



J. Andrews Marcher 1842.

John C. March

FOUR SERMONS

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN C. MARCH,
"

PASTOR OF THE

CHURCH IN BELLEVILLE, (NEWBURY;)

WITH A

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,


SERMON PREACHED AT HIS FUNERAL,

BY DANIEL DANA, D. D.,

Minister in Newburyport.

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**This volume has been prepared chiefly
for the friends of the deceased, and for
his bereaved flock.**



MEMOIR.

THE lives of the most excellent men have often been barren of incident. Often, their consistency and symmetry of character have left no virtues peculiarly prominent. Nor is it unfrequent, that they have shunned, rather than courted, the public attention. Circumstances like these have rendered it difficult to collect and exhibit suitable memorials of their characters and lives. Yet no men are more worthy to be remembered, loved and imitated.

These circumstances all meet in the case of Mr. MARCH. Wherever he was known, he was esteemed and loved. And it seems desirable that the excellencies of a character so estimable and unaspiring should be carefully preserved, and affectionately cherished.

He was born at Newburyport, October 9, 1805; and was the youngest of several children,

none of whom, beside himself, survived the period of infancy. His father was an intelligent and respectable shipmaster and merchant, of active habits, but much given to reading and reflection. His mother, an estimable woman, was, through most of her married life, the prey of a feeble nervous system, and an attendant depression of spirits. This circumstance, combined with the frequent absence of the father from his home, deprived their beloved child of much of that early training and instruction which he would doubtless have otherwise received.

Still, his childhood was by no means lost to the purpose of improvement. He early manifested an unusual fondness for reading ; and what he read, he was very apt to remember. His naturally contemplative mind directed him to books of real utility ; and those, generally of a moral and religious character. With books of this description, he was amply supplied from his father's library, and from the library of the Presbyterian Society with which he was connected. Frequently, and almost habitually, abandoning the sports of childhood, and the company of his co-equals, he would spend his hours of leisure in reading his favorite volumes to his beloved mother.

This devotion to books, and to retirement, combined with a habitual seriousness of mind, and a certain quiet gravity of deportment, created in many of his friends the impression that he was destined for the ministry. And such, there is little reason to doubt, was the early impression of his own mind. Indeed, at the age of twelve, he composed a *sermon* on the subject of *prayer*,—a fact of which there can be no doubt, as the manuscript, distinctly dated, now remains in the hands of his friends. In this composition, many of the most important ideas which belong to the subject, are stated with great simplicity, and in a natural method.

While looking forward to the ministry, he felt, and felt deeply, the necessity of personal religion. To this most important of objects, he devoted many intense thoughts, and many earnest prayers. He obviously regarded it as the grand concern. Whether effectual impressions of piety were made on his heart at this time, is somewhat doubtful. He himself referred his conversion to a considerably later period. Still, these early impressions were of inestimable value, as they induced a habitual tenderness of conscience, and preserved him, in a remarkable degree, from the follies and vices frequently attendant on youth.

When a little more than twelve years of age, he lost his father—an immense loss indeed ; and rendered the more afflictive by those increasing maladies and depressions of his mother, which almost incapacitated her for that superintendence and instruction so essential at his age.

About three years afterward, his mother was removed. The bereavement went to his inmost heart ; and the more, as, inheriting a portion of her *melancholy* tendencies, he must have felt, with more than usual acuteness, the pain and desolation of so early an orphanage.

But though *father and mother had forsaken him, the Lord took him up*. The sympathies of friends were powerfully excited. By their kindness, his sorrows were soothed, his anxieties were relieved, and a *home* was furnished him, during the short period which preceded the commencement of his collegiate life.

In the autumn of 1821, he entered Yale College. In the trial which preceded his admission, he satisfied, in good measure, his examiners, but not himself. In his subsequent course, he found that he had some serious disadvantages to encounter. His earlier reading had been but too desultory. His instruction in the classics had been neither systematic nor thorough. He was likewise, while a sophomore, afflicted with a

severe sickness, which debarred him from one half of the studies of that important year. But he was not discouraged. His diligence and determination surmounted many an obstacle. His character and attainments as a scholar were respectable, and his college life was marked with the esteem of his fellow-students, and the approbation of his instructors.

It was during the spring of 1825, (his last collegiate year,) that he obtained, as he hoped, the evidence and comfort of religion. At this time, there was a somewhat extensive awakening among the students, and the mind of young March was early and deeply impressed. He seemed, from the first, to give his whole heart to the object; determined to seek, until, by the grace of God, he should find. He complained, indeed, that he could not feel those terrors of the law which some felt, nor those overwhelming convictions of sin. Still, his convictions were deep and strong. In a letter to a friend, he thus expressed himself: "To continue in sin for a single moment longer, appears to me to be a crime of the deepest dye. It is rebellion against the King of heaven; against the greatest and best of beings. Surrounded as we are, by the proofs of his wisdom, power and goodness, is it not astonishing that we should still continue

to harden our hearts, and to dare his displeasure ? ”

Nor was he raised from mental distress to a high state of spiritual joy. Even after he indulged a hope of reconciliation to God, his hope was mixed with trembling. He complains of his mind as “continuing in a dark and confused state.” “The Christian life,” he finds, “is indeed a life of constant warfare. Temptations surround us on every side, and it requires the help of an almighty arm to shield us from their power.” “Instead,” says he, “of loving the God who made me, with an undivided affection, it frequently costs me a severe mental effort to raise my thoughts above the trifling objects of this inferior world. O, that I could break away from these fetters that bind me down to earth.”

Thus his religion seems to have commenced in great self-diffidence. And his case, it is believed, adds strong confirmation to the fact, that religion of this character is usually the most genuine and enduring.

Mr. March left college with the resolution to prepare for the Christian ministry ; but determined that, before commencing his theological studies, he would devote a year to the employment of teaching. From the autumn of 1825 to that of 1826, he had the charge of the acad-

emy in East Bradford. In this station, his character was developed to much advantage. The combined dignity and kindness of his demeanor and government, his aptness to teach, and his deep interest in the mental and moral improvement of those under his care, secured a general esteem and approbation.

About the month of June, 1826, he made a public profession of religion, and was united to the First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport. The clergyman who officiated on the occasion was the Rev. James Miltimore, pastor of the neighboring church in Belleville. Having administered the ordinance of baptism, he said, in the conclusion of the service, "Go, young man, and be faithful to your covenant vows." Little did the venerable minister imagine that, in a few years, this same "young man" would be received by himself as a beloved colleague, and not long afterward have the sole charge of his people.

In the autumn of the same year, Mr. March entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey. He had cherished, for some time previous, a desire, and even a resolution, to pursue his preparation for the ministry at Edinburgh. But the friends with whom he consulted, did not view the plan as, on the whole,

eligible ; and he submitted his judgment to theirs. Nor is there evidence that he ever regretted his decision. He uniformly expressed a high opinion of the advantages enjoyed at Princeton, and a great respect for its professors, as well as a warm attachment.

He pursued his studies with exemplary diligence, but not to the neglect of vital piety. The nearer his approach to that momentous period when he would preach the gospel to others, the deeper was his sense of the importance of its sanctifying and saving power on his own heart. In his letters to his friends, he lamented, at some times, over his spiritual barrenness ; and at others, expressed a tender fear lest all his religion should prove a mere speculation. Such apprehensions are not unnatural, nor unfrequent, in the most spiritual minds. There is much evidence that as he increased in divine knowledge, he grew in grace ; and that the holy doctrines of the gospel, as they entered and possessed his mind, diffused their sweet and heavenly influence over his inmost heart.

During one of the vacations of the Seminary, he was employed as an agent of the Nassau Hall Bible Society, in exploring the necessities of the county of Warren. The views which this excursion presented him, of ignorance, vice and

degradation, were at times almost sickening to his heart. Nor did he always escape an unkind and repulsive treatment from those whom he wished to enlighten, and to save. Many, however, received him with great cordiality and gratitude, and by their kindness, cheered his tender spirit when ready to sink in discouragement. On the whole, he gathered from the scene much valuable instruction, which he treasured up for future use. Nor did he regret the self-denial, or the suffering, by which it was purchased.

In the course of his third year at Princeton, he was much employed in giving occasional religious instruction in the destitute places around. These benevolent labors did not materially interfere with his theological studies. Indeed, they must have naturally tended rather to excite and invigorate his mind, to warm his heart, and to prepare him to enter with peculiar advantage on the future duties of the ministerial office.

Early in the year 1829, he received license as a preacher from the Presbytery of New Brunswick. From this time, he supplied various destitute congregations in the country. He likewise preached occasionally in the cities of Philadelphia and New York.

At this time, his mind became perplexed, and

at times even agitated, respecting the scene of his future ministerial labors. His honored friend, Dr. Alexander, was much disposed to introduce him to a vacant church in the State of New York, to which he had been requested to recommend a candidate for settlement. About the same time he was much solicited to engage in the service of the American Home Missionary Society, with a view to his being employed in a distant mission. The employment itself seems to have had strong attractions for his pious mind. But his habitual self-diffidence threw obstacles in the way. Writing to a friend, he says, "I know not whether I possess the proper qualifications for a domestic missionary—the firmness, the enterprize, but above all, the piety essential to the man who would become extensively useful in the great valley of the Mississippi. If not, I certainly ought not to go. And if, after going, and making trial of my powers in that widely-extended moral waste, I should find that I am not calculated for the service which I have undertaken, I trust that I shall have conscience and common sense enough to return."

To the same friend he writes, on another occasion, "I feel entirely unfit to preach the gospel any where ; and the consciousness of my unfitness is sometimes extremely distressing. It

is my most sincere and earnest wish that God would direct my steps, and place me in the situation where I can be most useful."

Mr. March was absent from the Seminary during most of the summer of 1829. Visiting his native place, he was engaged by the committee of the Rev. Mr. Dimmick's society (the pastor being absent on a journey for his health) to supply their desk for an indefinite number of Sabbaths. The time proving long, and his prepared sermons being but few, he was constrained to use great diligence in writing. This employment, to which were added visits to the sick and afflicted, with preparations for vestry meetings, left him little leisure. But these days were spent among valued and affectionate friends, and they passed pleasantly and rapidly away.

He returned to his beloved Seminary in August; and at the close of the term in September, bade it a final and affectionate adieu.

He soon made his way to the south-west; and he went under the impression that somewhere, in that extensive and destitute region, he should find a home, and a sphere for his ministerial labors. His first engagement to preach was at Maysville, Kentucky. Here he remained three months, or more. But the evils of slavery, as witnessed in that region, pressed heavily on his

mind, and discouraged him not a little, as to the success of his ministerial efforts.

In the following spring, he returned to New England. For some little time, he preached in various societies in his beloved native place. Afterward, he was employed for a few months in Abington ; and subsequently, for a similar period, in the upper parish of West Newbury.

Early in January, 1831, the Rev. Mr. Miltimore being somewhat indisposed, Mr. March was invited to aid him in his labors ; but for no specified time ; and probably with no thought, on his part, or that of the people, that this engagement would eventuate in a connection to be dissolved only by his death.

It was Mr. Miltimore's wish and hope, that after a time, he might resume his customary labors ; but his infirmities continuing, Mr. March was engaged in April, to continue for a year.

His labors were attended with gratifying success. The religious attention of the people was much excited by a protracted meeting held about this time, in Newburyport, which many of them attended ; and the good influence was deepened and extended during a similar course of exercises held afterward in Belleville. In the first year of Mr. March's labors, between forty and fifty were added to the church.

In January, 1832, he received an invitation to take charge of the people, as a colleague pastor with Mr. Miltimore; and the call, being given with great unanimity, was unhesitatingly accepted. His ordination took place on the first day of March. The season was attended with deep and solemn searchings of heart, and with many an anxious inquiry, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Few, probably, have taken the vows of ordination with a livelier sense of the duties and responsibilities involved in them.

The first communion which succeeded his ordination, was a season of singular interest. A considerable number were to be received to the church, of whom several were to receive the initiatory ordinance of baptism. The senior pastor being confined, the whole burden of the scene fell upon the young and trembling colleague. His feelings on the occasion were described in a letter which he wrote soon afterward, to a friend.

"When I first ascended the pulpit in the morning, but more especially, when I went down to administer the ordinance of baptism, I experienced a very uncommon degree of anxiety and trepidation. I trust, however, that nothing occurred in my unworthy administration of it, to derogate from its validity, or to

shock the feelings of those who witnessed it. At the administration of the Supper, I was favored with a much higher degree of self-possession than I had anticipated. At the same time, I cannot say that I was entirely free from embarrassment, or that I succeeded by any means as well as I could have wished. The day was uncommonly beautiful, and the congregation very large. I cannot but hope that some good impressions were made by the exercises of the day. If so, to God be all the glory."

In April, 1832, Mr. March was united in marriage with Miss Alice Little Hale, daughter of Thomas Hale, Esq., a much respected member of his Society. The ceremony was performed by his aged Colleague, who was now very infirm, and, in this instance, administered the marriage ceremony for the last time.

The new connection was auspicious. In the partner of his life, Mr. March found a cordial and devoted friend; a deeply interested sharer of his joys and sorrows, and, in some instances, of his most important duties. He was likewise introduced to a large and worthy family, whose esteem and affection he enjoyed to the last, and whose uniform kindness contributed much to heal the deep-seated wounds of his heart, and to compensate those bereavements of dearest friends

by which his earlier life had been so peculiarly darkened and distressed.

After boarding for nearly a year, with a valued friend and relative, and after a subsequent short experiment at house-keeping, Mr. March and his wife became members of the family of her father—a connection which continued to the close of his life. Nor was it a small privilege, to be thus exempted from those cares and solitudes which so often occupy the time, and sometimes distract the minds, of ministers of the gospel.

But no earthly condition is free from change, or from sorrow. The family of which Mr. March had become a part, was visited with distressing sickness, and with repeated and bitter bereavements. These providential dispensations pressed upon his heart, and awakened its tenderest sensibilities. The sorrows of his friends were his own. Still, he was to the afflicted, “a son of consolation.” And repeatedly was he cheered with the hope that his prayers were answered in the present comfort, and the everlasting blessedness of those dear friends who were removed.

Other dispensations of Providence went still nearer to his heart. In the third year after his marriage, he was gladdened by the birth of a

son. The event seemed to constitute a new era in his existence. So deep and tender was his interest in the young immortal, that he almost immediately began to provide books which might assist in his early education. The very first opportunities were likewise embraced, for training the infant mind, and conveying lessons of the greatest importance to the heart. More than two years afterward, a daughter was given; and the father's heart seemed to overflow with gratitude and joy. So powerful was the excitement of his feelings on the last occasion, and so deep his sensations at the baptism of the little one, that in performing the ordinance, he was constrained to make a considerable pause, having forgotten its name. But how fallacious are human prospects and hopes. In less than a year from her birth, the daughter was removed by death. The father's too susceptible mind was filled with anguish; and for a time, he seemed almost incapacitated for the discharge of his ministerial duties. But gradually his grief was softened, and submission to the will of a sovereign God, spread a calm over his mind. The affection which the parents had divided between the children, was now concentrated in their little boy. And he, as if conscious of their grief, and desirous to soothe it, would sometimes say to them, "*I will be your little baby now.*"

But the cup of sorrow was not full. In a year from the daughter's death, the beloved son, now the only object of parental hope, was called away. On this occasion, Mr. March's affliction was almost overwhelming. A habitual and disheartening depression seemed to brood over his mind; and though he was desirous to live for duty and usefulness, yet the charm of existence seemed to be almost gone.

Doubtless, in all this, there was something not wholly faultless. Yet the case will be very imperfectly estimated, without taking into view the original structure of his mind, and even his bodily temperament. His constitutional tendencies were remarkably tinged with melancholy. In contemplating such a case, it is delightful to recur to that Saviour who can be touched with the feeling of his people's infirmities; and who, if he sees their *spirit* willing, pities and pardons the infirmities of their *flesh*.

Nor can it be doubted that these deep afflictions were made ultimately subservient to Mr. March's spiritual improvement, and his usefulness. The destruction of his earthly hopes gave a heavenly direction to his mind, and increased its spirituality. The bitterness of his sorrow gave him more intimate communion with a suffering Saviour. And doubtless his own

experience, both of suffering and of consolation, prepared him to enter with deeper sympathy into the afflictions of his people, and to administer appropriate counsel and comfort.

Few ministers have been more exemplary than Mr. March, in the discharge of pastoral duties. With a marked emphasis, it may be said, that *he gave himself wholly to them*. From the commencement of his ministry, he deeply felt that the GREAT SHEPHERD had committed to him a portion of that flock which he had redeemed with his own blood; and that, coming in the clouds of heaven, he would require it at his hands. Hence he was diligent, laborious, unwearied, anxious to lay hold of every occasion, and every dispensation of Providence, to promote the spiritual good of his people. With this great object on his heart, he spared no pains, he shrunk from no sacrifices, and he was discouraged by no obstacles. His people were constrained to feel that in their Pastor, they had a real and ardent friend to their souls; that their spiritual improvement and eternal salvation were his grand objects, and his dear reward. With great fidelity, and with equal tenderness, he warned the wicked, instructed the ignorant, guided the inquiring, and pointed the anxious, humble soul to *the Lamb of God who taketh*

away the sin of the world. None of his congregation were too poor to attract his notice, or to engage his efforts for their spiritual good. He rejoiced in his people's joys, and grieved in their sorrows. He treated the aged with respect, the young with affectionate tenderness, and all with the dignified and condescending kindness which becomes a Christian minister.

"And as the bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

He was a diligent improver of time. In the preparation of his sermons, he was almost uniformly in advance. It is a remarkable circumstance, that though he was seized with his last sickness on Friday, both his sermons were found prepared for the following Sabbath.

Nor did he neglect the great object of personal improvement. He was, through life, a careful student of theology. Not content with its details, he resorted to its sources, and explored its first principles. He was well acquainted with the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Greek Testament. His brethren in the ministry, with whom he was associated for the purpose of mutual improvement, often found themselves materially

aided by his attainments, and soundness of judgment, especially in theology, and the portions of Scripture with which it is connected.

It was his custom to spend his forenoons in his study, and to employ no small portion of his afternoons in visiting the families of his people. To the last named service, he attached peculiar importance. And there is reason to believe that his usefulness among his people, and the blessing which they received through his ministry, are to be traced, in no small degree, to his fidelity and diligence in this duty.

He was accustomed, in addition to the services of the Sabbath, to deliver one lecture, at least, in each week. In seasons of awakening, or of special religious interest, he appointed various meetings for prayer, and was careful to attend them in person.

Such exemplary devotion to the great objects of his ministry was not lost. It had its appropriate reward. Indeed, his labors, it has been seen, were blessed from the first, and while he was preaching as a candidate. When he came to the people as their ordained minister, it was his rare privilege to come to a precious number who were hopefully converted under his preaching. No doubt, in many instances, they were the harvest springing from the seed sown by his

pious Colleague. In subsequent years, there were various instances of revival among the people of his charge. In the year 1834, there was a series of meetings, which issued in the hopeful conversion of not a few.

It would have been strange, if amidst such arduous attentions to the duties of the ministry, Mr. March had not found the necessity of relaxation. Such a necessity was not unfrequently felt. The relief needed was generally sought in journeying. As the family into which he had entered, had members and near connections in various regions of the country, his journeys were frequently made subservient to the visiting of dear friends. In other instances, he resorted to those places which were objects of curiosity and general interest. He early, in the company of friends, visited the White Hills in New Hampshire. In subsequent instances, he resorted to the Falls of Trenton, and of Niagara. With the last object, he connected an excursion to Quebec and Montreal—an excursion which he much valued, as giving him a knowledge which he never before had, of Romanism, in its splendor, and its corruptions.

From his journeys, he generally returned, invigorated in health, and improved in spirits, and prepared to engage with increased ardor and

efficiency, in his beloved ministerial duties. He lived for his work ; and delighted to devote all his faculties, his time and strength to his beloved people.

In the year 1840, Mr. March's health being somewhat impaired by study and pastoral labors, his friends proposed to him a voyage to Europe. Arrangements having been made for the purpose, he left home, about the middle of April, for Alexandria, (D. C.) which was the destined place of his embarkation. By reason of some detention, he spent several days at Washington, where he was introduced to the President (Mr. Van Buren), and where he had repeated opportunities of listening to the debates of the two houses of Congress.

He embarked at Alexandria, on the first of May, and on the sixth of June, he arrived in London. In this most distinguished city of Europe, and of the world, a mind like his could not but find ample materials to gratify curiosity, and to excite reflection. The advantages offered were seized with avidity, and turned to good account. He employed much time in surveying and examining the almost infinite variety of interesting objects with which he found himself surrounded. And he was alternately surprised, delighted and pained with the subjects of his contemplation.

He was introduced, by letter or otherwise, to some of the most distinguished ministers of the metropolis, and by several of them, he was treated with special attention. Not a few of them, he heard with no little interest and gratification; and in some instances, was himself invited to occupy the desk.

Of the celebrated Mr. Noel, he writes in his Journal: "It is delightful to see one so elevated in rank, and possessing a competent fortune, devoting himself to the arduous and self-denying duties of the Christian ministry. While he devotes the whole of his time to the duties of his profession, and is very abundant in labors, it is said that he gives away nearly the whole of his salary (about four thousand dollars) in charity."

Mr. March attended a public exercise of Dr. Harris, the author of *THE GREAT TEACHER, MAMMON, &c.*, and remarks thus: "It occupied more than an hour in the delivery, and was exceedingly fine. The style was similar to that of his printed productions." He adds:—"I had the pleasure of an introduction to him after the services were ended. His manners are very affable and pleasing. He is quite a small man, and has a very youthful appearance. When he first rose in the pulpit, I could hardly persuade myself that it was the distinguished man whom I expected to hear."

Mr. March travelled somewhat extensively in England. He had a very gratifying interview with Mr. Jay, of Bath, of whom he thus writes: "I found him very affable. His manners are both simple and polished; and he soon makes a stranger feel at home in his company. Though nearly seventy years old, his faculties, both of body and mind, seem to be unimpaired.—Remained at his house nearly an hour, and then regretted to leave him. Upon reviewing this interesting period, I cannot help being surprised at the number of topics upon which we conversed."

Mr. March spent a Sabbath in Birmingham, and attended the church of Mr. James, so well known in America by his writings. It was a communion season. Having been previously introduced to Mr. James, and very cordially received by him, he was much gratified with the discourse, and with the exercises of the communion, which he found much like those of the churches at home. At the close of the exercises, Mr. James affectionately supplicated the blessing of God on the American churches, one of whose pastors (to use his own language) was present.

In his journeyings in England, our traveller did not overlook the town of *Newbury*. He found

it a respectable and thriving place, containing a population of nearly five thousand. A remarkable circumstance was, that the Independent minister of the place, a respectable man, bore the name of *March*. Availing himself of the peculiar coincidences of the case, the stranger visited his house, and was very kindly received. Conversing with the English gentleman, he found himself confirmed in an opinion which he had entertained before ; that his family was of Norman descent, and probably came to England in the time of William the Conqueror.

Mr. March could not deny himself the pleasure of visiting Oxford, the seat of the most celebrated of the English universities. On this classical spot, a variety of interesting associations thronged around him. He took a particular view of the principal colleges, and of those objects which are generally esteemed the most curious. The Bodleian library, the largest in England, powerfully attracted his attention, as did likewise the Arundelian marbles, so celebrated for their antiquity. Passing through the principal streets, he was shown the very spot where, as is believed, the martyrs, Latimer and Hooper, were burned at the stake, in the reign of Mary.

From England, Mr. March made an excursion

to France, where he tarried about a fortnight. Most of this time was passed in Paris. His attention was much attracted to its ancient and splendid churches, its gorgeous palaces, its splendid promenades, and its almost infinite variety of painting and statuary. But his heart was continually pained by the levity and licentiousness which prevailed among all ranks of its inhabitants. *Infidelity*, in its various degrees and forms, presented itself as the grand and pervading malady. His remarks on Voltaire, the great corrupter of France and of Europe—remarks elicited by a sight of his statue in the Pantheon—are worth transcribing. “I presume,” he says, “it gives a very correct idea of the original, as he was in the days of his glory. The figure is tall, with emaciated, and somewhat ghastly features, impressing the beholder at once with the idea of great intellectual force, and a proud, reckless spirit. It certainly looks as we may suppose the great high priest of infidelity must have looked; reminding me strongly of those celebrated lines of Young :

‘Thou art so witty, profligate, and thin,
Thou seem’st a Milton, with his Death and Sin.’”

What a relief and delight must it have been to Mr. March, to pass from the Pantheon to the

Cemetery of Pere la Chaise, and to find inscribed on its entrance, in French : " I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

In this city, so devoted to luxury and licentiousness, Mr. March had one opportunity of preaching the gospel. This service he performed in the Wesleyan Chapel, in the presence of a large audience. His text was selected from John 3 : 16.—On another occasion, he writes in his Journal : " From what I have seen to-day, I am more and more convinced that there is a *remnant*, even in Paris ; and that religion is, on the whole, making progress among her gay and thoughtless population."

Returning from Paris to London, Mr. March soon began to set his face homeward. In this prospect, he quotes, in his Journal, the beautiful lines of Goldsmith :

" Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee."

Having taken leave of friends in London, particularly Mr. Bacon, who, with his family, had shown him particular kindness, he embarked on the seventh of August, and arrived at New York, on the fourteenth of September. Approaching the city, he thus writes : " The shores of New

Jersey and New York are now just before us. O that my heart may be filled with the liveliest gratitude to that God who has watched over me amidst all the perils of the mighty deep, and amidst all my journeyings in foreign lands, and brought me once more, in peace and safety, within sight of the land which gave me birth.—Hope in the course of a few hours, to be restored to the society of beloved friends. How delightful the prospect.”

His Journal closes in these terms: “As the result of my absence, I feel that my health has been greatly improved, that my experience has been enlarged, and that my knowledge of places, of men, and manners has been considerably increased. God grant that for all these benefits, my heart may be truly grateful.”

Mr. March's labors, while at home, though chiefly pastoral, were not confined to that department. Feeling a lively interest in the intellectual, as well as the moral improvement of the young, he labored for many years, and very assiduously, as a member of the school committee of the town of Newbury. He was likewise, for several years, a member of the Board of Trustees of Dummer Academy in Byfield, and in the latter period of his life, its President. It cannot be doubted that in each of these spheres of

action, his influence in the promotion of youthful knowledge and good morals, was efficient and salutary. He saw in the young, the elements of an immortal existence, and the materials which would constitute the salvation, or the bane, of his country, and the world, in future ages.

If the view which has been given of Mr. March's ministerial course be correct—and it is believed to be not exaggerated—it is not surprising, that by the sober and religious part of his people, he should be most affectionately and highly prized. Such was the real fact. Few ministers have possessed so much of the warm and united affection of their churches. It was a growing affection too. In the most tender and unequivocal form, it was displayed during his protracted sickness, and at his death. It may, however, be thought strange, that with his uniform and uncompromising advocacy of the cause of truth and holiness, he should retain the affection of all classes of his people. Yet this, too, was remarkably the fact. And if the explanation be sought, it will probably be found in that *meekness* which habitually imbued his spirit and his whole demeanor, and which mingled itself with his most faithful instructions and reproofs, whether public or private. Love,

genuine love, has not only an attractive, but a disarming power. The minister who is thus furnished, and whose instructions and rebukes are enforced by a correspondent example, may hope to pass unscathed, even through a censorious world. And he will have an advocate and a friend in the *consciences* of those whose *hearts* are not gained.

Nor was this affectionate estimate of his worth confined to Mr. March's own people. Wherever he was known—and he was known somewhat extensively—he was valued and respected as an exemplary Christian, and an instructive preacher. The churches around considered his presence and his labors among them, as a privilege. This sentiment, which extensively prevailed during his life, seemed to be deepened, as the time of his departure approached. It was felt that his death would make a chasm which could not be easily supplied.

By his brethren in the ministry, he was universally beloved. That veil of modesty which concealed a portion of his excellence from the passing world, did not obstruct their vision. It rather enhanced their sense of his worth, and gave him a deeper interest in their hearts. Those, particularly, who resided in his

native place, frequently resorted to him for aid. And with great readiness and liberality was that aid imparted. His name will long be fragrant in Newburyport. Nor will his memory ever recur to the minds of the pious in that place, but with a sentiment of gratitude that their town was privileged to give birth to such a minister, and of tender regret that his continuance on earth was so short.

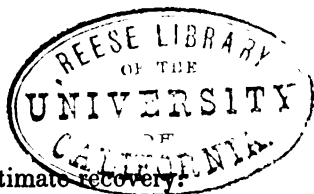
It should not be forgotten that Mr. March, while exemplarily devoted to his studies, and his people, was habitually alive to the interests of his country, and to the cause of religion and good morals in the community. He was grieved at the alarming progress of error and infidelity, of vice and crime. He lamented over the widespread ravages of intemperance, and the various and nameless evils of slavery. And without sanctioning what was irregular and extravagant in the opposition sometimes made to these evils, he was ever ready to employ for their subversion or mitigation, the weapons supplied by truth, and by genuine, enlightened benevolence. He was, for several years, Secretary of the Tract Society of North Essex, and by his annual reports manifested not only his lively interest in the cause, but enlightened views of the most efficient means of its advancement.

But his important and useful life must have a close ; and the event occurred at a period when, to human view, he was more than ever prepared for increased and extended usefulness.

His sickness commenced on Friday, March 20th, 1846. He had preached, on the preceding evening, his weekly lecture, from the text, *O how love I thy law*. On Friday afternoon, he walked out to make some parochial visits. But feeling much indisposed, he hurried back, and before night was in a burning fever.

For the first eight days, the distress was often so great as to induce delirium, and to deprive him both of sight and hearing. But he was subsequently much relieved, and was viewed as in a low bilious fever. His complaints lingering upon him in a remarkable degree, and no effectual relief being obtained, he was removed to Boston, that he might avail himself of the medical skill of Dr. Bigelow. That physician, after examination, pronounced the disease "water in the pleura ;" but did not judge it incurable. Subsequently, the difficulty of respiration increased ; but after the application of suitable remedies, there was apparently a change for the better.

It is remarkable that, through a great portion of his sickness, Mr. March, though not unaware



of danger, indulged a hope of ultimate recovery. He had a strong impression that the affliction was designed by his heavenly Father for his "great spiritual benefit." His mind was unusually active, and seemed, at times, full of plans of future usefulness. Still, he manifested an unreserved submission to the disposing will of God, and not unfrequently took near and comfortable views of death and eternity.

He continued in Boston about four weeks, and returned on the fifteenth of July, apparently more comfortable than when he left home. Several weeks afterward, he received a visit from Dr. Rigelow, at Belleville, who pronounced him no worse, and apprehended that the water was nearly absorbed. But soon afterward, other complaints supervened; medicine seemed to lose its power; and it was judged, on careful examination, that a portion of the lungs was ulcerated.

From this period to the time of his death—two weeks only—his strength rapidly declined; and his sufferings, which were borne with his usual submission and patience, were, at times, very great. Little remains, therefore, but to gather up a few of those remarks which fell from him during this short interval; and which, while they indicate the state of his own mind,

are suited to interest and profit the minds of others. If, in what precedes, and what follows, there should seem to any reader, to be too much of detail, let it be remembered that this Memoir has been prepared chiefly for his particular friends, and his affectionate people.

The day after the state of his lungs was announced to him—it was the Sabbath—he appeared deeply solemn, yet tranquil; and remarked, in conversation, “I would be willing to live an invalid for years, with an invalid’s food and privations, if occasionally I could preach the gospel of Christ.” And he thought, as he had an increased view of the value of the soul, he should be much more faithful than ever before.

On the following day, he expressed to a friend in the ministry, who paid him a visit, his entire submission and pleasure in being in the hand of God.

The same day, he remarked to another ministerial brother, who called to see him, that he did not ask so much for the *consolations* of religion—those were for God to impart as he saw best. “But I do wish,” said he, “for *a humble and contrite spirit; a broken heart.*” At the same time, he deplored much that he had been no more faithful as a minister of Christ.

The day following, he spoke much of the privilege of *communion with God*. He said, that were it possible for him to recover, it would be his greatest privilege and pleasure to spend frequent and long continued seasons of communion with his Maker—certainly an hour at a time, once in a day, and he hoped, oftener.

The day afterward, he said, "The last visit of Dr. Bigelow (that in which he expressed a more unfavorable opinion of his case) was the most profitable one he ever made me; for it drove me to the Saviour's feet." Being asked, if he found it a *new* place, he replied, "O no; but I was expecting to recover, and almost unconsciously was forming plans for the future; and they savored too much of worldly ambition."

On another occasion, he remarked, "The Christian's only home is heaven." He then spoke of his delight in the thought of being there; of his confidence that a seat was prepared for him; of the friends he would meet; but more than all, of his *dear Saviour*.

To a friend, he remarked, "The conversation of many troubles me; for if I have but a few weeks to remain, I would spend them all with my God."

In reply to a lady who visited him, and who

expressed a wish for his recovery, he said, "I feel that to live, will be Christ, and to die, will be gain." He was afterward led to remark on the short-comings of Christians, and said, "How much they lose, by not living nearer the Saviour. They have so little communion with him, that they hardly dare go into his presence. O, if there be a feeling of shame in heaven, I shall certainly feel it, since I have done so little for God."

The feeling of his own unworthiness was, at times, oppressive ; but after speaking of it, he would rarely fail to advert to the fullness there was in his Saviour, and his own unfailing trust in his boundless compassion.

On the Sabbath which was the last of his life, he requested to have read to him the fifty-first Psalm. He conversed, at noon, with the preacher who occupied his desk, expressed his wish that his might be a successful ministry, and said, "If you are ever brought to a situation like mine, you will feel your responsibilities as you never have before." Conversing, in the evening, on the subject of submission, he said, he believed he was willing to leave all, soul, body, friends, every thing, to the disposal of his heavenly Father.

The following day, he resumed the same sub-

ject, and earnestly requested his beloved wife to be willing to leave every thing in the hand of God. He wished her not to pray for his life otherwise than incidentally. Being questioned whether *he* did not ask for life, he replied, that he had, until within a few days ; but now, all he asked, was submission to the divine will.

On the morning of Thursday, he was visited by a brother in the ministry ; but was so much afflicted by a preternatural drowsiness, as to be able to speak very little. He told his brother, that he had much to say to him, and wished to see him again. But it was their last interview.

In the afternoon, he seemed brighter, and conversed freely on the things of eternity. He dwelt much on the fullness of Christ, as the great source of his consolation. "He is an ocean—vast—illimitable—else," said he, "I should despair."

The day following, he conversed with two of his sisters, as one on the borders of the eternal world ; and very affectionately and solemnly addressed to each, appropriate instruction and admonition. He performed the same duty, the day following, to a brother and sister, and with much tender earnestness. He said, he would willingly give up his own life, if his death might be blessed to the salvation of those he

so much loved. To another friend, who soon after entered his room, he expressed the wish "that all his dear people might feel as happy as he did."

To a brother in the ministry, who preached his preparatory lecture, he spoke with great tenderness and humility, of his own want of seriousness at ministerial associations; and lamented that he had ever forgotten, for a moment, the great object of the ministry. His regrets, and his humility seemed almost oppressive.

To a female relative, a member of his church, he said, the day before his decease: "This church, I trust, is a vine of God's own planting; the church of the living God; Jesus Christ the Captain of their salvation. I want them all to feel just as I do; to feel that the *Lord is right*. I have had many a *hard struggle* in my own mind; but now, *I have no will of my own*. I am perfectly reconciled. My will is lost in the will of God." He added, "Hezekiah prayed, and God added to his life, fifteen years; but how much less interesting were the latter, than the former years of his life."

The last day of his life was now come. It was a day of much bodily suffering, and of much spiritual enjoyment. His wife having read to him the passage, "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c.. he said, "How

consoling." She repeated promises, such as "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," &c. He said, "How precious." She repeated some stanzas of appropriate hymns. He said, "How beautiful ; how comforting." A ministerial brother from Newburyport visited, and prayed with him. At parting, he extended the dying hand, and bidding him farewell, said, "When I am gone, do not forget my church or people ; my dear wife or family."

He was visited, in the afternoon, by an aged friend in the ministry, to whom he expressed, in feeble accents, but very intelligibly, much Christian resignation, and much sweet peace and hope. He had been favored, that morning, as he believed, with a season of communion with his God. His ties to earth were dissolved. He was willing, and more than willing, to depart, that he might be with his beloved Saviour. He was willing to part with the dearest of earthly friends, and hoped to meet them, never to be separated more, in a Father's house above.

In a short time after his soul was committed to God in prayer, it took its upward flight, and rested in the bosom of its Saviour.

This interesting event occurred on Saturday, the 26th of September, 1846, near five o'clock in the afternoon.

After the particulars which have been given of Mr. March's life, and closing scene, it seems needless to attempt a formal delineation of his *character*. Most of its principal features have been already developed. It must have been seen that the essence and the charm of his character was *piety* ; a piety not superficial, nor austere, nor obtrusive ; but in-wrought, and meek, and retiring ; a piety not of cold speculation, or barren experience, or empty profession ; but a deep-seated *principle*, subduing the soul, warming the heart, regulating the temper, and spreading its influence over the life. It was this piety which rendered him so diligent in study, and so indefatigable in labor ; which prompted him to be so scrupulously attentive to the seasons and duties of devotion, while it suffered him to shrink from no extraneous and active service. It was this which made him so exemplary as a man ; so faithful and affectionate as a preacher ; so assiduous and devoted as a pastor, and so lovely in all the private and tender relations of life. It was this, in short, which diffused a salutary influence over his whole deportment, and secured to his character and his exertions, their most efficient power for accomplishing good. It was justly said of him by a ministerial brother who knew him well, that

"though grave, he was not austere; though dignified, he was accessible; though serious, he was cheerful; and though a pleasant companion, he never for a moment forgot that he was a minister of Christ." The same brother remarked of him, that "he had the peculiar faculty of disarming opposition, and uniting all hearts in his favor, without sacrificing any purpose which a faithful advocate for the truth ought to maintain." It was the same spirit of uniform piety, which rendered him so useful to his people, so beloved by his ministerial brethren, such an ornament to religion, and such a blessing to the community. It was this which sustained his heart in scenes of severe distress, and tranquilized his mind at the approach of death. It was this which enlightened and cheered his sick chamber, and gave it a character so beautifully described by the poet—

"The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged above the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.

You see the man; you see his hold on heaven,
If sound his virtue
Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her friends
On this side death; and points them out to man;
A lecture silent, but of sovereign power;
To vice, confusion—and to virtue, peace."

The removal of such a man as Mr. March, in the full vigor of his faculties, and the full career of his usefulness, is one of the mysteries of Providence. Yet some of the lessons which it comprises, are as obvious, as they are important. It speaks to us of that world where real goodness finds its *reward*, its *perfection*, and its *noblest sphere of exertion*. It speaks to us of the *independence*, the *munificence* of that Being who, having prepared the fittest instruments for his service on earth, can lay them aside without injury to his cause. The *design*, too, of such a dispensation will be well answered, if Christians shall look more simply to God himself, to uphold and prosper the interests of his Zion ; and if Christian ministers, gathering up the fallen mantle, shall give themselves more entirely to those pious exertions from the midst of which their departed brother was taken to his rest.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE HEAVENLY TREASURE.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field.—
MATT. xiii. 44.

THE Kingdom of heaven, is a phrase which has a variety of significations. Sometimes it simply means the gospel dispensation, in contradistinction from that which went before it ; as when John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Sometimes it seems to signify the visible church in contradistinction from the world ; as when our Saviour declares, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.” Sometimes it means the world of everlasting blessedness ; as

when our Saviour declares, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Sometimes it seems to have reference to the power of Christianity in the human soul: as when our Saviour declares, "The kingdom of God," (a phrase which I apprehend to be equivalent to the phrase, The kingdom of heaven,) "cometh not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, lo, there! for behold, the kingdom of God, (the kingdom of heaven,) is within you." Such I conceive to be its meaning in the passage selected for our text.

Two thoughts require attention. In what respects is Christianity in the heart of man, a treasure? And why is it called a hid treasure?

I. In what respects is religion a treasure?

1. It is excellent in its own nature. Such is an idea which men most naturally associate with the name of treasure. Silver and gold and precious stones seem to them to have an intrinsic value; in other words, to be valuable on their own account. It is true that this is, to some extent, a mistaken notion. It is in reality their relation to other things, which imparts to them their chief value. If they were not the representatives of other things, they would be of no

more account than some other species of matter of the same size. At the same time, though the notion be a mistaken one, yet on account of its commonness, it almost necessarily enters into our idea of a treasure. We say, therefore, that the word treasure, carries with it the idea of intrinsic value, of an excellence peculiar to itself. And, my friends, such is in reality the fact with the kingdom of heaven, or the religion of Jesus Christ in the soul of man.

To be convinced of the truth of this remark, we have only to consider for a single moment, what it implies. It implies then the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It implies deliverance from the power and pollution of sin, internal purification, and a partial, but constantly growing conformity to the law and the image of God. It implies an habitual fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. It implies a peace which passeth understanding, and a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. It implies, in a single word, all that is excellent in holiness, and all that is desirable in happiness.

Surely, then, whatever may be thought of earthly treasure, there can be no doubt of the value and the excellence of religion. It is valuable in itself, independently of its relation to all other beings, and all other things.

2. Religion is a treasure, because it procures for those who possess it, the richest of benefits. The chief value of worldly treasures consists in the benefits which they are capable of procuring for those who possess them. By means of their silver and gold, men may purchase houses, and lands, and merchandise ; every thing, indeed, which is an object of traffic. Thus they are enabled to gratify almost every desire of their hearts, and to procure for themselves the semblance, and the reputation, if not the reality of happiness. Indeed earthly treasures often procure for men advantages which are not objects of traffic. They impart to them influence amongst their fellow men. They are sometimes the means of elevating them to places of power and trust. Hence the wise man tells us that "the rich man's wealth is his strong city," and again, that "wealth maketh many friends."

In this respect, experimental religion may be compared to a treasure. It procures for those who possess it, the most abundant and precious advantages. Indeed, to some of these advantages I have already alluded. Fellowship with God ; peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ; what can be more desirable ? The man, therefore, who possesses the religion of the gospel, secures by it the favor of God. Yes ; he is regarded

with an eye of the utmost complacency, and a heart of the warmest love, by the greatest, the holiest, the best of beings. God is his Father, and his Friend. He may therefore rest assured that all things will be bestowed upon him of which he stands in need. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." How much is implied in this declaration of the Psalmist. By means of that rich treasure which he possesses in the religion of Jesus Christ, he obtains all those things which are necessary for him in the present world. On this account merely, it deserves to be regarded as the most valuable of treasures. But this is not all. Nay it is but a small part of the benefits which it procures for him. It will procure for him all the blessedness of heaven for ever; for the Lord will not only give grace, but glory. "Fear not," said the Saviour to his disciples; "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." But who can conceive the joys which await the child of God in another and better world? In comparison with them the present joys of earth are not worthy of the name.

What an immense difference is there, therefore, between the benefits which are procured by

earthly treasures, and the treasure which we are considering. The former can be enjoyed, at the farthest, but for a few short years ; at best, it can afford but a very imperfect, a very unsatisfactory kind of happiness. The latter are eternal in their duration ; are all which the soul can desire.

3. Religion is a treasure, because of the satisfaction which it affords to the man who possesses it. Now there is nothing which would afford to the great majority of men such an extacy of delight, as the discovery of some rich treasure. To this fact our Saviour alludes in the passage which contains our text, and indeed makes it the ground of the simile employed. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

From the well known cupidity of the human mind, we can easily conceive what would be the emotions of an individual who, digging in the earth, should suddenly strike upon a mine of silver or gold ; more especially if he had previously been a poor man, compelled to support himself and his family, by the labor of his hands, and by the sweat of his brow. What visions of happiness would flit before his excited

fancy. Already would he see himself, in prospect, "arrayed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day : " the observed of all observers ; caressed by the great, and honored by the multitude.

But, my friends, a much higher and purer satisfaction attends the discovery and the possession of the gospel treasure. It excites no extravagant expectations, expectations which ought not to be indulged, and which cannot be fulfilled. Nay, as we have already seen, the benefits which it procures are such as no mortal imagination can conceive. But it does afford the highest, the purest satisfaction. The man who has found it, feels that he has discovered a treasure indeed. Its value, although from its greatness it cannot be appreciated by any finite mind, appears to him so great, that for it, he is willing to sell all that he has ; nay, and to do it with joy. And why should he not ? For he parts only with that which is worthless, which indeed may be positively injurious to him, that he may procure that, whose value is infinite. Such then are some of the respects in which religion is a treasure. But,

II. In what respect is it a hid treasure ? This is the second point which we proposed to consider.

1. It is a hid treasure, as the great majority of men are unconscious of its existence. A hid treasure, as its name imports, is unknown to the generality of men. They pass over the field which contains it, without any conception of the riches which lie underneath its surface. Such is pre-eminently the fact with the treasure of religion. The great majority of men know nothing about it. Many indeed do not even believe in its existence. How many are there, to whom the doctrine of the new birth seems like the very essence of fanaticism and folly. They do not believe that God ever reveals himself to the souls of men, as he does not unto the world at large. They say that he is to be known only through his works, and his word; that as to speaking to them by his Spirit, it is an idea which has no foundation either in Scripture, or in reason. They may not doubt, perhaps, that those who profess to have experienced the power of religion upon their souls, are perfectly sincere in the belief of those things which they assert; that they imagine that they do indeed hold communion with God; that they have views of his glory, such as the majority of men know nothing of; that they have foretastes of heaven itself. But they believe them to be only the dreams of a glowing and excited imagina-

tion ; vivid enough to impress upon the minds of those who have them an idea of reality, notwithstanding that by the calm eye of philosophy they are seen to be only delusion. To such individuals, it is very certain that experimental religion must indeed be like treasure hid in a field.

But even some who profess to believe in its reality, can form no just conception of it. When they hear Christians speaking of the great things which God has done for their souls, of the revelations which have been made to them of eternal things ; of the peace and joy which they have found in believing ; it sounds to them almost like a new language ; like a strange tongue. Perhaps, like Nicodemus of old, they are ready to inquire, "How can these things be ?" Men may know much respecting the external forms of religion, who yet remain in utter ignorance of its spirit. The Scriptures tell us of those who have the form of godliness, but who deny the power thereof.

Now of such individuals there can be no doubt that they are ignorant of its power ; for if they were not, if they were acquainted with it, they would not deny it. But this ignorance is not confined to them. They only share it in common with millions of others ; of all indeed

who have not been born again. O, how many are there who are accustomed to read the Scriptures, from day to day, who regularly attend upon the public worship of God on the Sabbath, and who really feel and uniformly manifest a high regard for all the institutions of religion, who are as ignorant of its real essence, its transforming, purifying, enlightening, consoling and elevating influence upon the heart, as if they had never heard of it. Their altars, like those of the ancient Athenians, are erected to the worship of an unknown God. Suppose, then, that they should become the subjects of renewing grace, what an entire change, and how wonderful to themselves, would take place in all their views of religion. They would feel themselves introduced, as it were, into a new world. For if any man be in Christ, says the Apostle, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. O, would not such an individual feel that he has indeed found a treasure; ay, a treasure which, up to the present moment, has been hidden, as it were, in a field? But,

2. Religion is a hid treasure, as by the great majority of men, it is undervalued. If the existence of a treasure be entirely unknown and unsuspected, it is of course, as if it were not.

The man who owns the field which contains it, values that field none the more highly on its account. If assured that there is some kind of a treasure there, still if he knows not either its nature, or its amount, he is very likely to put upon it but a low estimate. Now apply these observations to the subject in hand, to experimental religion; and see how closely in these respects it resembles a treasure hid in a field. That it is most exceedingly undervalued by the majority of men, is but too painfully apparent. They value it so little, that they will not put forth a single effort for its acquisition. It is so completely hidden from them, that they can perceive nothing of its excellence. Nay, many who are constantly passing over the field which contains it, have their doubts of its existence. They value it, therefore, at nothing. And even those, who profess to believe in its existence, seem to place upon it scarcely a higher value. They are told that it is so valuable that to purchase it, they should be willing to give all that they have. But they obviously do not believe it. Nay, they are unwilling to give up for it, the slightest worldly pleasure. But would it, could it be so, if it were not hidden from their view; if they could see it precisely as it is? What sacrifices are they willing to make for an

earthly treasure. Our Saviour tells us that for joy thereof, they go and sell all that they have, that they may obtain it. And why is it thus? Is it not because they have discovered its value? They have seen it as it is. By seeing it, they have been enabled to estimate, to some extent, its amount. They think of the advantages which its possession will confer upon them. It will make them rich; it will impart to them influence amongst their fellow men. It is no longer a hid treasure to them. It is a treasure discovered. They are therefore willing to give for it all that they possess. If they were able they would give for it all that it is worth. And just such is the case with the treasure of experimental religion. If it were known, it would be highly valued. They would not think that the Scriptures place upon it an extravagant estimate; though they require of those who would possess it, that they give up all for it that they have. But alas! it is to them like treasure hid in a field. It is out of sight. They have only heard about it with the hearing of the ear. They are unacquainted with it, and therefore they do not value it as they do those things with which they are acquainted. This is the reason why they can prefer to it those things which are of infinitely less value; the smallest trifles of nature and of art. But,

3. Religion is a hid treasure, as it is to be obtained only by effort, and by sacrifice. Our Saviour represents it, in the passage from which our text is selected, as treasure hid, not in a man's own field, but in the field of another; so that before it can be obtained, that field is to be bought, though it may cost him all which he possesses. Sacrifices, therefore, are to be made in order to obtain the treasure of the kingdom of heaven. To this fact we had occasion to allude under the preceding head. But its importance renders it deserving of something more than a mere passing allusion. It deserves to be made prominent.

Be it then never forgotten, that the treasure which we are describing is a hid treasure; so that no man can obtain it, who is not willing to part with all that he has for it. We must be willing to give up not only our property, but our friends, our dearest comforts, yea, even life itself. If any man, said the Saviour, will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

But there is still one other respect in which

the kingdom of heaven is like to a hid treasure. To procure it, not only sacrifice, but effort is necessary. It would be of no avail for a man to purchase a field containing some rich treasure, if after he has purchased it, he is unwilling to dig for it. He can be none the better for it, so long as it remains in its secret bed. He must therefore break up the soil which covers it, and bring it forth from its hiding place. Just so, my friends, are we commanded to do in reference to the infinitely richer treasure of the kingdom of God. If thou criest after knowledge, says the wise man, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

The figure employed by the wise man is substantially the same with that employed by the Saviour, and suggests to the mind, the necessity of vigorous effort on the part of those who would secure for themselves the blessings of religion. But this idea is often brought to view in the Bible, not only in figurative, but in plain language. Thus we are commanded to seek that we may find ; to labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life ; to strive, or as the

word might be interpreted, to *agonize*, to enter in at the strait gate ; expressions which imply intense and long continued effort. But why should this occasion us any trouble, or any regret, when we consider that it is the richness and the abundance of the gospel treasure which render it necessary ? If it were less rich, or less abundant, it might perhaps be obtained with less effort. By a little digging, and a little searching, the mine which contains it might be exhausted. Should a man discover a mine of silver, or of gold, he would not certainly complain because it is so rich in the precious ore, as to render it necessary for him to labor upon it for months or for years, before he could exhaust it. The fact that every effort which he makes, adds to his wealth, causes that effort to appear to him easy and pleasant. We ought then to rejoice in the necessity which is laid upon us to labor, in order that we may obtain the rich treasure of the kingdom of heaven. For when we consider the cause of this necessity, we perceive that we are not required to labor in vain, nor to spend our strength for nought. The more deeply we explore the mines of gospel wealth, the more rich will their treasures appear to us. Every step of our progress will be crowned with some new success. However

much we may have already gained, we shall find that there is still more to be gained.

I. How happy then, I would remark in the first place, are all those who have found the gospel treasure. They are happier far than those who have discovered the richest of earthly treasures. For what is all the wealth of Peruvian mines, which must perish with the using, in comparison with that which lasts forever? It is but a short time that any earthly treasure can be enjoyed. A few years, at farthest, and the man who possesses it must bequeath it to his heirs. But the treasures of heaven are eternal in their duration. How wise therefore does that advice of our blessed Lord appear, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal : but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." O, which was really the happier man ; which was the more deserving to be envied ; the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fared sumptuously every day ; or the beggar who lay starving at his gate ? The one had earthly treasures in abundance, but he was

soon to leave them, and then his immortal spirit was to suffer the pangs and the privations of an everlasting poverty. He was to be so poor as to need even a drop of water, wherewith to relieve his parched and burning tongue. The other was possessed of all the treasures of heaven. It is true that he could not yet enjoy them. But they were his in reversion ; his in prospect ; ay, in speedy prospect. Happy, then, we repeat it, must be the man who has found that religion which is like a treasure hid in a field.

2. How naturally, upon a review of our subject, does the question arise in our minds, Can this treasure be obtained by seeking ? My friends, I wish for a moment to fix your thoughts upon this inquiry. I wish, in a special manner, to bespeak for it the attention of those who do not profess to have found it. Now, all, I presume, will acknowledge, even the infidel himself, if he were present, that if the representations which we have made in the preceding discourse, be true ; if there be such a thing as experimental religion, it must be the greatest of blessings ; it must be more valuable, yea infinitely more valuable, than all things else. It must indeed be the one thing needful. All men in a state of nature, are conscious of

some mighty want which this world can never supply ; or, as the poet expresses it, of an aching void within, the world can never fill. It is not in the power of silver or gold, of houses and lands, of honor and distinction, of sensual pleasures, of any thing, indeed, which this world can afford, to satisfy the cravings of an immortal spirit. Is it then in the power of religion to do it ? It doubtless is, if it is all which I have represented. It is, if it brings the soul into direct and intimate communion with its God ; if it elevates it above the world ; if it purifies and sanctifies its affections ; if it meets all its demands, adapts itself precisely to its nature, and gives to it both the promise and the pledge of a happy immortality. We have asserted, in the preceding discourse, that such is the fact with religion. And we believe that we have asserted it upon the highest and the best of authority ; the authority of God himself. And we believe, too, that the truth of our assertion has been confirmed by the experience of thousands and tens of thousands of God's children in all ages of the world. Nay, we believe that there are living witnesses of it, and that in great numbers ; and that some of these witnesses may be found even among ourselves ; in this very community, yea, amidst this con-

gregation. At the same time, as the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field, as the great majority of men know nothing about this hid treasure, we cannot wonder that to many, all we say about it, should seem like idle tales.

But since such is the infinite importance of the subject; since such is its relation, not only to the interests of time, but to those of eternity, would it not be the part of wisdom, even for those individuals to inquire whether these things may not be so? Nay, to put forth every effort in their power to ascertain the fact, if any mode exists, by which it can be ascertained. But it has been our object in the preceding discourse, to show that there is such a mode. We have declared and we trust that we have proved by our appeals to Scripture, that whilst the kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure hid in a field, in many other respects, it is like it also in this; that its riches may be discovered, yea, may be possessed, by seeking for them.

Is not the experiment, then, my friends, worth the making? Suppose you were told that in some neighboring field there is a treasure of silver or gold; told, too, by some one who professes himself to have discovered it there, and of whose veracity you have no reason to doubt, would it be wise in you to

ridicule the intelligence? Indeed would you be likely to do it? You might, perhaps, distrust its correctness. You might think that the author of it is mistaken. Still, when it is so easy to ascertain the truth in respect to it; when for this purpose you have only to go to that field, and to dig and to examine for yourselves, would you not be disposed to do it? Now we affirm that the kingdom of heaven; that religion, with all its exalted privileges, and all its precious joys, is like that treasure hid in a field. It is to be obtained by seeking. Will you then, instead of seeking that you may ascertain whether what we tell you is true, content yourselves with disbelieving our declaration, declaring that it is not, that it cannot be true? Is this the part of wisdom?

If the declaration were entirely new, if it had never been heard before, if we could produce for it no authority, it might perhaps be wise. But it comes to you from ten thousand different sources. It is as old as the Bible itself, and it has never ceased to be repeated throughout the many ages during which the Bible has existed; and it has been repeated by those who have declared that they spoke from experience. Their language has been that of the Psalmist, "Come and hear, all ye that

fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." I ask, then, is it wise that you should reject all these multiplied declarations, without any inquiry into their truth, when such an inquiry is in your power? We can tell you where the hidden treasures of the gospel are to be found. They are to be found in repentance for your sins, in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in giving him your hearts, and devoting yourselves to his service. Will you not, then, go and seek them there? The conditions, you perceive, are both easy and reasonable; they commend themselves to your own consciences. O then comply with them; perform your first and plainest duty, and you will no longer doubt that there is such a thing as experimental religion. Though now it may be to you a hid treasure, it will then be a treasure discovered, and you will find it to be a treasure indeed; infinite and all sufficient, soul satisfying and everlasting.

SERMON II.

HOPE, THE CHRISTIAN'S ANCHOR.

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.—**HEBREWS vi. 19.**

THESE words are obviously the continuation of a paragraph ; and therefore to know to what the apostle refers, they must be viewed in their connection. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us ; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." It is then the hope of eternal salvation through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, of which the apostle is

speaking, and which he represents as an anchor of the soul.

The figure is one of peculiar beauty. The soul is represented as a ship embarked upon the ocean of life, exposed to all the winds of heaven, and tossed about by its tempests. Still there is no danger of its being wrecked, for it is held fast by its anchor, an anchor which is sure and steadfast ; for it is cast within the veil ; it is attached to the Rock of Ages. From this strong hold, no earthly power can separate it.

Such, then, my friends, is the strength, and such the influence, of the Christian's hope. The sentiment, therefore, contained in our text, when stripped of its figurative garb, amounts to this : that there is nothing like the hope of the gospel, to keep the soul *steadfast* amidst the adverse and dangerous influences to which it is exposed. To illustrate this sentiment, will be my object in the following discourse.

In pursuing this object, it will of course be necessary for me to point out some of the adverse and dangerous influences to which I have referred ; and to show in what manner hope operates to preserve the soul steadfast and immovable amidst them all.

1. We live in a world of error—a world in which the light of truth shines but feebly.

Whilst in a Christian land like ours, vast multitudes possess the Bible, and profess to believe it, a great diversity of opinions exist in respect to the doctrines which it contains. What one affirms, another denies. One theory after another, is broached upon the most interesting and important subjects, until the memory becomes burdened with their number, and some are ready to ask, is there any such thing as certainty ; or is the Bible merely a riddle to exercise the ingenuity, and to puzzle the understandings of men ? How numerous, for instance, are the speculations in respect to the character of God. Whilst one represents him as so just, that he will inflict upon every impenitent sinner the penalty of everlasting death, another declares that he is too merciful to do it. Nay, he stigmatizes the opposite doctrine as not only false, but barbarous ; as clothing the Almighty with the attributes of a tyrant ; and as utterly subversive of his claims to the character of a Father to his creatures.

How different, too, are the speculations of men in respect to the object for which Jesus Christ came into the world. Whilst some contend that it was to make an atonement for the sins of the world, others contend that such an atonement was entirely unnecessary. Whilst

the former declare that he became the propitiation for our sins, and that he died that man might live, the latter declare that he came only as a teacher of the race, to make known to them the truth of God, to illustrate the excellence of it in his own pure and spotless example, and after having given to it the testimony of his whole life, to seal that testimony with his blood. How various, and how contradictory, too, are the speculations of men in respect to the nature of Christ. Some affirm that he was equal with the Father, God manifest in the flesh, possessed of all his attributes, and as such entitled to an equal degree of reverence and honor. Others, on the contrary, affirm that he was a mere man, born into the world like other men, and though vastly superior to most of them in point of character, chargeable with many of their infirmities and defects. Others, again, take a sort of intermediate ground. They acknowledge that Christ was more than man : that he was even greater than angels. They do not, however, believe that he was God. They believe that he stands next to God in point of rank ; that he was the first-born of his creatures, that he has been invested with authority over them, and that he is entitled to receive from them, honors almost, if

not quite divine. All these doctrines have been defended, perhaps, with an equal degree of ability. Error has sometimes had advocates who are no less gifted with education and talent, than the advocates of truth. They have been men of powerful minds, of great natural shrewdness, well skilled in all the arts of debate, insinuating in their style, and above all, of great weight of character.

In the hands of such men, it is easy to perceive what advantages the cause of error must possess. Those who have perused their writings, know with what extreme plausibility they have often maintained their ground, and how difficult it has been even for those who have not been convinced by their arguments, to meet and to overthrow them. It cannot, therefore, seem strange to us that every teacher of error should have his disciples ; more especially when that error falls in with the corrupt inclinations of our own hearts, and those who listen to him have no means of confuting his statements, and are not accustomed, perhaps do not even wish, to think for themselves. But whilst, from the causes which I have mentioned, there are thousands in our world who are blown about by every wind of doctrine, there are some who believe the truth, and who remain firm in

their attachment to it. Such is the fact with those who have been taught by the Spirit of God.

But what is it which holds them firm? I answer, it is in part, that hope which is as an anchor of the soul. Now that hope is founded in the truth, and so interwoven and incorporated with it, that you cannot destroy the one, without destroying the other. The Christian believes that he shall be saved; but he believes it, because he also believes that Christ has made an atonement for his sins according to the Scriptures; and he believes that such an atonement has been made, because the attributes of God required it; because without such an atonement, God could not have been just, and yet the justifier of sinners. He also believes that such an atonement could have been made by no finite, no created being; and that consequently he by whom it was made, could have been none other than God in human flesh, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Thus we perceive how closely the hope of the Christian is connected with the orthodoxy of his belief. What though his understanding, therefore, may be plied with the most specious and potent arguments in favor of some popular error? What though, for in-

stance, all that has been said, all that can be said, against the doctrine of the atonement, should be arrayed before him in the most forcible and impressive style; what though he should be told that such a doctrine is dishonorable to God, since it represents him as an implacable being, whose anger against the sinner can be appeased only with blood; or that it is inconsistent with the dictates of reason and common sense, to which nothing analogous in any human government can be found; that the innocent should be made to suffer for the guilty; or that it is contradicted by all those numerous passages of the Bible in which God is said to be merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and in truth;—he knows that all his hope of pardon and salvation is founded upon this controverted doctrine. He knows that when his conscience was burdened with a sense of sin, and he felt as if the avenger of blood was just behind him, and the wrath of God seemed just ready to burst upon him in torrents of overwhelming and eternal ruin, he could find no peace to his troubled spirit, until he found it in believing; ay, in believing that Jesus Christ had made an atonement for his sins. The moment that his eye fell distinctly upon the cross, he felt the burden of his guilt removed. Hope

sprung up in his stricken and darkened soul. And O how great were the consolations of that hope. It seemed to open before him a new world. Floods of joy were poured into his soul, of which he can never lose the remembrance. Perhaps I ought rather to say, a fountain of joy was opened there, whose streams still continue to flow, and which he desires, nay which he firmly believes, will be perennial. Those, therefore, who have never had a similar experience ; who know nothing of the hope by which his breast is animated ; may say what they please in respect to the unreasonableness, nay the absolute impossibility of the atonement ; they may set up their own merits in opposition to the merits of Christ ; it will still be the language of his heart, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He may not be able to answer all the objections which are alleged against the doctrine of the atonement ; he may be conscious of a great deficiency of skill in defending it ; he may be charged with holding it without reason, and contrary to argument and to evidence ; he may be completely silenced by the cavils of his opponent ; and yet his belief in it will remain unshaken. And why ? Not from

that pertinacity which adheres to any opinion which it may happen to embrace, whether it be right or wrong ; not from any obtuseness of intellect which cannot feel the force of an argument, and which knows not how to weigh an objection ; but simply because his hope, the anchor of his soul, is moored to it ; that hope which he would not exchange for ten thousand worlds. Thus we see that there is nothing like a good hope through grace, to preserve men from the dominion of error. In the language of the eloquent Melville, " You may liken the believer in Christ to a vessel launched on troubled waters ; and you may consider skepticism and false doctrine as the storm which threatens him with shipwreck. And when you express surprise that a bark which seems so frail and so poorly equipped against the tempest, should ride out the hurricane, whilst others, a thousand times better furnished with all the resources of intellectual seamanship, drive from their moorings, and perish on the quicksand ; we have only to tell you, that it is not by the strength of reason, and not through the might of mental energy, that moral shipwreck is avoided ; but that a hope of salvation will keep the vessel firm, when all the cables which man weaves for himself have given way like tow ; and that thus

in the wildest of the storms which evil men and evil angels can raise, this hope will verify the apostle's description, that it is an anchor of the soul, and that too, sure and steadfast."

2. We live in a world of temptation. There is everything, both from without and from within, to draw us aside from the paths of duty; to induce us to go astray from God. The world is continually spreading out before us its silken nets. Sometimes it seeks to allure us by its riches. It appeals with an almost irresistible power to our love of possession. It speaks to us of the advantages which those riches, if acquired, would purchase for us. It seems to show us, as did the evil one to our Saviour, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and says to us, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down, and worship me." How hard the great majority of men find it, to resist the temptation, is but too obvious from the ease with which they yield to it.

O how many are there in our world, how many even in Christian lands, who live amidst the light and under the sound of the Gospel, who are the avowed, the open worshippers of Mammon; who make gold their hope, and the fine gold their confidence. But the honors of the world, are no less attractive to multi-

tudes, than its riches. It is exceedingly gratifying to the natural aspirations of the human heart to sit down upon the high places of the earth, and then to put forth an influence which is felt and acknowledged by thousands. To gain such a distinction, what efforts have men sometimes been willing to make. No danger has been esteemed too great to be encountered for its acquisition. It has been sought amid all the carnage and horrors of the battle field, amid the studies of the cloister, in the senate chamber, the popular assembly, and sometimes (shall I say it?) in the sanctuary, and even before the altars of religion. It has stimulated all the worst passions of the human heart. It has led to falsehood, to treachery, to meanness, to cruelty, to the violation, in a single word, of the most sacred and solemn obligations.

O what havoc has ambition made in our world. How in every age has it stained the pages of its history with blood. Millions of wealth have been expended to support its pretensions; millions of lives have been sacrificed at its shrine. How alluring, too, to the great majority of men are the *pleasures* of the world. But we cannot surely be surprised at it, when we reflect how loudly the appetites of our nature are continually clamoring for their gratifi-

cation. Men wish to gratify those appetites, and the world affords to them the means for so doing. And these means it knows how to present before them under the most seductive and captivating forms. It knows how to excite the imagination, to dazzle the senses, to please the taste, to suit, indeed, its temptations to the character, the temperament, the age, and the circumstances of every one whom it seeks to subdue. Whilst therefore some of its victims are found wallowing in the lowest depths of sensuality, others are seen moving amidst the most refined and polished circles ; mingling in the giddy dance with all that is high in rank, resplendent in beauty, commanding in influence. Such then is the power which the world exerts ; such are the temptations which it throws in the way of men. But to help forward the influence of the world, and to give to its temptations a greater power, we are told that the powers of darkness withhold not their aid. "Your adversary, the devil," says the apostle, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." We find, accordingly, that he is continually tempting men to do wrong ; to trample on the laws of God. To accomplish his purposes there is no art to which he does not resort. He knows the weakness of human nature. Its vul-

nerable points are all familiar to him. He knows, therefore, when he can make his attacks with the greatest hope of success. What has not man to fear from his intelligence and cunning. Is it strange that his power over the children of men should be so great, and in so many instances undisputed? that he should even have acquired for himself the portentous title of the Prince of this world?

But the worst enemies of man are, after all, to be found in his own heart. Were there no traitors in the citadel itself, it might be defended against outward attacks. The world and the devil could not prevail against man, if they had no confederates, no auxiliaries in his own bosom. But alas! the human heart is depraved. It loves the world, and the things of the world. It is naturally averse to holiness, and to God. It is predisposed, therefore, to yield to every temptation which may assail it. Nay, it not unfrequently invites temptation. It throws open the door for its admission, and almost constrains it to enter.

With such a proneness to sin, and with such a constant exposure to temptation, what is it which can keep even the Christian firm? I answer, that hope which is an anchor to his soul. That hope is worth more to him than all the treas-

ures, all the honors, and all the enjoyments of earth. It is the hope, indeed, of treasures which are vastly more abundant and valuable than those for which he is tempted to barter his soul; the hope of an inheritance in heaven which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. It is the hope of honors infinitely greater than any which the regal crown or the imperial purple could confer; honors such as God only can bestow; even the honor of standing with acceptance before his throne, and of being acknowledged as a son of the Highest. It is the hope of pleasures, compared to which all the enjoyments of this world deserve to be regarded only as pains; those pleasures which flow from constant communion with God, and from dwelling continually in the light of his countenance; which consist in freedom from the power of sin, and in entire and everlasting exemption from its consequences.

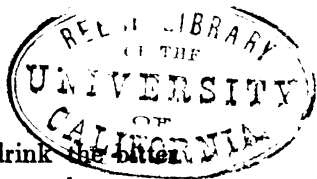
O how great, how unspeakably great, is the blessedness of the Christian. How bright are the prospects which open before him beyond the grave. "God," saith the Scripture, "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." "And

there shall be no more curse ; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it : and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face ; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light ; and they shall reign forever and ever." Such are the objects of the Christian's hope. And now shall he exchange this hope, so bright, so glorious, for any thing, yea, for all which the world can give ? He knows that if he yield to the temptations which surround him, he must relinquish this hope. It becomes therefore the language of his heart,

In vain the world accosts my ear,
And tempts my heart anew ;
I cannot buy your bliss so dear,
Nor part with heaven for you.

We see, therefore, how the hope of the Christian operates to keep him firm and immovable amidst the temptations to which he is exposed.

3. We live in a world of sorrow. For man is born to trouble, even as the sparks fly upward. Sorrow is the necessary, the inevitable consequence of sin. We find, accordingly, that in the present world none are exempted from sorrow. Even those who profess to be the children



of God are sometimes called to drink the bitter cup. Indeed the Psalmist informs us that many are the afflictions of the righteous. And the Psalmist spoke from his own painful experience. In instances almost innumerable, his heart had been made to bleed. He had been afflicted by the loss of some of his children under the most distressing and aggravated circumstances, and by the perverse and wicked conduct of others. He had suffered from the treachery of pretended friends, and from the malice of open and avowed enemies. His spiritual sorrows had been great. He knew what it was to experience the marks of God's displeasure, and to mourn the hidings of his countenance. But the experience of the Psalmist, if not in its minutest details, at least in its general features, has been the experience of all the people of God. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

So long as Christians remain in a world of changes, they must expect like other men to be affected by those changes. As it is appointed unto all men once to die, they must expect that death will sometimes invade their own circle. They must expect to be separated from parents, from partners, from children, from brothers and sisters. As riches are constantly liable to take

to themselves wings and fly away as an eagle toward heaven, they must not be surprised if, like other men, they are sometimes called to experience the most painful reverses of fortune ; if their ships should be wrecked by the tempest, their fields be blasted by the mildew, their houses be consumed with fire, their stocks be made valueless by causes which they could not foresee, and over which they have no control ; their earnings be wrested from them by violence, or by fraud. But affliction, as its very name implies, is always hard to be borne. We know what its influence not unfrequently is upon the ungodly. It sinks them in despondency. It drives them to despair. Sometimes it is ruinous to their moral character, for it induces them to seek relief in some vicious and ruinous gratification ; to drown their griefs in the intoxicating bowl. Sometimes it is destructive to their health. They brood over their misfortunes until the tone of their system is destroyed, and disease comes in to finish the work which mental anxiety had begun. It is to this fact that the apostle is supposed to refer when he declares that the sorrow of the world worketh death. Sometimes it deprives men of reason. Go to our insane hospitals, and how many will you find there, who have been re-

duced to their present pitiable condition by the loss of property or friends. Now it is obvious in respect to a great portion of these individuals, that their souls had no anchor to keep them firm and steady amidst the pitiless blasts, and fierce storms of adversity. Left, therefore, to their mercy, they were driven upon the rocks and the quicksands upon which they have made shipwreck. But the Christian has such an anchor. That anchor is hope ; the hope of everlasting blessedness beyond the grave. Let whatever may befall him in the present world ; though he should be deprived of every earthly dependence, and every earthly comfort, he cannot sink down into absolute despair, because hope whispers to him that the treasures of his soul remain untouched. He knows, or may know, that he has in heaven a better and an enduring substance ; and that when his present trials shall all be over, he will be admitted to its full and everlasting enjoyment. He hopes, too, that his present trials will only constitute a preparation for that enjoyment. For he finds it recorded in that blessed book which sets before him the foundations of his hope, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God ; to them that are called according to his purpose ; that his light affliction which is

but for a moment, shall work out for him, in the end, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And now must not such a hope as this keep his soul firm amidst the fiercest storms of adversity, and enable him to ride them out, if not in perfect peace, at least in safety? The ship which lies at anchor cannot help feeling the storm which beats against her; she must rise and fall with the excited billows. Sometimes those billows may break over her, and she may seem to be almost submerged beneath them. But the storm cannot prevail. She is anchored to a rock. When, therefore, the clouds shall be dispersed, and the winds shall cease to blow, and the heavens shall recover their serenity, and the bosom of the great deep its calmness and its stillness, that gallant ship will be seen reposing there uninjured. And so it is with the Christian. Notwithstanding that he has an anchor to his soul, both sure and steadfast, when the storms of adversity are blowing around him he cannot help feeling them. Sometimes he may even be heard crying, Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. But although buffeted by the waves, and tossed up and down, like the billows, he cannot sink beneath them. His soul is in a sure place. Its anchor is cast within the veil. It has laid hold upon the Rock of Ages,

and no created power can tear it thence. How beautifully is this idea illustrated in those splendid declarations of the Psalmist ; “ Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts ; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.” But although danger seemed thus to threaten him, he could not sink ; and hence we hear him immediately after, exclaiming, “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” Yes ; it was hope which sustained him, and carried him safely through. It was the anchor of his soul, and therefore he felt that he had no reason for discouragement or fear.

How precious, then, how unspeakably precious, must be this hope. My friends, do you possess it ? O have you ever cast your anchor within the veil ? If not, how can you expect to encounter the storms and the tempests which are so common upon the ocean of life ? How far have they already driven you from the right and the safe course. And if you have not already made shipwreck of the soul, it is only because the mercy of God has prevented it.—But that mercy, be assured, will not continue for ever. The rocks and the quicksands of

everlasting ruin, although concealed from the view, are nigh at hand. You may therefore fall upon them before you are aware. And then, O how dreadful will be the shock. Let me urge you, therefore, to seek immediately, and with all your heart, the Christian's hope ; that hope which is as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. If thus sought, it may, through the mercy of God, be found. If you delay until to-morrow, to-morrow may prove too late. Your souls may be lost ; irrecoverably, eternally lost.

SERMON III.

THE RAINBOW AROUND THE THRONE.

And there was a rainbow round about the throne.—REV. iv. 3.

THE rainbow is a beautiful object. It is interesting alike to the man of science, and to the most untutored savage ; to the little child, and to the hoary headed sage. The philosopher beholds in it an illustration of some of the laws of light, and a confirmation of the Newtonian theory of colors ; the poet, a theme for song, unsurpassed, if not unrivalled, amidst all the wonders of the creation ; the most casual observer, an object which charms his senses, and gratifies his taste. But to no class of men does it come invested with so many interesting associations, as to the Christian ; for it carries him back to that period in the history of our world, when after the whole human family had been des-

troyed with the waters of a flood, with the exception of Noah and his household, God declared to this distinguished saint, "I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

What object can be conceived, better fitted to represent the divine mercy, spanning as it does the visible horizon; its top reaching to heaven, and its ends resting apparently upon the earth; as if it formed the medium of intercourse be-

tween these distant worlds ; whilst its transcendent beauty, contrasting with the dense black clouds which are round about and underneath it, speaks only of love, forgiveness, reconciliation and joy. It is probably for this reason, that in our text, the throne of God is represented as encompassed with the rainbow. Not that such is in reality the fact ; but that so it was represented to the apostle in vision. "And immediately," he tells us, "I was in the spirit : And behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat, was to look upon, like a jasper, and a sardine stone : and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." The description is evidently figurative ; but, like all the other figurative language of the Bible, it is full of meaning. There is, no doubt, a meaning in the jasper and sardine stone, to which he who sat upon the throne, is compared. Whether the speculations of learned men upon it are correct, I shall not now attempt to determine. I will only remark, that it appears to me to be more uncertain, and more recondite, than the meaning of that part of the description contained in our text. By the rainbow round about the throne, I think it can hardly be doubted that God's gracious covenant with his

own people is meant. By the words of our text, therefore, we are naturally led to consider,

- I. The nature of this covenant.
- II. Why it is compared to a rainbow ; and
- III. Why this rainbow is said to be round about the throne.

I. Let us consider, for a few moments, the nature of God's gracious covenant ; or, as it is more frequently, and perhaps more correctly styled, the covenant of grace. That such a covenant does indeed exist, is obvious from numerous passages of Scripture, of which the following may be considered as a specimen. "And for this cause, he is the mediator of the new testament." The original word more properly signifies a covenant ; and for this reason, it should thus have been rendered, "He is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament (or first covenant) they which are called, might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant." "Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament (the new covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you." Indeed, the book which contains the records of our faith, should be denominated, the New Covenant, rather than

the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; since such is altogether a more literal interpretation of the Greek title by which in all ages it has been called ; and is altogether more in accordance with the strain of its teachings. There is therefore a great abundance of authority for the expression, "covenant of grace."

But what does this covenant imply ? The word *grace* implies that it must be made with the undeserving, with sinners. Grace is unmerited favor, or rather favor shown to those who had forfeited it by their sins. Such, my friends, was the fact with the whole family of man. At an early period after their creation, they became corrupt. For "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." They incurred the penalty of that law which declares, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." For "sin entered into our world, and death by sin ; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." After the fall, the whole human race were in a lost condition. They were unfit for heaven, and the wrath of a holy God impended over them. The covenant of works, as it has been sometimes called, was violated ; and therefore could avail them nothing. As they could do nothing for themselves, what

could God do for them? It is evident that he could save them only by entering into some new covenant with them; a covenant which, whatever might be its specific character, must necessarily be a covenant of grace.

But how could he enter into such a covenant with them, consistently with his own glorious perfections, and with the honour of that law which they had broken, and whose every precept seemed to cry out for their destruction? It would seem at first view, almost as impossible as it would for any earthly sovereign to enter into a covenant with a set of hardened rebels who, by their crimes, had rendered themselves deserving of death, and who by their weakness, and by their entire subjugation, are lying at his mercy. But God, as the Scriptures inform us, contrived a plan by which all the difficulties which lay in the way of showing mercy to sinners, were removed. This plan is thus described to us by the Apostle: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (or as it is rendered in the margin, by a sacrifice for sin) condemned sin in the flesh." Christ "who knew no sin, became sin (that is, a sin offering) for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in

him." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." It appears, then, that Jesus Christ became our substitute in relation to the law of God; so that in consequence of what he did and suffered on our behalf, it has no longer any penal claims upon us, if we become interested in his atoning sacrifice. Thus was the foundation laid for the establishment of a new covenant with the human race; a covenant of mercy and of grace.

But a covenant always implies conditions upon the part of both the contracting parties. What, then, does God agree to do for those who become interested in this covenant; and what, on their part, are they required to do? To answer these questions, may be regarded as the chief object for which all Scripture is given. Hence we find that the great central truth of all revelation is, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In other words, if men will only believe in his Son Jesus Christ, God engages to bestow upon them all the blessings of salvation. Such may be considered as the most general or comprehensive view of what is meant by the

covenant of grace. But in order to perceive all its excellence, and all its glorious fullness, it may be necessary to view it a little more in detail. We find it thus summarily described in the Westminster Confession of Faith. "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the Gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews; all fore-signifying Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious through the operations of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of

sins, and eternal salvation ; and is called the Old Testament. Under the Gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed, are the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper ; which though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles ; and is called the New Testament."

We perceive therefore that the foundation of the covenant of grace is laid in the sufferings of Christ. He became a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Its conditions are, on our part, the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ for our Saviour ; an act which implies a hearty sorrow and true repentance for all our sins, a cordial forsaking of them, a total renunciation of self, and an entire reliance upon the merit of Christ ;—on the part of God, *salvation*, with every thing which it implies, such as the pardon of our sins, the sanctification of our natures, the aid and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, victory over death, and life everlasting in heaven. "As for me, this is my covenant with

them, saith the Lord ; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh ; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." "All that the Father giveth me," says the Saviour, "shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him ; and I will raise him up at the last day." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Such are the blessings included in the covenant of grace ; all promised to man upon the plain and reasonable condition of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having thus considered its nature, we are now prepared to inquire,

II. Why, in our text, it is compared to a rainbow.

One reason, perhaps, may be, that it affords so interesting a subject for human contempla-

tion. As the rainbow is the most beautiful object which the eye can contemplate ; as its various colors, bright, soft, harmonious, combined into the arch, that most symmetrical and perfect of all geometrical forms, affords the highest possible gratification to the sense of sight ; so the covenant of grace is the most cheering, the most delightful subject which the mind can contemplate. It is full of brightness, symmetry and beauty. The Christian never tires in gazing upon it. Sometimes, indeed, by reason of the darkness which is in him, he may lose sight of it. The throne of God may seem to him to be surrounded only with thick clouds. He may be able to discover no rainbow there. He may therefore be seen turning away his thoughts and contemplations from it. But let it break upon his soul in all its matchless and perfect beauty, and it cannot help fixing his admiring gaze. O, think you that the vision which the apostle saw in our text palled upon his senses, or that he wished it to be withdrawn ? Think you not rather that the effect upon him was entrancing ; that he would have been willing to die amidst all the glories of such a scene ?

Another reason for representing the covenant of grace under the image or figure of the rain-

bow, may be traced to the cause assigned for that promise of God, of which the first rainbow, referred to in sacred history, was the token. "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." So the sacrifice of Christ is styled by the apostle a sweet smelling savor, and that, too, to God; and therefore he resolves no more to visit with a curse those in whose behalf it was offered. As a pledge and a promise of which, he has set his rainbow, not in the visible heavens, but round about his throne.

Another reason for the employment of this figure may be, that the rainbow round about the throne is significant of a covenant which shall endure as long as that which was made with Noah. The latter implied perpetuity, and so does the former. God calls it an everlasting covenant between himself and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. So the covenant of grace is everlasting. Says David, "Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall never depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace

be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." "Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." "I will make a covenant of peace with them ; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them ; and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forever more." "I will betroth thee unto me forever, in righteousness, in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies ; I will even betroth thee to me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." O, if the covenant of grace could be annulled, what a death-blow would it give to the hopes of the Christian. But no ; the rainbow about the throne assures him that it is as firm and as durable as the pillars of heaven.

But there may be still another reason why the covenant of grace is represented to us under the image of the rainbow. The rainbow is said by the natural philosopher to be occasioned in part, by the reflection of the sun's rays from the rain-drops of the falling shower. So the covenant of grace, the rainbow round about the throne, may be regarded as a reflection of the brightest glories of the Sun of Righteousness. O yes, there is nothing more glorious than this covenant. It is illumined by the brightest

beams of heaven. "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory," says the apostle, "much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." God is most eminently glorified by the salvation of sinners. But the glories of the natural sun are manifested in the rainbow in a very peculiar way. By means of the refracting and reflecting influences of the drops of rain upon which his rays fall, those rays are decomposed, and they are shown to us in all their original colors. We see exhibited before us, as it were, the elements of light, and are made to see how they are combined together by the wisdom of God, to produce their cheering and benign effects. So in the covenant of grace, the rainbow round about the throne, all the elements of the divine character are exhibited, as it were, to our view, and we are made to see what it is which constitutes his holiness, his perfection, his glory. There we see those attributes which, at the first view, seemed to be at variance with each other, mingling harmoniously together; justice and mercy, righteousness and grace. At the same time, as the colors of the rainbow are perfectly distinct, so these attri-

butes are all distinct. Not one interferes with, or obscures another. The covenant of grace may be regarded as a sort of spiritual prism, in which the holiness of God, by which we understand the perfection of his character, is separated into its essential or component parts. All the colors of the rainbow are there; from the fiery red of his eternal justice, down to those softer hues, which indicate his mercy. The rainbow in our text, is said to have been in sight like unto an emerald. The emerald, it is known, is green; the color which perhaps of all colors is the most refreshing to the eye. Hence it is that with which God has seen fit to clothe the grass of the field, and the leaves of the trees. The reason, therefore, why this color is said to predominate in the rainbow about the throne, is obvious. It is emblematical of the mercy of God; the attribute which, of all attributes, is the most attractive to the eye of sinners; the only one indeed, which affords them any ground for encouragement; any foundation for hope. Such are some of the reasons which have suggested themselves to my own mind, why the covenant of grace is compared to a rainbow. But why is this rainbow said to be about the throne? This, you

will remember, is the third point which we proposed to consider.

III. One reason doubtless is, that this throne would otherwise be unapproachable by sinners. They could not even bear to gaze upon it, for it would seem to them to be encompassed only with the clouds and darkness of God's displeasure.

Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame ;
Our God appeared consuming fire,
And vengeance was his name.

Yes, my friends, before the rainbow encompassed the throne, it was an object of unspeakable terror to the sinner. And if that rainbow were not still round about it, it would be an object of terror now. Let the sinner cast his eye toward the heavens when the thunderstorm is rising out of the west. As he sees the clouds gathering blackness, and rolling rapidly up toward the zenith, casting their fearful shadows upon the waters beneath, and filling the very atmosphere with gloom ; as he hears the sound of the thunder, at first apparently remote, but at each successive clap approaching nearer and nearer ; as he sees the forked lightning increasing in vividness, until its bolts seem just ready to fall upon his devoted head ; who

can describe the anxiety and alarm with which his bosom is filled? He hardly dares look toward the heavens, for they seem to him to be charged with the wrath of the Almighty, and big with his own ruin. What then must be his emotion, when suddenly the clouds which had just now looked down upon him with so threatening an aspect, are seen rolling away to some distant point in the horizon ; when the bright sun breaks forth in all his glory from underneath the veil which they had spread over him ; and when in accordance with nature's eternal laws, he sees the rainbow painted in colors of light and beauty, upon the opposite heavens, a token that the storm is over ; that the danger is passed.

Must not he gaze upon it, not only with the pleasure of one who beholds an object of surpassing loveliness, but with the rapture of one, who beholds in it, a pledge of deliverance from danger and destruction. O, to him the heavens are never as beautiful, as when spanned with this arch of promise and mercy. The very cloud which lately appeared to him so terrible, adds, by its contrast, to the glory of the scene. When it constituted the fore-ground of the picture, he could not bear to look upon it ; as its back-ground, it seems to him to be essential to its perfection.

Now to man without a Saviour, that heaven which is the throne of the Almighty is shrouded in darkness. Observe with what sublimity of thought and of language, this sentiment is expressed by the Psalmist. "He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. And he made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Highest gave his voice. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils."

Such my friends, are the terrors which surround God's throne in the heavens, so long as man continues without a Saviour. How then, in all his feebleness and all his guilt, can he dare to gaze upon it? He has reason to fear, that the next flash which issues from it will strike him down to perdition.

But amidst all the terrors of the scene, the clouds and thick darkness, the storm and tem-

pest of almighty wrath, let the Sun of Righteousness break forth in all his transcendent glory, and lo, upon the very clouds which but just now appeared so full of terror, a rainbow is seen, reflecting the brightest glories of that sun, and affording a pledge to him who beholds it, of the cessation of the tempest, of deliverance from danger, of reconciliation and peace. And that rainbow spans the heavens. It is round about the throne. The sinner, therefore, may now gaze upon that throne without one emotion of terror; nay, with gratitude and joy. What though the cloud is still upon it? Its thunders are hushed. Its lightnings sleep. It holds the tokens of mercy in its bosom, and by the darkness of its own aspect, its contrasted gloom only causes the brightness and the beauty of that token to appear the more conspicuous. That man, therefore, may approach the throne of God without apprehension, the rainbow is seen to be round about it.

But still another reason, perhaps, may be assigned for the expression. Its nearness to the throne denotes how much God thinks of it. He has placed it so near to his own seat, that we may be sure he will never lose sight of it. Not that we would be understood to insinuate that a God of infinite knowledge needs,

like forgetful man, to be reminded of his covenant by any external sign ; but only that in accommodation to our habits of thought and conception, he has been pleased thus to represent it ; so that faith may be aided by imagination, and confidence in God increased by a figurative representation of that which increases our confidence in man. And in the language employed upon this subject, I find myself borne out by the language of the Bible. Thus in reference to the rainbow which God set in the cloud after the deluge, we hear him declaring, " And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud ; and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh ; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." God here speaks of setting his bow where he may behold it, as if he needed to be reminded of the covenant of which it is the emblem, and the pledge ; a mode of expression which is evidently adapted to our own habits of thought and expression.

We feel, therefore, justified in asserting that

the rainbow which the apostle saw in vision, is said to have been round about the throne, as a proof that God will never lose sight of it, will never forget it, or rather will never lose sight of the covenant of which it is the token. "For this is, as the waters of Noah unto me ; for as I have sworn that the waters should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."

Yes, my friends, because the rainbow is round about the throne, the Christian has nothing to fear. Not only is the tempest hushed for the present, but it is hushed forever. God will never forget his covenant ; he will never suffer it to be annulled.

In conclusion I would remark,

1. What consolation does our subject afford to the Christian. O, with what glories does the throne of God appear to him to be invested. Although oppressed with a sense of his unworthiness, he need not fear to cast his eye towards it, for he will behold the rainbow there. Let him then fix his eye upon it, until his heart be-

comes filled with all that love, and gratitude, and joy, which it is calculated to inspire. O, who can gaze upon it, and still remain unaffected by its beauty, and unmoved by all its interesting and heart-stirring associations. We ought to regard the rainbow round about the throne, as our greatest stimulus to the cultivation of every Christian grace, and the exercise of every Christian virtue. But

2. Are there any here, who, conscious of their own inherent vileness, tremble in view of deserved wrath, and who dare not lift up their eyes toward the throne of God, lest they should see it shooting forth those flames of vengeance, which are destined to consume their souls? My friends, our subject tells you that you may dismiss your fears. That throne is no longer the seat of wrath which it once was. The Sun of Righteousness is shining upon the clouds on which it rests, and has painted the rainbow there. O then, banishing your despair, look toward it with the eye of faith, and in the name of God, I am authorized to assure you that your souls shall live ; shall live forever.

SERMON IV.

THE HEAVENLY CITY.*

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.—*REV. xxi. 24.*

IN the chapter before us, heaven is exhibited to view under the image of a city, whose magnificence can be represented only by the richest and brightest of earthly objects. Its streets are therefore said to be paved with gold, its foundations to be inlaid with all manner of precious stones, its gates to be of pearl. But when the sacred writer attempts to describe the light which shines upon it, and by which its inhabitants are illuminated, all earthly analogies seem to fail him. He can find no image within

* It is a significant and touching circumstance, that this is the last sermon which Mr. March ever wrote. It was finished the day on which he was seized with his mortal sickness ; and, of course, was never preached.

the compass of human knowledge which is able to set it forth. Even the sun and the moon grow dark before it. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And yet it is from these luminaries that we derive all our best ideas of brightness, and of beauty. To ourselves, nothing can be more glorious than the sun, shining in his strength; nothing more beautiful than the moon, reflecting with her chaste and softened radiance, his beams.

What, my friends, would be the condition of our earth without these luminaries? We should have no day; but one long, dismal, everlasting night would brood over all the works of creation. Our eyes would be useless, for there would be nothing for them to gaze upon. In vain would be the graceful or majestic form. In vain would the mountain rise toward heaven, and the valley lie stretched out at its feet. In vain would the river wind its way toward the ocean; and that ocean would heave its billows in vain. In vain would the forest put forth its leaves, and the flower unfold its petals, and the pastures of the wilderness be clothed with verdure; for there would be no sun to shine upon them by day; no moon by

night. For all our conceptions of majesty and beauty, it is to these sources of light that we are indebted. So long therefore as we continue in the present world, we need them ; we could not dispense with their aid, and they are all that we need. A brighter light than that of the sun, a softer radiance than that of the moon, can hardly be conceived.

What then must be the splendors of that world where they have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, because of the glory which fills it, and which far outshines them both ; a glory proceeding from him who is the Author of light, and who, in the expressive language of Scripture, is the Light itself ; by whom the sun and the moon were created, and from whom, of course, all their effulgence was derived. Yes, my friends, God himself is the light of the heavenly world, as the sun and the moon, those creatures of his power, are the light of this world.

How far the language of our text is to be understood in a literal sense, may, perhaps, be a matter of doubt. That it is not, however, to be understood altogether in a figurative sense, seems to me to be obvious. We shall, doubtless, possess in heaven, if permitted to enter there, the faculty of vision. I know not why it may not even be predicated of the disembodied

spirit ; for whilst in the body, it surely possesses this faculty. It is not the eye which sees, but the spirit which stands, as it were, behind it, and which makes use of it, as the astronomer makes use of his telescope. The eye is a mere instrument, without perception and without intelligence ; curiously contrived indeed, and most wonderfully adapted to its purpose. But of what use would it be without the intelligent spirit upon whom it has been bestowed to aid its power of vision, or rather to enable it, so long as it continues in the body, to exercise that power. But when it leaves the body, why may we not suppose that it will no longer need such an instrument ; that it will see directly, and no longer through a glass ; not darkly, as now, but clearly ?

But the Scriptures teach us that even the body is to be raised again ; and although it will be incorruptible and immortal, free from all its present grossness, and present infirmities, that it will be substantially the same body that it now is. All that is essential to its identity will still remain. But if so, the eye which was dimmed by death, must be once more lighted up, and as we have reason to believe, it will be vastly improved. All its present imperfections will be removed. It will be capable of seeing more

clearly than ever before. But if we possess the faculty of vision, we shall need to dwell in light; for without light, this faculty would prove to us of no avail. But from whence can this light proceed, in a world where there is no sun, no moon? From whom can it proceed, but from Him who created these luminaries, and hung them in our own visible heaven, and who has declared that when they have accomplished all the objects for which they were created, he means to extinguish them? We believe, then, that to interpret the words of our text in a literal sense, would not be inconsistent with truth. We believe that heaven is made light by the glory of God, and of the Lamb. But we believe, too, that this glory infinitely exceeds, both in its brightness and beauty, the glory of our own bright and beautiful sun, when he is pouring down upon us his noon-day beams, and filling the whole creation with splendor.

But whilst we believe, in a qualified sense, in the literal interpretation of our text, we believe that it is susceptible of a figurative interpretation; an interpretation far more important and precious. To this, therefore, it will be my object, in the following discourse, to call your attention.

Our text, then, asserts that the glory of God

lightens heaven, and that the Lamb is the light thereof. From these words we infer that the glory of God is concentrated, as it were, in the Lamb; or in other words, that it shines forth through the Lamb. These two expressions are certainly represented as synonymous, or equivalent. It will be, then, in heaven, as the apostle informs us it is now and ever will be on earth. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Christ, then, it seems, the Lamb of God, is the great moral light of the universe. He is not only the Sun of Righteousness to those who dwell in this world, but to those who dwell in heaven; to angels, no less than to men. Indeed this seems to be a most natural inference from the words of our text. "The Lamb is the light thereof." But if so, every order of beings, from the highest to the lowest, who inhabit that blessed world, must derive their light from him. He pours his beams upon the archangel, no less than upon the humblest saint. But this idea is an important one, since it tends to confirm, in a signal and most interesting manner, the great doctrine of our Lord's divinity. If he be indeed the light of heaven, and if, as this light,

he is the glory of God, must he not be divine? I have made these remarks in order to show that the whole essence of our text is in reality contained in the latter clause of it. "The Lamb is the light thereof." This is the point which I shall now seek to illustrate. In what respects then is Christ the Lamb, in a figurative sense, the light of heaven?

1. He is so, because of his own inherent beauty and perfection. Light, as I have already suggested, is the fairest of the works of God. Hence in all ages, and so far as we know, in all languages, it has been regarded as the emblem of all that is excellent, and all that is glorious. As such, you know it is often employed by the sacred writers. It is indeed the emblem under which they exhibit to us God himself. "God is light." In Milton's sublime apostrophe to light, therefore, there is nothing unnatural, nothing extravagant.

"Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven first born,
Or of the Eternal, co-eternal beam!
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light,
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt there in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate."

The sun, which is to us the source of light, is the glory of this lower world. But what the

sun is to this lower world, such is Christ to heaven. He is its chief glory ; nay the source of all its glory. So far as light is the emblem of excellence, he is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Where is to be found moral beauty, compared with that of the Saviour ? He possesses every conceivable excellence, and that in the highest perfection. Wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, all unite to form in him a character which all holy beings reverence, admire, and love.

2. Christ is the light of heaven, because of the knowledge which he imparts to its blessed inhabitants. Now for most of the knowledge which we possess in the present world, we are indebted to the light. It is literally true, as the apostle declares, that whatsoever maketh manifest is light. Without light, we should not be acquainted with the size, the form, the color, or the situation, of the ten thousand objects by which we are surrounded. All that we should know about visible things, would be what others had taught us, or what may be ascertained by other senses than that of sight. We might become acquainted by the sense of smell, with the fragrance of the rose ; by the sense of touch, we might become acquainted with its form and structure ; but what should we know of its

actual beauties? If born blind, we should be compelled to dispense, in great measure, with that kind of knowledge, which is derived from books. We should remain everlasting strangers to the choicest beauties of nature, and of art; we should remain forever ignorant of the features of our fellow-men, not excepting our best beloved friends. We perceive, then, how much we are indebted to the light for our knowledge of earthly things. But through the Lamb of God, light is thrown upon a multitude of subjects most interesting and most important to be known, of which the inhabitants of heaven must have remained forever ignorant, but for this light. Some of the perfections of the Godhead could never have been revealed, at least so far as we can see, but for the Lamb who was slain.

The fact that Christ is represented to us under the figure of the Lamb, is a proof that it is in the particular relation which this figure is employed in the sacred Scriptures to indicate, that he is the light of heaven. This relation, you know, is that of the Redeemer and Saviour of men. Now the Scriptures inform us that "God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." But how could these attributes, which to us appear

the brightest which adorn the character of God, ever have been revealed to the universe, to angels, or to men, if Christ had not become incarnate, or if he had not suffered and died on our behalf? That God should forgive sin, appears, at the first view, inconsistent with his holiness, his justice and his truth; inconsistent with his holiness, because it implies reconciliation with one whom sin has polluted; inconsistent with his justice, because it restores him to a rank which he has plainly forfeited, and to which he deserves not to be restored; inconsistent with his truth, because he has declared that the soul, the spirit, which sinneth, be it human or angelic, shall die.

How then can such an attribute as mercy exist in the divine character; or if it exists there, how can it possibly be manifested? Now it is obvious that the more perfectly the divine character is known, the greater satisfaction must it afford to all holy beings. It is important, therefore, that all its attributes should be developed to their view; that no one of them should be concealed. How then can it be seen that God is merciful and gracious, as well as holy and just? How it might have been seen, we are not qualified, perhaps, to say. How it has been seen, we know. In the cross of Christ (to

employ the language of the Psalmist) mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Yes, in the Lamb of God, the Lamb that was slain, we see mercy triumphing over judgment, and that too without any sacrifice of those attributes to which it seemed to be opposed ; nay, even combining with them, satisfying all their claims, and shedding over them a new lustre. Yes, in the Lamb of God we see, and all holy beings see, how God may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. What a light, therefore, is poured by him over the divine character. How clearly and how wonderfully does he reveal to us that most cheering of all truths, that truth which sends such a thrill of rapture through all the heavenly hosts, through seraph bands, as well as through the company of the redeemed ;
GOD IS LOVE.

Whilst I have declared that the glory of God will probably be manifested to the universe, only through the Lamb, I would not be understood to assert that a portion of it, at least, might not be manifested in some other way. There are certain attributes of the divine character which did not need the aid of the cross for their manifestation. Thus the power of God is most strikingly manifest in all the works

of creation, especially in the ten thousand suns which sparkle in the regions of space, with the ten thousand times ten thousand worlds which revolve around them. His goodness is manifest in all the life, intelligence and joy, which are spread over our own world; in all the benevolent arrangements which the inanimate portion of the creation exhibits for that which is animate. O how does it breathe forth in the sweet odors of spring, and in the gentle gales of summer. How is it inscribed on every flower which blooms, and in every opening leaf. How has it written itself in letters of light on the heavens; and how has it robed the earth in beauty.

But in the works of creation, the *wisdom* of God is no less apparent. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." If, therefore, God were not manifested to the universe under the figure of a Lamb, but simply as a pure and infinite spirit, his glory would enlighten heaven. His natural attributes would at least be seen in all those wonderful works which his hands have formed. And we have reason to believe that some of his moral attributes also might thus be manifested. Let him come out against all the transgressors of his law, in the terrors of his wrath, dooming

them, as he did the angels who kept not their first estate, to an eternity of wretchedness ; and what an evidence, what an illustration would it afford of his justice, his holiness, and his truth.

But to see God precisely as he is, we should need a brighter light to shine upon his character than would thus be afforded to us by the works of his hands, and the moral dispensations of his providence. In these we might discover his knowledge, wisdom, power and goodness ; his justice, holiness and truth. But mercy, forbearance, grace, forgiveness would be wanting to fill up our idea of the divine perfection. But when God is exhibited to us, as in our text, under the image of a Lamb, we see these latter attributes, blending most delightfully with the former. Yes, and even adding to them a new lustre ; so that our conceptions of the sterner attributes of his character are enlarged and elevated. His holiness, his justice, his truth appear more conspicuous, more glorious. Thus we see in how significant a sense, the Lamb is the light of heaven.

3. The natural light is a source of joy to the inhabitants of earth. All creatures whose senses are adapted to the day, rejoice in the light. With what enraptured notes, what songs of gladness, does a great portion of the feathered

tribes welcome the return of the morning. No sooner is the eastern sky illuminated with its first dawning beams, than the forest and the field are made vocal with their melodies. Just so is it with a large portion of quadrupeds. With the return of day, they seem to wake up to a new life. Just so is it with man. Who has never felt himself inspired with the freshness of the morning? Some physiologists have contended that the light produces a change in the system itself; imparting to it a sensation of vigor and of joyousness to which, during the darkness of night, it is a stranger. How welcome is the light to the man who has spent the night in watching. The Psalmist makes use of this fact, to set forth the intensity of his own spiritual longings; "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

But as the natural light is thus a source of joy on earth, so is Christ the source of all joy in heaven. On this account, therefore, as well as the others which have been specified, the Lamb is the light of the celestial world. O what rapture will his presence afford throughout the ages of eternity, to those who have been saved by his merits. It is now the language of their

hearts, "whom have we in heaven but thee ;
 and there is none upon the earth whom we de-
 sire besides thee." But when they shall see
 him as he is, how much more lovely, and how
 much more precious will he seem to them.
 What joy will it afford them to study his per-
 fections. What joy to sing forth his praises.
 With what rapturous emotions will they sing
 the new song, "Thou art worthy to take the
 book and to open the seals thereof: for thou
 wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy
 blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and
 people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our
 God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on
 the earth." Thus in this sense, the Lamb will
 be the light of heaven to the redeemed. But
 from what follows the remarkable passage we
 have recited, it appears that he will be so, too,
 to those who have never needed redemption.
 "And I beheld," says the apostle, "and I
 heard the voice of many angels round about the
 throne, and the beasts, and the elders : and
 the number of them was ten thousand times ten
 thousand, and thousands of thousands ; Saying
 with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was
 slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom,
 and strength, and honor, and glory, and bless-
 ing."

To all beings, therefore, who inhabit the bright world of glory, from the highest archangel to the meanest saint, we perceive that the Lamb is the light thereof.

1. We are then led to remark, in the first place, how important was the object for which our blessed Lord became incarnate. It was not merely that he might save earth, but that he might enlighten heaven. It was not merely that he might manifest good will to men, but to angels. Not only to secure the happiness of the former, which they had forfeited by their sins ; but to add inconceivably and immensely to the happiness of the latter. Indeed, I know not how any man can study the great plan of man's redemption as revealed to us in the sacred Scriptures, without being convinced that it has important relations to other worlds beside our own, and to other creatures beside ourselves. That man was the immediate object, for whom it was contrived, and that he has derived from it the most important benefits, there can be no doubt. It is the great central truth of revelation, that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost ; that he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself, a peculiar people. But whilst the plan of redemption had reference

primarily to ourselves, it has poured its flood of light and glory over the whole intelligent universe. In these, as we have seen to-day, the highest angels will eternally rejoice. With what an infinite importance does this fact invest the great doctrine of our Lord's incarnation. It would be important, if we could discover in it only the ground of our own salvation, if the Lamb were only the light of earth. But when we are told, as in our text, that he is the light of heaven, who can even conceive of its importance? We can only exclaim with the apostle, "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.

2. If the representations in the preceding discourse be true, how certain is it that those who deny the great doctrine of the atonement, know not what they do. They extinguish the light of earth. What hope can there be for man, if it be not true, as we have been taught, and as many firmly believe, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures? What hope can there be for man, if he has no merits to rely upon for salvation, but his own? If he can enter heaven only through his own unaided exertions, by satisfying all the demands of

God's violated law, and by yielding to it that perfect obedience which it requires? No, my friends, if you succeed in removing from the Bible the great doctrine of atonement, you extinguish at once the sun of our own moral world, and envelope its inhabitants in the thickest of moral darkness. In the language of the apostle, "Then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The curse of the law has never been repealed; and although its execution may, for a season, be delayed, it must eventually come. I repeat, therefore, that by the denial of this great doctrine, you extinguish the light of earth. You quench, as it were, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. But surely in doing this, you know not what you do. Yet this is not all. You extinguish also the light of heaven. For the Lamb is the light thereof. Yes, much of the light which shines upon that blessed world, proceeds directly from the Lamb that was slain. The great plan of redemption, as we have seen to-day, has relations to the whole intelligent universe; to angels and to archangels, scarcely less important than those which it sustains to ourselves. It sheds light and glory over the heavenly plains. Surely then those who disbelieve in its existence, and who take upon them to deny it, know not

what they do. Not only do they deprive the Christian of the foundation of his hopes here on earth, but the redeemed spirit, and the unredeemed because sinless angel, of the chief sources of their joy in heaven.

3. Does not our subject teach us, that what the Christian considers to be his light on earth, will continue to be his light throughout the ages of eternity. He has heard his Saviour declaring to him, I am the light of the world; and he has found him to be so by his own blessed experience. O how has that promise been verified to his soul; "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And how does he rejoice in that light. It is the source of all his knowledge, purity, and comfort. It shines upon the dark path, which he is required to tread in his pilgrimage from this world to a better. And such is his love for it, that he hopes it may continue to shine upon him after he has got beyond it, throughout the ages of eternity. And in this hope, our text informs him, he will not be disappointed. For the Lamb is the light of heaven, no less than of earth. Yes, in a degree inconceivably greater. Here the light shineth in the midst of darkness. Its rays, therefore, are sometimes obscured. But there it

will pour forth its full, uninterrupted and unmingled effulgence. The sun shall be no more their light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto them ; but the Lord shall be unto them an everlasting light, and their God, their glory.

We may learn, therefore, from our subject, that in one sense, the Christian's heaven commences upon earth. The moment that he believes in a crucified Redeemer, its light begins, though perhaps with a dim and imperfect ray, to shine upon him. We find, accordingly, that the songs which he sings on earth are substantially the same with those which he sings in heaven ; differing indeed in the loudness and sweetness of their tone ; but referring to the same subject, and breathing the same spirit. "Now unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

Finally, may we not learn from our subject, that no man can be fit for heaven, who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ. As he is the light of that bright world, what joy would it afford to those who love darkness rather than light, to be admitted there ? But alas ! how great is the number of such. They shrink from the light

which he sheds, even upon this dark world. The beams of the Sun of Righteousness are hateful to their sin-diseased souls. How then could they bear its full, unmitigated effulgence, as it shines forth in heaven ?

Let me, then, my impenitent hearers, leave you with this single but most solemn inquiry ; What, with your present feelings towards the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, can be your fitness for that world, respecting which we learn from the text, that he is the everlasting light and glory ?

SERMON

AT THE

FUNERAL OF THE REV. MR. MARCH,

SEPTEMBER 30, 1846.



FUNERAL SERMON.

LUKE xii. 37.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.

How faithful and how kind is the admonition conveyed in these words of our heavenly Friend and Saviour. Alas! how *needful* is it too. Where is the dying immortal, who is not apt to forget both death, and the eternity beyond it? And where is the *Christian*, who is not prone to slumber—to slumber on the brink of the grave—to slumber at the very threshold of immortal joys?

Our blessed Master, in dispensing divine instruction, employed every species of address which was calculated to win attention. He assailed the consciences and hearts of his hearers at every avenue where truth might find admission. He often presented eternal realities through the medium of sensible images; of objects and

events frequent in their recurrence, and familiarly understood. In the passage which has furnished the text, he illustrates his coming at death, and our duty in reference to it, by the solemnities of a marriage. As these occasions were celebrated among the Jews in the night ; and as the hour at which the married pair, with their attendants, would arrive at the bridegroom's mansion, was uncertain, it was the duty of the servants to be ever on the watch, and ever prepared to meet and welcome their coming Lord. Such is the exhortation, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately.—*Blessed,*" adds the Saviour, "*are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.*"

My brethren ; our nature, and our circumstances, as creatures destined to death, and to an eternal state, loudly declare that *we* too ; that all of us without exception, are interested, deeply interested, in this divine admonition. Yes ; if an eternity is before us all, it must be the proper business of us all, to *prepare* for eternity. For everlasting joys and everlasting woes are no

trifles. Nor will any who are not deplorably infatuated, treat them as trifles. If death and judgment *may* be at our very doors, what have we to do, but to be constantly looking out for them ; constantly preparing to welcome the glorious and awful Judge ? If, in addition to the solemn and reiterated warnings of God's word, his *providence* gives us its daily admonitions ; if every dying bed, and every opening grave is a preacher ; if *the grave which opens this day*, preaches with unwonted eloquence ; it must be a criminal indifference, to remain unmoved.

Let us consider, first, the *great duty* suggested in the text ; and then, the *solemn and interesting motives* by which it is recommended and enforced.

The duty here exhibited, is that of *watching* ; and this, with special reference to the coming of Christ at death. Watching, all know, is opposed to sleep. It is a truth—painful and mortifying, but still a truth—that *spiritual* slumber has overtaken the whole human race. In regard to the things of religion and eternity, all mankind are naturally in a profound sleep. In the things of the world, they are awake and engaged ; and often, they are all ardor, animation and activity. But *here*, every sense ap-

pears enchained ; every faculty, torpid and inactive. The glory of the blessed God shines around them ; but they perceive it not. He speaks, with the authority of a Sovereign, and the melting tenderness of a Father ; but they hear not his voice. Mercies and judgments, invitations and warnings, commands, reproofs and threatenings are equally lost upon the slumberers. And how deplorably *insensible* are they, like men asleep, to their guilt and danger, to their truest interest, and their highest happiness. How inactive, too, as really as if asleep, in the proper business of life ; that of glorifying their Maker, and benefiting their fellow-creatures ; that of preparing for a future account, and a happy eternity. How do they suffer those days, months, and years, on which their immortal salvation depends, to glide by them unnoticed, unimproved. Surely, there needs no farther proof that they are asleep. Thus to live, cannot be worthy the name of life. It is but to doze and dream away a useless, and a guilty existence.

Far different from this is the case with the real Christian. Divine mercy has dispelled his guilty slumbers ; has opened his eyes, and ears, and heart to eternal realities. He has begun to perceive the infinite glory, and excellency, and

claims of the ever-blessed God ; the base and destructive nature of sin ; the vanity of this dying world, and the transcendent worth of a soul immortal. He perceives that in that single word *eternity*, are embosomed realities the most interesting and awful. No longer can he close his ears to the thunders of a violated law, or to the melting accents of divine compassion in the gospel. The beauties, the glories, the merciful invitations of the Saviour now irresistibly attract him. He rouses up from the long sleep of death, and applies with diligence and vigor, to the great end of his being. Abandoning the follies of the world, and rising above its groveling pursuits, he aims at far nobler objects. To please, to serve and glorify his God, is now his great concern. While he sheds tears of penitential sorrow over his past life—lost to God—lost to duty—lost to real happiness ; he wishes to consecrate every moment of the future to his Maker, and to eternity. Not that he is wholly disenthralled from spiritual slumber. Alas ! it frequently creeps upon him still. It frequently enchains those faculties, and consumes that precious time, which he would wish to consecrate invariably and entirely to religion. This is his burden and grief. He honestly strives against it. He longs to be wholly free.

He longs to serve his God with the activity and ardor of "the rapt seraph that adores and burns." He maintains a vigorous conflict with indwelling corruption. He carefully avoids those objects and those indulgences which tend to lull him into a state of carnal security and slumber. Thus, by the grace of God, he does habitually maintain some degree of spiritual activity and watchfulness.

Let us, for a moment, consider this watchfulness with a special reference to the hour of death, and to the solemn account which the Christian will then give to his glorious Master. These are scenes which he habitually keeps in view. He does not, with the giddy multitude, endeavor to drown the thoughts of death in the cares, the pleasures, or the dissipations of the world. He wishes it to be ever uppermost in his heart, and familiar to his thoughts. Nor does he merely believe in the reality and certainty of death, and a judgment to come. He thinks upon them with seriousness and solemnity, yet with a sublime pleasure. He feels that "were death denied, to live would not be life." How insupportable would be the thought of being *always* thus in a state of exile from his God and Saviour; of being condemned to spend an eternity in these abodes of sin and sorrow. In

those favored seasons when his evidences are bright, and his affections ardent, how does he spring forward to meet his Redeemer and his Judge. How does the thought of enjoying his approving smile, enhance every earthly comfort, and soothe every present trial. Especially, how does it reconcile him to all the self-denial, and toil, and neglect, and reproach which he encounters for the dear name of Jesus. How does it weaken every tie to earth. How does it illumine and cheer the valley of death. Amidst the transports of this thought, he is willing to bid adieu to every friend, to close his eyes on the glories of the sun, and venture down the gloomy vale.

Doubtless, the watchfulness we now describe, includes an active and diligent *preparation* for the coming of Christ at death and at judgment. This is the habitual aim, this the grand object of the good man's life. To this he wishes to subordinate every other object. And how does he endeavor to accomplish this great and all-absorbing design? Obviously, by cultivating the very same disposition and temper, and by pursuing the same course of conduct, in which he would wish to be found by his blessed Master at his coming. Is he a private Christian? He aims habitually to imbibe the spirit of his Sa-

viour ; to imitate his example of humility, self-denial, compassion, forgiveness, and universal love ; to be faithful to his interest ; to do all to his glory ; in a word, to consecrate time, talents, property, influence, heart and soul to his sacred cause. Is he a Christian minister ? He supremely loves his Master ; loves his study ; loves his closet ; loves his people ; preaches in simplicity the holy, humbling, saving doctrines of the cross ; feeds the sheep and the lambs of the flock ; watches for souls as one that must give account ; and esteems not even his life dear, so that he may finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus.

Thus we have some imperfect view of the watchfulness recommended in the text. We now hasten to consider some of the great and interesting motives by which it is enforced.

The *first* motive seems naturally derived from the *certainly* of our Lord's coming. This certainty is obviously intimated in the text. Indeed, the nature of the case excludes all doubt. Unless we firmly believe that we are accountable creatures ; and that He who made us, and assigned our respective duties and spheres of action, will call us into judgment, and treat us according to our respective characters, we may as

well commence infidels and atheists at once. On the other hand, these truths duly felt, and deeply familiarized, cannot fail to engage us to all that diligence and watchfulness which has been described. Will our great Lord and Master assuredly come and call us to account? Will He who is now our invisible, but ever present witness, shortly be our Judge? Will it be impossible to avoid an appearance at his awful bar? Will he bring *every work into judgment*, and *every secret thing*? Shall all that we have ever done, and said, and thought, and felt, and wished, pass in solemn and particular review before him?—It is impossible that stronger arguments than these, can be presented to the human mind. If we do not feel their force, we must be strangely hard and insensible indeed. O why is it, that the thought of death, of meeting an omniscient and holy Judge, of receiving from his lips a sentence irreversible and everlasting, a sentence whose every word will be fraught with rapture, or with anguish inconceivable—why does not this thought penetrate every human heart to its centre? Why does it not fill every immortal creature with the liveliest solitudes? For what was life given us, but to prepare for this dread account? And if we are not habitually and anxiously preparing for it, how

are we sporting with the patience and goodness of God. How are we abusing and (must it be said ?) murdering days, months, and years, and even our own souls.

Secondly. The *time* of our Lord's coming is utterly *uncertain*. It may be perfectly sudden, unforewarned, and unexpected. "Be ready," says the Saviour ; "for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." "Watch ; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping."

Most wisely and most kindly has our Creator concealed from every human being, the time of death. And what is the lesson to be learned from this divine arrangement ? Obviously that suggested by the poet.

Is death uncertain ? Therefore thou be fixed :
Fixed as a sentinel ; all eye, all ear,
All expectation of the coming foe.

True, thousands derive a contrary lesson from the uncertainty of death ; and thousands, perhaps, whom the world esteems wise. They would not, if they could avoid it, put the smallest portion of their worldly treasure to a moment's hazard ; but they will be content, for months and years, to hazard the loss of their

souls. The thought of enduring a few months of sickness, or pain, is insupportable ; but the thought of plunging into miseries which never end, scarcely robs them of a moment's quiet. We need not, my brethren, attempt to find a *name* for this folly. It is impossible. Human language is far too poor. But O, let us shun it. Let us shun *procrastination*—that rock on which thousands and thousands have split, and made shipwreck of their immortal hopes. Let us not, O let us not commit these souls to the mercy of an unknown, an unpromised hereafter. As we would not treasure up materials for unavailing repentance, for the bitterest anguish, for overwhelming despair, let us without a moment's delay, flee to the hope of the gospel, consecrate our all to our Creator and Redeemer, and thus prepare to meet our Judge in peace.

Again. Consider, for a moment, the sad state of those whom their Lord, at his coming, shall surprise asleep. This must be an awful case indeed. Suppose it the case of one who was never truly awakened, and never began to make any real preparation to meet his Judge. How full of horror must be such a condition. To slumber on to the last ; to cry *peace, peace*, till sudden destruction comes ; to be summoned into eternity unprepared ; to meet a frowning

Deity, an angry Judge,—O, how inadequate is the language of mortals to portray the terror and the anguish of such a scene. To lose the *soul*, that invaluable, neglected, abused treasure ; to lose the smiles of God, and the bliss of heaven ; to be banished far from the source of all good ; to depart under his tremendous, insupportable frown ; to dwell forever amidst condemned spirits, and devouring flames—these are horrors which it might seem unkind even to mention, were it not to warn the impenitent, the secure, the presumptuous, to escape them without a moment's delay.

But suppose a different case. The Saviour, as we have seen, bade his own disciples beware, *lest, coming suddenly, he should find them sleeping*. There was danger, then, that even they might be thus found. Elsewhere, he gives us to understand that while the bridegroom tarried, the *wise* virgins, as well as the foolish, slumbered and slept. Truly melancholy and humbling is the thought, that Christians are capable of such folly, such gross inconsistency, in any degree. But it is the fact. And what if they should be called to die in such a state. Death must be a surprise indeed. How poorly prepared must they be for that last awful conflict. How destitute,

probably, of the light of the divine countenance, and the evidence of a pardoned state. Such, indeed, is the wonderful mercy of God, and such the stability of the new covenant, that no real Christian can lose his soul. But can it be a small thing to want, at such a period, the consolations of religion? Can it be a small thing that the pangs of death should be exacerbated by the agonies of doubt, and of remorse? Can it be a small thing that a circle of broken-hearted friends should be deprived of the comfort, and the surrounding world of the edification, arising from a death-bed cheered with the sensible presence of Christ, and the dawning light of heaven?

In a word: How blessed, as the Saviour declares, *are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching*. Death, it is conceded, is terrific to nature; and it is doubly appalling to the unpardoned, unprepared sinner. But what of evil, or of terror, has death for the watchful Christian? It takes him from earth, and its enjoyments; but not until his heart is thoroughly weaned from them. It closes the period of trial; but not until its great end is accomplished; not until his title to heaven is established, and his preparation for its felicities, matured. It separates him from earthly

friends ; but it unites him, and that inseparably, to friends still more beloved, and more holy. It leads him down a dark valley ; but even there, the splendors of an eternal day begin to dawn upon his mind. It places him in the immediate presence of a holy God ; but it is a presence which he has habitually and ardently longed for ; the presence of a Father, and a Friend. And what is the reception, and what the felicity which he may expect from the Saviour, when he shall have come at death, and found him ready and waiting for his advent ? Let the Saviour himself declare. *Blessed*, says he, *are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.* He adds, *Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and will make them to sit down at meat, and will come forth, and serve them.* Wonderful, astonishing words ! We shall never, never comprehend their full meaning, till we arrive at heaven. But they tell us significantly, even now, that He who, on earth, condescended to *wash the feet* of his dear disciples, will not, in heaven, be less condescending, or less kind. No ; he will be bringing forth to them forever a fullness of unceasing, ever-growing delights and consolations. And those delights and consolations will be a thousand times endeared to their hearts, as

coming to them, not only as the purchase of his blood, but as the immediate gifts of his beloved hand. Yes; they are with their Saviour. They behold his unveiled glory. They bear his perfect image. They receive endless and uninterrupted communications of his love. This is the heaven which, while here, they longed for. This is the heaven to which sovereign, infinite, abounding mercy has exalted them.

We have taken some view of the character of the Christian; the watchful Christian. And by the aid of revelation, we have cast a glance at his blessedness; his blessedness in death, and to eternity. And is it possible, my beloved hearers, that any of our depraved and sinful race, have ever attained this sublime character. Is it possible that any whom we have known, and loved, and conversed with—any whom we have but recently seen struggling with toils and trials, with infirmities and sin, have escaped from them all, and are, this moment, enjoying this pure and immortal blessedness? Yes; it is *more* than possible. We believe that it is a glorious and incontestible fact. And we humbly trust that the DEAR FRIEND whose mortal part reposes in that coffin, is now added to the *great cloud of witnesses* who give their testimony to the de-

lightful fact; and thus to the transcendent excellence and blessedness of Christian piety. It is consoling to reflect that his perfected and happy spirit is now with its God and Saviour. With many tender regrets, we shall soon commit his mortal part to the silent tomb. But let us first pause a moment, and take a parting look at one in whose character and example, there is so much to instruct, and to animate.

MR. MARCH was born at Newburyport, of worthy and respected parents. In his very childhood, he gave evidence, not only of a docile mind, and a tender conscience, but, as was thought by many of his friends, of hopeful piety—evidence which, as they conceived, was not discredited, but rather confirmed, by his subsequent years. In his own view, however, the great work of conversion occurred at a period considerably later. It was, as he believed, in the closing year of his college life, that he obtained the first distinct and effectual impressions of his own state as a sinner, and of the way of salvation revealed in the gospel of Christ. His early religious exercises were marked with tenderness, humility, and self-distrust. His views of sin, and of his own unworthiness were, at times, deeply distressing. Nor was it otherwise

than gradually, that he arrived, through much scrutiny and self-suspicion, at a confirmed hope of his interest in the Saviour.

He had cherished, very early, a strong inclination to the Christian ministry ; and having completed the usual course at Yale College, received his theological education at the Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. Amidst the instructions of this seminary, he obtained very clear and discriminating views of the great doctrines of the gospel—views which were confirmed and expanded by his subsequent study of the Scriptures, and which imparted an evangelical stamp to his preaching, through the course of his future life.

Having commenced his career as a Candidate for the ministry, and preached, for a time, in various places in New England, and beyond its bounds, he was invited, in the beginning of the year 1831, to supply the desk in this place. The proposal was occasioned by the indisposition of the aged Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Miltimore ; whose infirmities being rather increased, than alleviated in the course of the year, the Society invited Mr. March, and with great unanimity, to take part in the pastorship, as a Colleague. Their overture was accepted ; and it is well known with what assiduity and tenderness the

young Pastor devoted himself to soothe and brighten the declining years of his aged and revered Father.

This connection, so auspicious, and so delightful, was but too short. In little more than four years from its commencement, the Society was called to shed tears of affectionate sorrow over the grave of the venerable Miltimore. From this period, the surviving Pastor, on whom had previously devolved a great portion of the active duties of the place, found himself left to bear, alone and unaided, the entire burden and heat of the day.

As a preacher of the gospel, Mr. March was greatly and justly esteemed. His sermons were not mere cool and general discussions of Christian doctrine. Nor were they flighty and superficial addresses to the imagination, and the feelings. They were animated, and occasionally they were impassioned. Yet they were luminous and instructive too. They dwelt mainly on those doctrines by which Christians are nourished, quickened and comforted; and sinners awakened, converted and saved. They judiciously placed the stress of religion where the Scriptures place it. Proceeding obviously from the heart, they were very apt to reach the conscience, and the heart. Hence it was, that

while they were *generally* acceptable, they were most highly prized by the most serious, and the most judicious.

His prayers were not less instructive and edifying than his sermons. They were judiciously adapted to times, places, subjects, occasions and circumstances. They indicated a heart habituated to communion with God, deeply impressed with his majesty; humbly and tenderly confiding in his mercy. They indicated a lively sense of the value of spiritual blessings, and of the worth of souls immortal. Occasionally, and not unfrequently, they took the style of that importunity, that fervent wrestling with God, which could scarcely fail to bring the supplicated blessings down.

He was a devoted and affectionate *pastor*; prompt at the call of duty; punctual to every engagement; solicitous to detect, and to cherish any serious impressions among his people; watching for their souls as one that must give account. His addresses to the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the awakened and inquiring, exhibited that union of fidelity and tenderness, of discrimination and sound judgment, which was calculated to give them force, and to secure for them the best effect.

Such fidelity, and such exertions were not in

vain. They were crowned with rich blessings. Under his care, the church was gradually increased. And there were seasons in which the divine influence was signally bestowed, quickening the zeal of Christians, and adding not a few to their number.

Mr. March felt a cordial interest in all those great enterprises of piety and benevolence which have distinguished the present age ; and employed an energetic influence in their support. His zeal in the cause of reformation was warm and active. It was the fruit, not of mere excitement, but of principle and reflection. It was regulated by a sound judgment, and of course, was the more efficient, as well as more enduring.

It was remarkable that amidst so much active labor, he should find so much time for mental improvement. But he was diligent in study, and extensive in his investigations. His visit to Europe, some years since, while it furnished him a variety of valuable books, seemed to impart a new impulse to his mind. And he evidently advanced in knowledge, to the close of life.

On the whole, Mr. March established for himself, with the judicious and candid who knew him, the character of a good minister, and a

good Christian ; of a sincere friend to God and man ; to society, and its best interests ; to his country, and his species. He was a tender husband, and an affectionate father ; a kind neighbor, and a faithful friend.

He was most unusually endeared to an affectionate people. During a ministry of nearly fifteen years, their confidence was unshaken ; their attachment unabated. Never, indeed, were the evidences of this confidence and attachment so manifest, as in the last year of his life.

He was highly esteemed by his ministerial brethren, to whom he was ever ready to impart his valuable services ; and his praise is in all the churches.

We aver not that he was faultless. This would be to take him out of the pale of humanity. Still, his character, to human view, made an approach, at least, to the faultless. While it attracted a general esteem, it might almost be said to bid defiance to reproach. For himself, however, he felt, and he deeply, humbly felt, that he was a fallible, sinful man. He centered all his hopes in the merits and the compassion of that Saviour who, we doubt not, has pardoned his every error, and received him to his everlasting mercy.

His last sickness was protracted and dis-

tressing. But it was signalized, throughout, with serenity, and sweet submission to the will of God. So peculiar and equivocal were its symptoms, that hope and fear seemed long to alternate in the minds of his friends. The sufferer himself sometimes expressed strong desires to recover; and this chiefly, that he might do some farther service for his Master, and his beloved flock. He was particularly anxious to address the dear youth, and to stimulate Christians to a closer communion with their Saviour, and a more active devotion to his cause. Throughout his sickness, many precious truths and counsels were uttered, which can never be forgotten, nor ever, we trust, be remembered but with profit.

His reason continued to the last. Somewhat more than an hour before his departure, it was my privilege to sit by his bed, and to find him full of peace and hope. He had been favored that morning, as he believed, with a season of sweet communion with his God. He was perfectly willing to depart. He even longed to go and be with his Saviour. He could willingly leave his dearest friends, in the joyful hope of soon meeting them in a Father's house, never to be separated more.

Our tenderest sympathy is due to her who, on this afflicting occasion, is the *chief mourner*. The cup which she is called to drink, is indeed a bitter cup. Yet it has been mingled by an unerring hand—a kind hand—a *Father's* hand. And that Saviour who once wept at the grave of a dear friend, permits her tears, and compassionates her sorrows. To his all-sufficient grace, to his all-supporting arm, we tenderly commend her. May she meekly kiss the rod of the heavenly Chastener. May she be purified in the furnace. May her heart, so repeatedly bereaved of its loved ones, and now so emphatically desolate, be filled, more than ever, with the love of God, and with the divine, undying consolations which that love imparts. Blessed be his name! there is a world where love is perfect, and friendship unbroken and eternal. May every recollection of joys departed contribute to raise and rivet her heart to that better scene, and to prepare her for its unfailing peace and blessedness.

To the respected and numerous family with which our lamented friend was, by marriage, connected, we offer our sincere and tender condolence. With no common affection did they receive and love him; and he was worthy of their love. His friendship, his example, his

counsels and his prayers were all precious to their hearts. And not a few of them are consoled by the hope, that the friendship begun on earth, will be perfected and immortalized in heaven. And what better wish can our hearts form, than that they may all, without exception, be thus divinely favored and blessed; that following their lamented friend wherein he followed Christ, they may be re-united to him in that world where all are completely blessed, and where the pure delights of friendship are never embittered by the danger, or even the possibility of separation.

My friends of this church and society: The heart which lately throbbed with unutterable desires for your salvation, is now cold and motionless. The tongue which proclaimed to you the messages of a Saviour's love, and the warnings of his mercy, is now silent in death. Your minister is no more. He who besought you to be reconciled to God; he who invited you to a Redeemer's arms; he who warned you to flee from the wrath to come; he who prayed and wept over you; who counselled you in your difficulties, comforted you in your sorrows, and watched by your sick and dying beds—is withdrawn forever from your sight. His last message is delivered; his last prayer is

uttered ; his work is done ; his account is rendered to the great Judge of quick and dead. And before the bar of that eternal Judge, you will one day meet him. It will then appear how he has preached, and how you have heard ; what were the privileges which you have enjoyed under his ministry, and how far you have profited by those privileges. And O my friends ! eternal consequences are depending. It is a melancholy and startling thought, that the minister may be loved, and the gospel he preaches, be disregarded and disobeyed. Yes ; the minister may be loved, while the Saviour and the salvation he recommends, may be rejected and lost. Are you, then, prepared to have the momentous point decided ? Are you prepared for the scrutinies and decisions of the final day ?—Not a few of you, we doubt not, will be the joy and crown of your beloved minister in the great day of the Lord. For the rest, we have but one wish and prayer. It is, that what all the counsels and warnings of your *living* minister have not accomplished, may, through the boundless mercy of God, be accomplished by his lamented removal, by the eloquence of his dying bed, by the soul-subduing, heart-melting services of this day. Yes, my friends ; from the coffin which encloses those

dear remains ; or may I not rather say, from the heaven to which the released spirit has taken its flight ; a voice addresses you—a voice of compassionate warning, of tender entreaty. Will you not listen ? Will you not obey ? Can you bear the thought that the heart-rending separation from a beloved minister, shall be an *everlasting* separation ? Will you not aspire to meet him with joy before the Judge ? Will you not aspire to be his glory and his crown in the regions above ?

My brethren in the Christian ministry : The early and lamented exit of our departed friend, and the solemn services of this day, speak a language to us, most significant and affecting. *Why* he was so early removed ; why a life so precious, and so useful, should be so speedily terminated, we may not too curiously inquire. To some of us, perhaps, who have been long spared, (to *one*, I am *sure*,) the fact seems equally mysterious and humbling. And it suggests inquiries most interesting to us all. Were *we* called soon away, could we meet our omniscient Judge in peace ? Would ours be *the blessedness of those servants whom their Lord, when he comes, finds watching* ? Are we faithful—faithful to the Master who sent us—faithful to our ordination vows—faithful to the souls of

our people ; souls redeemed with blood, and solemnly committed to our charge ? Are we living and acting as under our glorious Master's eye ? Are we sedulously preparing for his final appearing ? Are we *wholly absorbed* in this great object, and honestly endeavoring to spend each day, each hour, as if each would be the last ? Should our Lord come by a sudden call, should he come to-day, would he find us ready to give him a joyful welcome ?—Awful indeed will be that meeting, if we are found unfaithful, unprepared. No words can describe it. No imagination can conceive it. But if we are faithful, we have nothing to fear. Our blessed Master will kindly accept our poor imperfect services ; will present us the palm of victory, and place on our unworthy heads, the crown of glory.

May the God of infinite mercy sanctify the removal of our dear departed brother to the whole circle of mourning relatives and friends ; to all the inhabitants of this, and the neighboring towns ; to the ministers and churches by whom he was so extensively known and esteemed ; and to all the friends of religion, and of man.

In view of this afflicting dispensation, who is not ready to exclaim ; *Help, Lord ; for the godly*

man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men. The righteous are taken away ; they are taken from the evil to come.— And who shall fill their places ? Who shall supply the chasm caused by their removal ? In a season too evidently marked by the frowns of God on our country, where are the men who shall rise up in the spirit of our departed brother, and avert, by the holy importunity of prayer, the righteous anger of Heaven ? Amidst the sad declensions and degeneracies in religion, where are the men anxious and eager to restore its primitive purity, and arrest its downward progress ? When error, and delusion, and infidelity, and vice, and crime sweep over the land like a flood, where are the noble spirits, still faithful to the cause of truth and righteousness, and courageously resisting the incursions of the enemy ?

How emphatically, by the late dispensation, has our great Lord and Judge proclaimed, *Behold, I come as a thief ; blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* May we all be prepared to reply with sincerity and ardor ; *Amen ; even so come, Lord Jesus ; come quickly.*



TRIBUTE OF AFFECTION.

STANZAS SUGGESTED BY THE DEATH OF REV. J. C. MARCH.

INSCRIBED TO MRS. M.

[By a Lady of the Society.]

WEEP not for him, his work is done,
And peaceful is his slumber now;
Calmly hath sunk his setting sun,
While beams of glory tinged his brow.
Though earth was beautiful and bright,
And love would fain have bound him here,
Reflections from a purer light
Illumed his path when death was near.

Weep not for him, a holy song,
Unmingled with discordant strains,
He tunes amid the angel throng,
Who tread with joy the heavenly plains.
Eye hath not seen that better land,
Ear hath not heard its joyous tone,
Nor dreams with their enchanted wand,
Portrayed its bliss to man unknown.

For thee the bitter tear we shed,
We blend the silent sigh with thine;
Sad mourner o'er the holy dead,
With whom thy life was wont to twine.
The beaming eye is closed in death,
The sunlight of thy earthly way,
And with the gasp of parting breath,
Faded from thee each cheering ray.

Ye shared life's changing hopes and fears,—
 When joys were radiant in the sky,
 Or when the light was dimmed by tears,
 Love blest each hour that hasted by.
 Henceforth, a lonely path you tread;
 Yet while the strongest ties are riven,
 Hope softens every tear you shed,
 And points the aching heart to heaven!

We mourn for those without a guide,
 Amid their wanderings day by day,
 To point them o'er time's fleeting tide,
 To Christ, the Light, the Truth, the Way!
 No more his voice in fervent prayer,
 Shall plead for blessings on his flock,
 No more shall they his counsels share,
 Who led them to the Living Rock!

Oh! when the scenes of time are o'er,
 When earthly pageants pass away,
 When parting tears are shed no more,
 Nor Death the Conqueror comes to slay;
 May you the loved and lost one meet,
 Pastor and people join again,
 Rejoicing at the Father's feet,
 And blend in one eternal strain!

H. S. G.

Oct. 8, 1846.