<sup>p</sup> Rom. v. 5. and viii. 24.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 18.

putting off the old man with its lusts<sup>r</sup>, and putting on the new man with all its characteristic graces<sup>s</sup>. Be “growing up thus into Christ in all things as your living Head<sup>t</sup>,” till you have arrived at the full measure of the stature of Christ<sup>u</sup> :” and when you have attained a perfect meetness for the enjoyment of your God, you shall be like him, and with him for ever<sup>x</sup>.]

<sup>r</sup> ver. 8, 9.<sup>s</sup> ver. 12, 13.<sup>t</sup> Eph. iv. 15.<sup>u</sup> Eph. iv. 13.<sup>x</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

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## CHRISTIAN CONSTANCY DISPLAYED.

Col. iii. 12—14. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

THE end of Christianity is, to restore man to the Divine image, in order to his ultimate restoration to the blessedness which he has forfeited and lost: nor does God ever accomplish the latter but through the medium of the former. Doubtless the Lord Jesus Christ, by his own obedience unto death, effects our reconciliation with God: *that is his work, and his alone.* But our “meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light” is the work of his Holy Spirit<sup>a</sup>; and it is wrought in every one of “God’s elect:” for no one is “chosen to salvation but through the sanctification of the Spirit, united with, and added to, the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ<sup>b</sup>.” Hence, in the chapter before us, the Apostle marks distinctly wherein that renovation consists: it is “a putting off of the old man, and a putting on of the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness<sup>c</sup>.” The particular evils of the old man, which are to be put off, are enumerated in ver. 8, 9. The particular graces of the new man, which are to be put on, are stated in the words of my text: and,

<sup>a</sup> Col. i. 12. <sup>b</sup> 1 Pet. i. 2. <sup>c</sup> ver. 9, 10. with Eph. iv. 24.



inasmuch as this transformation of the soul into the Divine image, or “the forming of Christ within us,” is that which, beyond all other marks of distinction, will operate to our final acceptance with God<sup>d</sup>, the Apostle urges us to meet God, as it were, upon his own terms: “Put on, *therefore*,” the new man: and he urges us, by the consideration of the distinguishing grace which we ourselves have received: “Put on, *therefore*, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,” this new man. Now, the attainment of this change is what we all profess to hope for; and, therefore, it should be sought by us with all diligence, and be manifested by us in the whole of our life and conversation.

To impress this upon your minds, I will shew,

I. Wherein the Christian character consists—

If we would have a full view of this subject, we must enter into the Christian’s experience *before God*. But that would lead us beyond the proper scope of our text, which confines our attention to the Christian in his daily walk *before man*. Adhering then to our text, let us see what the Christian should be,

1. In the daily habit of his mind—

[You cannot but know, brethren, what proud, selfish creatures we are by nature; caring for nothing but our own ease, pleasure, honour, and advancement. Except in very particular cases, where relative or social ties have created a more than ordinary interest in our minds, how little do we feel for those around us; either for those with whom we have more immediate intercourse, or those who are bowed down with sorrows of any kind!

But, in opposition to these hateful dispositions, we should put on, in the place of indifference, compassion; in the place of roughness, courtesy; and in the place of pride, humility. We may conceive how a mother’s bowels would yearn over her first-born child, when writhing in agony, and perishing through want. Such “bowels of mercies should we put on” towards all who are in want or trouble of any kind; participating, at least by sympathy, the sorrows which we cannot

<sup>d</sup> This is the meaning of “Christ is all,” *i. e.* the *image of Christ*. Compare Gal. iv. 19.

alleviate in any other way. And towards every person with whom we come in contact, whether he be a superior, an equal, or an inferior, yea, and whether he be a friend or foe, we should “put on kindness,” and exercise nothing but benevolence. As least of all, we should be ever ready to take the lowest place, “putting on humbleness of mind,” and, with unaffected simplicity, rendering ourselves the servants of all around us. This, I say, should be the daily habit of our minds; not called forth by great exertion, but operating readily, naturally, habitually, as the feelings of a mother towards her infant offspring.]

## 2. In his deportment towards others—

[Here, alas! we cannot but be sensible what irritability we have shewn on the slightest occasions; what displeasure, when an offence has been of any continuance; what alienation we have felt from those who differ from us in their sentiments and conduct; and what vindictiveness, when any serious injury has been sustained by us. But all of this is sadly unbecoming us as the followers of Christ, whom, by every possible consideration, we are bound to imitate and resemble. For anger, we should “put on meekness;” and “long-suffering,” in the place of retaliation or complaint. Instead of harbouring intolerance, we should “put on forbearance;” and, instead of retaining a vindictive spirit against any, we should call to mind how many and great offences Christ has forgiven us; and should gladly “mete to our fellow-creatures the measure which we ourselves have received from him.” This is the spirit which we are to manifest on all occasions; and this is to be the constant tenour of our way, in all our intercourse with mankind.]

## 3. In the governing principle of his life—

[Here is man’s great defect. By nature we are altogether wrapt up in *self*. *Self* is the principle that actuates us in every thing, and the end for which alone we live. Self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-interest, occupy, for the most part, our every thought, and regulate our every motion. But there is a new principle that is imparted to the Christian, and under its influence his whole life must be directed: and this is, the principle of love or charity. This is the root and essence of every other grace: it comprehends all, combines all, consolidates all. Whatever there be that enters into the composition of Christian “perfection, *this* is the bond” which unites it altogether, and forms it into one harmonious mass. It is the spirit which pervades and actuates every faculty of the soul, even as the soul directs and regulates every member of the body. The soul, in operation, causes every member to

perform its proper office; and love, presiding, will keep every Christian grace in full activity. This, therefore, we must “put on, over all, and above all” the other graces that have been mentioned; that so nothing may be wanting to the proper discharge of all our duties.]

That I may the better commend to you this state of mind, I will endeavour to point out,

## II. The vast importance of it—

Notice particularly what the Apostle urges in my text: “Put on, *as the elect of God, holy and beloved,*” these several graces. *God calls for it: man expects it: consistency requires it.*

### 1. God calls for it—

[You are his elect. But to what has he called you? Not to salvation only, but “unto holiness<sup>e</sup>.” Hear particularly how St. Paul states this matter: “God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy and without blame before him in love<sup>f</sup>.*” And again: “He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son<sup>g</sup>.” Now if, instead of cultivating these graces, we retain “the old man” in all his power and efficiency, we defeat the very object which God, supposing him to have elected us, has had in view. And will God endure that? Our blessed Lord said, “Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil<sup>h</sup>?” Know, then, if we continue devils, as Judas did, we shall, with him, “go to *our own place<sup>i</sup>,*” and not to the habitation of the just. We can never be “beloved” of our God, if we be not “holy.”]

### 2. Man expects it—

[If we profess to be “the elect of God,” man will very reasonably demand a proof of it. We may tell him of our *faith*: but he will reply, ‘Shew me your *works*. As for your faith, God alone can judge of that: but I must judge of the tree by its fruits: and, if you profess to be distinguished above your fellows by the special favour of your God, I have a right to ask, “What do ye *more than others<sup>k</sup>?*” Have you “put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness<sup>l</sup>?” Let me see what your tempers are in your family, and towards all around you, and especially

<sup>e</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 7.

<sup>f</sup> Eph. i. 4.

<sup>g</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

<sup>h</sup> John vi. 70.

<sup>i</sup> Acts i. 25.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. v. 47.

<sup>l</sup> Eph. iv. 22—24.



under circumstances of heavy trial. Tell me not of your inward experiences *before God*: I must judge by your spirit and conduct *towards man*: and, if I find you not endued with the graces of the Spirit, I can account you no better than others; yea, rather, I must account you worse; since, with all your high professions, you are no better than hypocrites and deceivers.']

### 3. Consistency requires it—

[*This is the peculiar force of my text.* When we call ourselves “the elect of God,” we *profess* to have been “renewed in the spirit of our mind:” for, if we do not profess this, the most abandoned reprobate in the universe has as much right to call himself “elect,” as we. “Are you, then, destitute of compassion? How dwelleth the love of God in you<sup>m</sup>?” Are you proud, passionate, intolerant, unforgiving? “*Lie not against the truth<sup>n</sup>:*” ye are “children of darkness, and not of light;” “not children of God, but children of the devil<sup>o</sup>.” To “call Christ, Lord, Lord,” without walking in his steps, is only to deceive and ruin your own souls.]

BEHOLD then, brethren,

#### 1. The excellence of Christian principles—

[Christianity requires us to refer all good to God; and to say, after all that we have attained, “By the grace of God I am what I am<sup>p</sup>.” But will this tend to encourage us in sin? No; “the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world<sup>q</sup>,” and “the hope that we have in Christ will, of necessity, lead us to purify ourselves, even as He is pure<sup>r</sup>.”]

#### 2. The beauty of the Christian character—

[Look at a man *habited*, as my text describes, in all those lovely graces; and “so clothed with them,” as never to be seen without them: and then tell me, whether he be not a lovely character. Is there a man in the universe that does not admire “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and forgiveness,” and all under the direction and government of “love?” I grant, that, from envy and jealousy, the world may be filled with rage against a person possessing all these graces: for so were they incensed against our blessed Lord himself, in whom these virtues existed in their utmost possible perfection: but this was on other grounds than on account of his virtues: he

<sup>m</sup> 1 John iii. 17.

<sup>n</sup> Jam. iii. 14.

<sup>o</sup> 1 John iii. 7—10.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.

<sup>q</sup> Tit. ii. 11, 12.

<sup>r</sup> 1 John iii. 3.

professed himself the Messiah; and *therefore* they put him to death: his tempers, and dispositions, and habits, they could not but admire. And so, at this day, the men that hate us, under the idea of "God's elect," cannot but acknowledge that the consistent Christian is, of all characters, the loveliest upon the face of the earth<sup>s</sup>. I call upon all of you therefore, brethren, to "shew forth these virtues;" and thus to "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by well-doing<sup>t</sup>."]

<sup>s</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 4.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 15.

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## LOVE TO THE SCRIPTURES RECOMMENDED.

Col. iii. 16. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.*

IT was declared to be one of the principal advantages which the Jews enjoyed above the heathen, that they had "the Oracles of God committed to them<sup>a</sup>:" and we are still more highly privileged, in that we have in our hands the New-Testament Scriptures, whereby we are enabled to understand the writings of Moses and the prophets more fully than the writers themselves understood them. What part of the Christian records the Colossians could possess, we do not exactly know: we are sure that the sacred canon was not yet complete; nor were the different epistles which are come down to us, collected into one volume. It is probable enough that one or two of the Gospels might have been seen by them: and the possession of such a treasure would be a very sufficient ground for the exhortation before us. To *us* who enjoy a complete collection of all that God has ever seen fit to reveal,—at least, as much of it as is at all necessary for our edification and comfort,—the exhortation may be addressed with proportionably greater weight. To impress it the more powerfully upon your minds, we shall take occasion from it to shew you, in what light the sacred volume should be regarded, and in what manner it should be improved.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. iii. 1, 2.

## I. In what light it should be regarded—

The word which has been transmitted to us was written by different men, in different and distant ages of the world. But though it was written by men, it is indeed the word of God; because those holy men wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost<sup>b</sup>. Indeed, the word is, properly and strictly speaking, “the word of Christ”—

[Our blessed and adorable Lord ministered to the Church not only before his incarnation, but from the very beginning of the world. It was He who preached by Noah to the antediluvian world<sup>c</sup>. It was He who inspired all the prophets in all succeeding ages of the Church; and enabled them to testify beforehand respecting his future sufferings and glory<sup>d</sup>. Thus was he the real Author of the Old Testament. With respect to the New Testament, whatever is revealed there must also be traced to the same source. It was Christ who taught his Apostles, and who “by his Spirit brought all things to their remembrance,” and, in a personal appearance to Saul, revealed to him the whole scheme and plan of redemption<sup>e</sup>. What the Apostles spake in his name, they affirmed to be, not the word of man, but of God<sup>f</sup>: and what they wrote in their epistles, they declared to be “the commandment of their Lord<sup>g</sup>.” Hence every part of the sacred volume is justly called by the Apostle “the word of Christ.”]

## In this view it ought to be regarded by us—

[Let us suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ were now to come amongst us, and to teach in our Churches, as once he did in the streets and synagogues of Judea: should we not, if we knew him to be that very Jesus, listen to him with the deepest attention? Should we not revolve in our thoughts the various subjects of his discourse, and labour to ascertain their true import? If we could suppose him now addressing us from the cross, and appealing to his sufferings as an unquestionable demonstration of his love, and an irresistible argument for our adherence to him; should we not be melted to tears? should we not be ready to exclaim, “What have we to do any more with idols?” “Other lords have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.” Or, lastly, let us suppose that we saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God<sup>h</sup>: let us suppose he spake to us now, as once he did from Mount Sinai, with thunder-

<sup>b</sup> 2 Pet. i. 21.<sup>c</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 18—20.<sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.<sup>e</sup> Gal. i. 11, 12.<sup>f</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 13.<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 37.<sup>h</sup> Acts vii. 56.



ings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and the sound of the trumpet waxing louder and louder<sup>i</sup>; should we not tremble? should we not be ready to engage, as the Israelites did, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient?" Were we to hear him speaking to us in any of these ways, the word would not more certainly be *his*, than this word is which we now possess: and therefore whatever sentiments of fear or love or gratitude we should feel on account of such revelations of his will, we ought to feel in reference to that sacred volume which we have in our hands: whenever we look upon it, we should say, This is the word of Him who came down from heaven to instruct me; of Him who died upon the cross to save me; of Him who now sits enthroned in glory, and will hereafter fix my doom according to it<sup>k</sup>.]

Let us next inquire,

II. In what manner it should be improved—

We should not merely regard it with pious veneration, but should make use of it,

1. For the furnishing of our minds—

[It is to little purpose to have the Scriptures in our houses, unless we read them diligently, and acquire a practical and experimental knowledge of them. As the tables of the law were deposited within the ark, so should the whole "word of God be hid within our hearts." It should "dwell in us;" it should dwell in us "richly:" its *precepts* should be treasured up in our minds, that we may know what the will of the Lord is: its *promises* should be precious to us, that we may be able to plead them at the throne of grace, and obtain the accomplishment of them to our own souls: nor should its *threatenings* be overlooked, but rather be considered as kind and salutary admonitions which are given us for our good.

It will be said by many, that their memory is defective, and that they cannot retain the things which they read or hear: but if we made a practice of selecting daily some short portion of Scripture for our meditation throughout the day, the most ignorant amongst us would soon attain a knowledge which at present appears far beyond his reach.]

2. For the regulating of our conduct—

[Speculative knowledge, for the most part, administers only to pride and contention. That which alone is valuable to the Christian is practical. The Scriptures are designed to lead him to such wisdom and discretion as will be in vain

<sup>i</sup> Heb. xii. 18, 19.

<sup>k</sup> John xii. 48.

sought for from any other source. Indeed “*all* wisdom” is to be “drawn from these wells of salvation.” The person whose mind is cast into the mould of the Scripture, will view every thing as God views it: he will have the same practical judgment as God himself has. “Good and evil, light and darkness” will not be confounded in his mind, as they are in the minds of ungodly men: he will distinguish them with ease, except in cases that are very obscure and complicated: by means of the spiritual discernment which he has obtained, he will be able to judge of the conduct of others, whilst they are not able to appreciate his: and as far as his actions are regulated by his principles, he will be a light to all around him; and they shall be constrained to “acknowledge that God is with them of a truth.” Indeed it is for this end that God sets up a light in his people’s souls; “not that it may be put under a bushel, but that it may be set on a candlestick, and give light to all that are in the house;” and that the person possessing it may be able to say to all around him, “Whatever ye have seen and heard in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.”]

That we may ENFORCE the exhortation in our text, we would remind you, that a love to the Scriptures is,

1. An inseparable attendant on true piety—

[Look at the most distinguished saints, and see how they regarded the inspired records. Job esteemed the words of God’s mouth more than his necessary food<sup>m</sup>: Jeremiah found them the “joy and rejoicing of his heart<sup>n</sup>,” and to David they were “sweeter than honey and the honey-comb<sup>o</sup>.” Let not us then think that we have any title to be classed with those holy men, if we do not resemble them in this particular — — —]

2. A necessary means of advancement in every part of the divine life—

[Have we been only just quickened from the dead? we cannot but love that which has been the means of giving us life<sup>p</sup>. Are we as new-born babes? we must of necessity “desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby<sup>q</sup>.” Are we arrived at the strength and stature of youth? “that word must abide within us, in order that we may be able to overcome” the great adversary of our souls<sup>r</sup>. In a word, whatever state we be in, it is “by them that we are to be furnished for every good word and work<sup>s</sup>.”]

<sup>l</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>m</sup> Job xxiii. 12.

<sup>n</sup> Jer. xv. 16.

<sup>o</sup> Ps. xix. 10.

<sup>p</sup> Ps. cxix. 93.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 2.

<sup>r</sup> 1 John ii. 14.

<sup>s</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

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DOING ALL IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.

Col. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

SUPPOSING the existence of one Supreme Being to be acknowledged, our obvious duty towards him must be, to exercise such a dependence on him, as shall evince a consciousness, that “in him we live, and move, and have our being<sup>a</sup>.” This being what, for distinction’s sake, I will call natural religion, we may see what must, of necessity, be required of us under the Christian dispensation. By the Gospel we are informed, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator and Governor of the universe; and, consequently, must be entitled to all that regard which, as Theists, we pay to the Supreme Being. But He is further revealed to us as the Redeemer of the world; and, consequently, as standing in a still nearer relation to us, as our vital Head; from whom we derive all supplies of grace and peace, and to whom we must ascribe all the blessings which we enjoy, whether in time or in eternity. What, then, is evangelical religion? It is not an assent to certain principles, however accurate those principles may be: nor is it a practice of certain duties, however commendable those duties may be. It is a habit of mind, by means of which Christ’s universal agency is acknowledged, and the whole soul goes forth to him; receiving every thing from his fulness, and improving every thing for his glory.

To unfold this more clearly, I will endeavour to shew, what, under the Gospel dispensation, should be the habit of our minds,

I. In all that we do for God—

In my text, we are told to do every thing “*in the name of Jesus Christ.*” Now, by this expression, I understand that we should do every thing,

<sup>a</sup> Acts xvii. 28.



## 1. From respect to his authority—

[St. Paul says, “We command you, *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly<sup>b</sup>.” It was by the authority of Christ that he issued that command; and from a respect to that authority was that command to be obeyed. In like manner must we have respect to Christ in every thing that we do: for he has said, “Then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” It must be a matter of indifference to us what *man* may enjoin, unless it have the sanction of our blessed Lord’s authority also. We must always ask ourselves, What does the Lord Jesus Christ require of me? *That* I will do, at all events, and under all circumstances. If it be approved of man, I will do it, not so much to please man, as to please the Lord: and if it be disapproved by man, I shall still do it, because it will please my Lord: nor will I be diverted from the path of duty, though the whole world should combine to oppose my progress. My Lord’s will being clearly ascertained, I shall need nothing to encourage my exertions, nor will I suffer any thing to obstruct them.]

## 2. From love to his name—

[We read of “receiving a child *in Christ’s name*,” and of “giving a cup of water *in his name*<sup>c</sup>,” that must import that we do it from love to Christ. And this should be the one spring of all our actions: “The love of Christ should constrain us<sup>d</sup>.” It is not necessary that there should be in our minds, on all occasions, a long train of argumentation to call forth this principle: a mother needs not such a process to call forth her love to her infant offspring: if an occasion fall for the exercise of that principle, it is ready for action at all times, and at a moment’s notice. And so should it be with us, towards our Lord Jesus Christ: there should be in us such a deep and abiding sense of our obligations to him, that, in every thing we say, and in every thing we do, we should desire to please him.]

## 3. In dependence on his grace—

[The Prophet Micah says, “All people will walk every one *in the name of his god*; and we will walk *in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*,” that is, in an entire dependence upon him. Now, to whom must we look for *direction* in all our ways, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has engaged, as our Shepherd, to go before us<sup>e</sup>, and who has told us in all things to follow his steps<sup>f</sup>?” And on whom

<sup>b</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 6.<sup>c</sup> Mark ix. 37, 41.<sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14.<sup>e</sup> John x. 4.<sup>f</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 21.

shall we rely for *assistance* in our difficulties, but on him who has directed us to be “strong in the Lord<sup>g</sup>,” and assured us that “through his strength we shall do all things<sup>h</sup>?” And through whom can we hope for *acceptance*, but through Him, our Mediator and all-prevailing Intercessor<sup>i</sup> ?]

#### 4. For the advancement of his glory—

[When Peter and John had healed a man that had been lame from his mother’s womb, the spectators were ready to ascribe the miracle either to “the power or holiness of those” who had wrought it: but the Apostles instantly gave the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ, *in whose name*, and by whose power alone, it had been wrought: “*His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom you see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all<sup>k</sup>.*” Thus, whatever it be that we either say or do, we must consult his glory, and labour to advance it. Nothing is too insignificant for us to attend to in this view: “Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we must do all to the glory of God.” If it be thought that it would be presumption to suppose that any thing we can do can by any means advance his glory, we quite mistake: for, in his last intercessory prayer, he said, “All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them<sup>m</sup>.”]

The same habit of mind must be cultivated, also,

#### II. In all that God does for us—

There may be many occurrences which, to flesh and blood, are painful: yet, in them must we see nothing but an occasion of praise and thanksgiving. Job blessed God as well for taking away his property as for bestowing it<sup>n</sup>. And thus must we also “in every thing give thanks,” knowing that “this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us<sup>o</sup>.”

We, in all circumstances, have occasion to praise our God—

[Those things which have the most painful aspect are yet in reality the fruits of love: for “whom God loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth<sup>p</sup>.” Indeed, the beneficial tendency of our afflictions is often as

<sup>g</sup> Eph. vi. 10.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9. Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>i</sup> Eph. iii. 18. 1 John ii. 1, 2.

<sup>k</sup> Acts iii. 6, 16.

<sup>l</sup> 1 Cor. x. 31.

<sup>m</sup> John xvii. 10.

<sup>n</sup> Job i. 21.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Thess. v. 8.

<sup>p</sup> Heb. xii. 6.

clear and visible as if it were pointed out to us by a voice from heaven. For who does not see how trials wean us from the world, and purify us from our dross? We are told, and we find it true, that “tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, even a hope that maketh not ashamed<sup>a</sup>.” But, independent of this, so great are the blessings of redemption, that they ought to swallow up, as it were, every other consideration; and to fill our souls with unutterable joy and gratitude, even in the midst of all the troubles that either men or devils can inflict upon us. In the first chapter of this epistle, the Apostle puts this in a most striking point of view. He supposes the Colossians to be oppressed with heavy and long-continued afflictions: and “he prays for them,” that they may be “strengthened with all might, according to God’s glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered them from the power of darkness; and hath translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom they had redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins<sup>r</sup>.” Must they under their trials be content with exercising “patience?” no: or “long-suffering?” no: they must be filled with “joyfulness;” and be so borne up by a sense of God’s mercy, and by the wonders of redeeming love, as to have not a word to utter but in a way of praise and thanksgiving. This then, beloved, is to be the frame of your minds at all times; as it was of Paul and Silas, when in the prison and in the stocks “they sang praises to God at midnight<sup>s</sup>.”]

In doing it, however, we must still have respect to the Lord Jesus Christ for the acceptance of our very best services—

[Continually is this inculcated in the Scriptures of truth. “We must give thanks *always for all things* unto God and the Father *in the name of* our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>t</sup>.” Praise is “a sacrifice which must be offered” on him as our altar; and “be presented by him” as our great High Priest, even as the animals were under the Jewish law<sup>u</sup>; and it is therefore called “the calves of our lips<sup>x</sup> :” nor can any sacrifice, however holy, be “acceptable to God, but as offered to him through Jesus Christ<sup>y</sup>.” This is particularly to be borne in mind at all times. We must “never sacrifice unto our own net, or burn incense to our own drag<sup>z</sup>,” but do on earth as they are doing in heaven.

<sup>a</sup> Rom. v. 3—5.

<sup>r</sup> Col. i. 11—14.

<sup>s</sup> Acts xvi. 25.

<sup>t</sup> Eph. v. 20.

<sup>u</sup> Heb. xiii. 15.

<sup>x</sup> Hos. xiv. 2.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5.

<sup>z</sup> Hab. i. 16.



Not a voice is heard in heaven which does not give glory to God and to the Lamb: nor on earth should a soul be found that does not say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise."]

Let me now OBSERVE,

1. If this be religion, how little is there of true religion upon earth!

[Where do you find men of the character above described? How few are there, how very few, in whom this is found to be the prevailing habit of their minds! An attention to doctrines is frequent; nor is regard for moral duties uncommon: but such views of Christ, such respect to his authority, such love to his name, such dependence on his grace, such zeal for his glory, and, withal, such an overwhelming sense of his love as swallows up every other feeling; where are these found? In how very small a measure are they possessed by the very best amongst us! and how far are the generality from possessing them at all! Yet it is by this standard that all Christian experience must be tried. My dear brethren, get your minds rightly instructed in this matter; and then will you be able to form a right judgment, both of your own state and of every thing around you.]

2. If this be true religion, how happy a man is the true Christian!

[Doubtless the Christian must be conscious of innumerable defects, and must find cause in himself for the deepest humiliation. But, in proportion as he has attained this experience, tell me whether he be not happy? tell me whether he be not a far happier man than the possession of the whole world could make him? I know that an ignorant ungodly world will deride this as enthusiasm: but the passage which I before cited, in reference to natural religion, is amply sufficient to shew that this experience is most rational, and indispensable to the Christian character. What are the feelings of one who, in the daily habit of his mind, "lives, and moves, and has his being in God?" Precisely such are the Christian's feelings towards the Lord Jesus Christ, only elevated by a sense of redeeming love. "Believe ye then in Christ;" and "abide in him" by the exercise of faith and love: and let him be "your life:" yea, "live altogether by faith in Him who has loved you, and given himself for you." Then will you "rejoice in him even now, with a joy that is unspeakable and glorified," and soon be partakers of "all the fulness of joy at God's right hand for evermore."]

## MMCLXXXIX.

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## THE RELATIVE DUTIES EXPLAINED.

Col. iii. 18.—iv. 1. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

IT is often a matter of complaint with some, that many who have been ordained to preach the Gospel leave the great and mysterious doctrines of the Gospel on the back ground, and bring forward little else than dry morality. But, whatever ground there may be for that complaint, it may be well to inquire, Whether there be not too much reason to complain of another class, who pay such exclusive attention to the doctrines, as almost entirely to overlook the duties, of the Gospel? Amongst some it would be almost thought superfluous, and even wrong, to devote an entire discourse to the subject of moral duties; since, according to their views, the discharge of them may well be left to the simple operation of faith, without any distinct statement of them from the teachers of Christianity. But so thought not the Apostle Paul. On the contrary, in those two epistles (to the Ephesians, and Colossians) in which he enters most deeply into the mysteries of Christianity, he enlarges most fully on the relative duties. We are persuaded that a similar plan ought to be adopted by every minister of Christ. We should have no exclusive preference for doctrines or duties, but should put each in their place, and bring them both forward in their proper

season. Convinced of this, we enter with great pleasure on the consideration of our relative duties; that is, of the duties,

### I. Of husbands and wives—

It is worthy of observation, that, not in this place only, but in all other places where the Apostles speak of the relative duties, they mention those of the inferior first. The reason of this seems to be, that the duties of the inferior arise solely from the command of God, and are totally independent of the conduct of the superior; so that no neglect of duty on the one part can justify any neglect of it on the other. Agreeably therefore to the Apostolic plan, we shall notice the duty,

#### 1. Of wives—

[To you are assigned obedience and subjection; partly, because you were created after man, and for the sake of man; and partly because you were first in the transgression, and were the means of bringing ruin upon man and upon all his posterity<sup>a</sup>. The extent to which obedience to your husband is required of you is indeed exceeding great: it reaches to every thing that is not contrary to the will of God: it is, if I may so speak, co-extensive with the obedience which the Church owes to the Lord Jesus Christ; and your obedience is due to your husband, as to the Lord himself. I am aware that this expression is very strong; but I conceive it is not at all stronger than the declarations of St. Paul. True, in the text it is only said, "Submit yourselves, *as it is fit* in the Lord:" but in the Epistle to the Ephesians he draws the very parallel that I have drawn, and shews that your duty to your husband corresponds exactly with the Church's duty to the Lord Jesus Christ: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, *as unto the Lord*: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, *as* the Church is subject unto Christ, *so* let the wives be to their own husbands *in every thing*<sup>b</sup>." (Of course, this will be understood of obedience only, and not of dependence; for that were absurd and impious in the extreme.) In the whole of this obedience, she must feel that it is due to him by God's special appointment: that he is her head, and her lord, whom she is bound, not only to obey,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 11—14. with Gen. iii. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Eph. v. 22—24.



but to obey with “reverence<sup>c</sup>,” “even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord<sup>d</sup>.”

This may be thought to sound harsh by those who are not accustomed to consider what the Scripture speaks on this subject: but it will not be thought so, if we contemplate what God has required,]

## 2. Of husbands—

[Your duty, is to “love your wives,” and never on any occasion to entertain an unkind feeling towards them. A proud, haughty, imperious carriage towards them is most offensive to God, who will regard every harsh, bitter, or contemptuous expression towards them as an abuse of your authority and a violation of his commands. Though he has constituted you lords, he has not authorized you to be tyrants; but requires you to be precisely such lords over your wives, as Christ is over his Church. You are to govern, it is true; but you are to govern only for the good of the wife: you are to seek only, and at all times, her best interests, and to promote to the utmost of your power her real happiness. You must not require any thing unreasonable at her hands, nor ever fail to recompense with testimonies of your love the efforts which she makes to please you. Nor must you merely endeavour to render her happy, but you must be ready to make great sacrifices for this end. What the Lord Jesus Christ has done for his Church, is set forth as the proper model and pattern of your duty towards your wife: “Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the Church, and GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT.*” O! what an example is here! Methinks, no wife would complain of the obedience that is required of her, if the authority of her husband were exercised in such a way as this: on the contrary, obedience on her part would be her chief delight. Know then, ye husbands, that this is the duty assigned to you: if your wives are to be obedient, as the Church is to Christ, ye also on your part are to be loving, even as Christ is to the Church. “Your wives should be to you as your own flesh. Now no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord does the Church<sup>e</sup>.” and precisely in the same way should you exercise all imaginable tenderness towards your wives, and be as careful of paining them as you would be of suffering any thing to wound the apple of your eye.]

Next to the duties of husbands and wives will naturally follow those,

## II. Of parents and children—

<sup>c</sup> Eph. v. 33.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 1, 5, 6.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. v. 28, 29, 33.

Here again we are called, in the first place, to notice those of the inferior :

### 1. Of children—

[Obedience is your duty also: nor is there any limit to the exercise of this duty, except where you are required to violate a command of God. Reason indeed is sufficient to teach you this: for your own ignorance and inexperience must of necessity direct you to look up to your parents for instruction and guidance. But revelation teaches you to regard the authority of your parents as God's authority, and to consider obedience to *them* as obedience to *him*. In fulfilling the commands of parents, there should be no reluctance: on the contrary, to please, and serve, and honour his parents should be the desire and delight of every child. He should have no wish to shake off their yoke; no desire to act independently of them. Nor let this be thought hard: for God has annexed a special promise to the fulfilment of this duty: the command relating to it is said to be "the first commandment with promise<sup>f</sup>;" and it is generally to be observed, that the blessing of God does rest in a more especial manner, throughout the whole of their lives, on those who have honoured and obeyed their earthly parents. This may be accounted for on natural principles; for the dispositions which are exercised in filial obedience argue a degree of self-government, which will go far to render a man both amiable and prosperous in every situation and condition of life. But besides this, the blessing of God will assuredly rest on such characters; and He, as the universal Parent, will recompense into their bosom their compliance with this command.]

### 2. Of parents—

[Both in the text, and in the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, there is a restraint laid on parents with regard to the exercise of their authority: it is not to be attended with harshness or severity, "lest they provoke their children to anger, and discourage them" from attempting to fulfil their duty, under the idea, that, whatever efforts they may use to please their parents, it will be a hopeless task. Parents have much to answer for, when they produce such an effect as this on their children's minds. If on the one hand it be said, that "there is much folly in the heart of a child, and that the rod of correction must drive it out," it must be remembered, on the other hand, that the mind of a child may soon be cast down, and that we may by harsh restrictions and undue severity augment that very rebellion which we endea-

<sup>f</sup> Eph. vi. 1—3.

your to subdue. There can be no doubt but that many parents harden their children's hearts against their authority in the first instance, and ultimately against the authority of God himself, purely by the tyranny which they exercise, and by the continual irritations which they occasion<sup>g</sup>: and in the last day they will be found, in too many instances, the prime movers, and the real causes of their children's eternal ruin. Fathers, be upon your guard respecting this; and instead of thus driving your children to despondency, endeavour to bring them up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord<sup>h</sup>." See in what way God dealeth with his children, how he bears with their infirmities, and consults their best interests<sup>i</sup>: so should you do<sup>k</sup>, and, like Abraham of old, be solicitous only for their eternal welfare<sup>l</sup>.]

There is yet one other relation specified in the text, namely, that,

### III. Of masters and servants—

It has pleased God that there should be different ranks and orders of society, and that to each should be assigned appropriate duties. We notice those,

#### 1. Of servants—

[Your rank in society is ordered of the Lord: nor, when you hear in what light you are viewed by him, will you see any reason to repine at it. By virtue of your office you are required to "obey those who are your masters according to the flesh:" and to obey them cheerfully too, and without reserve. Nor in the discharge of this duty are you to act in the absence of your master any otherwise than you would in his immediate presence: you are to render obedience "in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ*; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but *as the servants of Christ*, doing the will of God from the heart<sup>m</sup>." What an elevated view does this give of your situation and employments! You appear to be servants of *men*: and so indeed you are: but you are servants of *the Lord Jesus Christ*: and it is your privilege to consider yourselves as living in *his* service, as much as if he were to come down to sojourn again on earth, and to admit you into the number of his domestics. Whatever your particular office be, you are privileged, so to speak, as altogether to forget your servitude to man, and to consider yourselves as performing the

<sup>g</sup> That is an humiliating view which the Apostle gives of parents, but, alas! how true in too many instances! Heb. xii. 10.

<sup>h</sup> Eph. vi. 4.

<sup>i</sup> Ps. ciii. 8—13.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 11.

<sup>l</sup> Gen. xviii. 19.

<sup>m</sup> Eph. vi. 5, 6.



office of angels in the service of your God and Saviour. It is your privilege also to expect your wages from *him*. What you receive from man, is for your body only: but you shall have wages for your soul also, even "the reward of an eternal inheritance." This is represented as the state even of *slaves*, and of those who were called to serve Jewish or Heathen masters: how much more then is it the happy state of you who live in Christian families, and especially where God in Christ Jesus is loved and feared! Yes, "whether ye be bond or free, your Master, your work, your wages are the same<sup>o</sup>." Act then agreeably to this exalted view of your station. Even though you should have "froward and unkind masters," still act the same: and, if your work is thereby rendered the more difficult, your reward shall be proportionably advanced<sup>p</sup>.]

## 2. Of masters—

[As your servants are to put you in the place of Christ, so are you to be as in the place of Christ to them: and exactly such a master as he, if in your place, would be, such are ye to be to those who are under your command. Would he never be unreasonable in his expectations or commands? So neither are ye to be. Would he be kind and indulgent? So must ye be. Would he delight to make his servants happy; and would he consult in all things their eternal welfare? So are you to act, "*doing in your station the same thing to them,*" as they in theirs are required to do to you<sup>q</sup>. Especially must you "forbear all threatening" words or looks; "remembering that you also have a Master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons," and who, as their avenger, will call you to an account for all acts of unkindness or oppression towards the meanest of mankind. In a word, see how your God directs and governs you; and let him be your model for your government of those whom he has graciously committed to your care.]

We may SEE here,

### 1. The extent and excellence of true religion—

[Religion enters into every situation and relation of life. It finds the whole world disordered like a body, every joint of which from head to foot is dislocated: but by its operation on the hearts of men it sets every joint in its place, and diffuses through the whole a divine unction, whereby every joint is set at liberty, and performs with ease its proper functions. Those in a higher and more honourable station despise not those

<sup>n</sup> See the text.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 18—20.

<sup>o</sup> Eph. vi. 8.

<sup>q</sup> Eph. vi. 9.

which are lower and less honourable; neither are they envied by them: but each occupies with content and satisfaction the place assigned it by its Maker, and finds its own happiness in contributing, according to its ability, to the good of the whole. If it be said, that these effects are not visible in the world, even amongst those who profess religion; I answer, that this only shews how little there is of true religion in the world. The first ages of the Church display in all its beauty the native tendency of Christianity: and, if the same effects are not alike visible now, it is not owing to any want of efficiency in religion itself, but to the low state of religion in the world. In proportion as vital godliness prevails, it does, and ever must, manifest its practical influence upon the heart and life.]

## 2. The importance of studying the character of Christ—

[Christ ought to be well known to us in his work and offices as the Saviour of the world. But we must not confine our attention to his mediatorial work: we must also contemplate him as an example which we are to follow in every part of our conduct both towards God and man. Behold him as a son and a servant; what an entire devotion was there in him to his Father's will! It was his meat and drink to do it. View him also as the Husband and Lord of his Church; what inconceivable love and kindness does he exercise towards her at all times, notwithstanding her innumerable defects! Let us then study his character; and whether we move in the higher or inferior relation, let it be the one aim of our lives to walk in his steps, and to follow his example.]

## 3. The way in which to judge of our spiritual attainments—

[Religion is a practical thing, and is intended, as we have shewn, to make us fill to advantage every relation in life. Now I grant that there are many who discharge in a most commendable manner their relative duties, whilst yet they have no regard for God in their hearts. Consequently, I cannot exactly say, that the fulfilment of relative duties will stamp you as religious characters: but this I must say, that the not discharging of these aright will prove to demonstration, either that "your religion is altogether vain," or that it is at a very low ebb indeed. But supposing that there be no manifest neglect of these duties, I would ask, How much is there of *God* in them? Is the authority which you either obey or exercise, regarded as *God's*? Is his will considered as the rule of all that you do, and his glory as the end? Here is the point to be inquired into: it is this which makes your actions pleasing and acceptable to him: and I may add, that it is this

which will make obedience easy and delightful to yourselves. Habituate yourselves then to realize the thought, that it is Christ whom you serve, or in whose place you stand whilst others are serving you. So shall your whole deportment become exquisitely pure, and holy, and refined; and you will “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”]

## MMCXC.      2190 .

### THE CHARACTER AND AIM OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

Col. iv. 12. *Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

LOVE is the essence of the Christian religion. The heathens themselves noticed the fervour of the love which subsisted among the first Christians. Ministers in particular feel a distinguished regard for those to whom they have been signally useful<sup>a</sup>. Epaphras is set forth as a most eminent pattern of affection and zeal.

#### I. The office he sustained—

Epaphras was perhaps the same with Epaphroditus. He was of Colosse, and perhaps the founder of the Church established there; he sustained the most honourable of all offices, being “a servant of Christ.” This office every Christian may be said to bear, but ministers bear it in a higher and more exalted sense: They are,

##### 1. His stewards—

[A steward has the care and management of the family committed to him: so Christ’s ministers have the mysteries of the Gospel committed to them<sup>b</sup>. They are to dispense these mysteries to men<sup>c</sup>: hence we are taught to consider them expressly in this view<sup>d</sup>.]

##### 2. His messengers—

[They are ambassadors from the court of heaven<sup>e</sup>: they deliver to men his messages of grace and mercy: they negotiate, as it were, a peace between God and man.]

<sup>a</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Luke xii. 42.

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 1.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.



## 3. His representatives—

[They stand in his stead<sup>f</sup>; the word they speak is not theirs, but his<sup>g</sup>. The reception or rejection of them will be deemed a reception or rejection of Christ himself<sup>h</sup>.]

## 4. His glory—

[They are the instruments whereby he is known and glorified: hence they are expressly called “the glory of Christ<sup>i</sup>.”]

In this office he acted worthy of the trust reposed in him.

## II. The love he manifested—

Love will invariably manifest itself in acts of kindness towards those who are the objects of it. A minister's love will shew itself most towards the souls of men; but none can do good to souls unless God himself vouchsafe his blessing<sup>k</sup>: hence Epaphras made application to God in prayer.

He did this fervently—

[It is said of Jacob that he “wrestled” with God all night in prayer<sup>l</sup>. Thus did Epaphras on behalf of the Christians at Colosse<sup>m</sup>. How desirable is it that every minister should be so occupied !]

He did it constantly—

[He was not satisfied with preaching to them, or praying with them: he remembered them “always” in his secret prayers before God<sup>n</sup>; nor did his absence from them diminish his concern for their welfare. This was the most unequivocal testimony of his affection that he could possibly give them<sup>o</sup>.]

Nor could he rest satisfied, while his people had a sin to be forgiven, or a want to be supplied.

## III. The end he aimed at—

He desired that his Christian friends might be Israelites indeed; no doubt he had exerted himself much and often to make them so. He sought the same blessed end in all his prayers for them:

<sup>f</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.                    <sup>g</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 13.                    <sup>h</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 8.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 23.                    <sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 7.

<sup>l</sup> Compare Gen. xxxii. 24, 28. with Hos. xii. 4.

<sup>m</sup> This is implied in the term ἀγωνιζόμενος.

<sup>n</sup> 1 Thess. iii. 10. with Isai. lxii. 7.

<sup>o</sup> It is easier to preach to men *ten* hours, than to pray for them *one*.

1. That they might have no secret reserves in their obedience—

[He well knew that one sin indulged would destroy the soul<sup>p</sup>: he was aware that nothing but the most unreserved dedication of ourselves to God's service would be of any avail<sup>q</sup>: he therefore prayed that they might do "all" the will of God.]

2. That they might attain the highest degrees of holiness—

[There is no absolute perfection or completeness in the creature; but there are high degrees of holiness to which the upright may attain<sup>r</sup>. He longed that they might be as eminent as possible<sup>s</sup>.]

3. That they might be steadfast to the end—

[Many "endure only for a season, and in a time of temptation fall away;" but the apostatizing of persons who have been hopeful, is death, as it were, to a faithful minister of Christ<sup>t</sup>. He knew that there were many seeking to turn them from the faith<sup>u</sup>: he therefore sought to have them so established that they might "stand."]

We may OBSERVE from hence,

1. What should be the standard of a minister's preaching—

[Faithful ministers are often thought too strict and severe; but if they should desire such perfection for their people, they should labour also to promote it by their preaching. If they should lower the standard of men's duty, they would betray and murder the souls committed to them. Let not any then condemn the strictness or severity of what they hear, unless it exceed the Scripture standard.]

2. What should be the measure of the people's practice—

[There is no attainment with which we should be satisfied, while there remains any thing to be attained. What ministers should desire for us, we ought to desire and aim at for ourselves. Whatever then we may have attained, let us forget what is behind, and press forward toward that which is before.]

<sup>p</sup> Jer. xlviii. 10.

<sup>q</sup> Ps. cxix. 6.

<sup>r</sup> *Τέλειοι καὶ πεπληρωμένοι* imply, that he wished them not to continue babes, but to arrive at a state of manhood; and not to be satisfied with a scanty measure of grace and knowledge, but to be "filled with all the fulness of God."

<sup>s</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Thess. iii. 8.

<sup>u</sup> Col. ii. 8.