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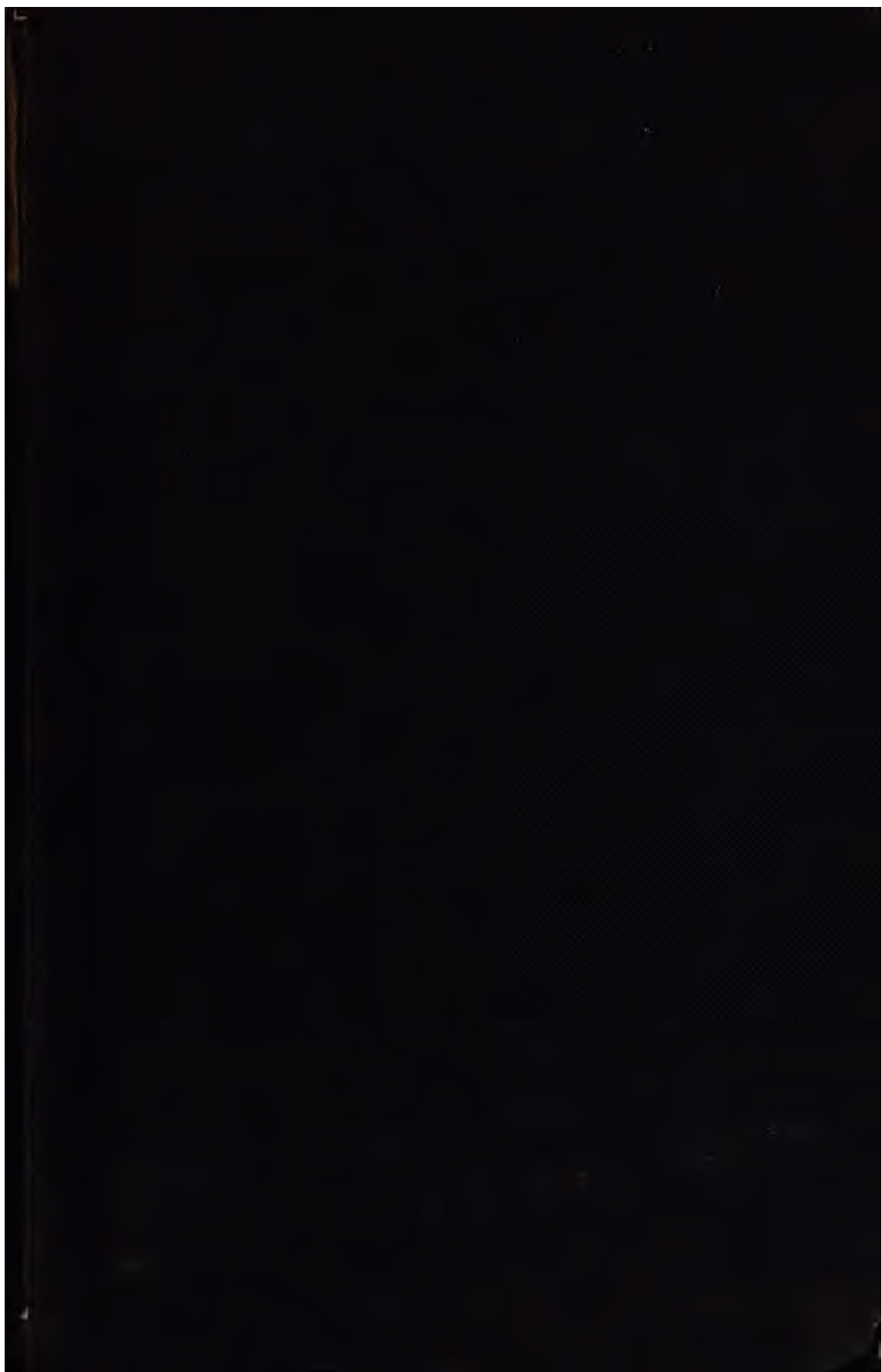
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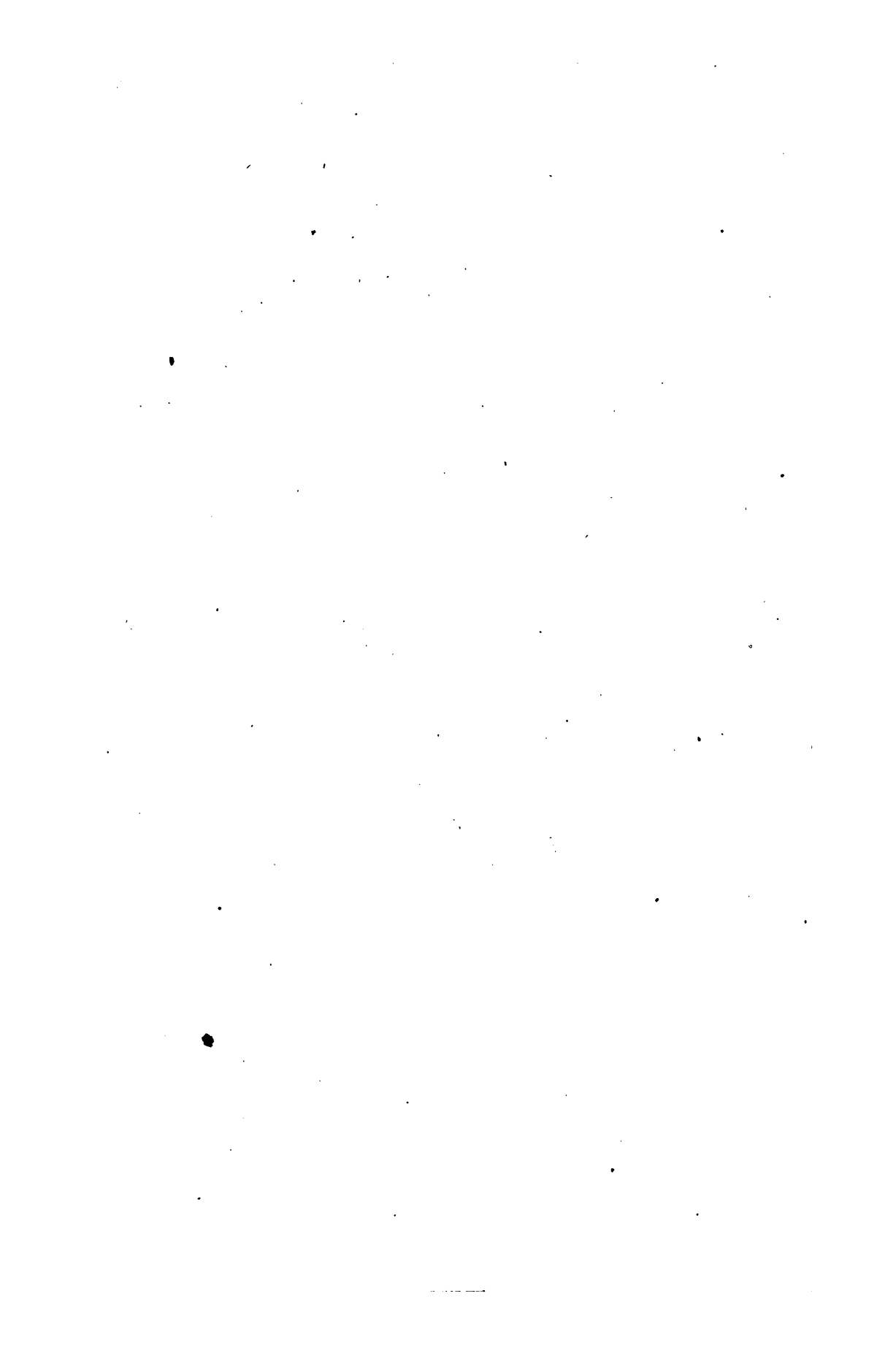
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1983



EXPOSITORY

LECTURES

ON

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

BY THE

REV. WALTER M'GILVRAY,

MINISTER OF HOPE STREET CHURCH



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TO

THE REV. THOMAS BROWN, D. D.

MINISTER OF FREE ST. JOHN'S, GLASGOW,

AS A SLIGHT BUT SINCERE TOKEN OF AFFECTION FOR HIS PERSON,

VENERATION FOR HIS CHARACTER,

AND GRATITUDE FOR HIS FRIENDSHIP,

THIS PRODUCTION

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.





## P R E F A C E.

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[THESE Lectures are sent to the press, in compliance with the general desire of the Congregation before which they are being delivered. As the Course is at present going on, and the Lecturer therefore occupied in the weekly preparation of the Series, he is prevented from giving them that careful revision which productions written amid the daily pressure of official engagements must obviously require.

It is only necessary to add, that the reasons urged in favour of the immediate publication of the Lectures in numbers, rather than in the form of a complete volume at the close, have been sufficiently strong to induce the Author to forego the advantages which might be gained by a little more leisure and delay. Such as they are, it is hoped they will meet with the indulgent consideration of the reader; to whom they are commended, with the earnest prayer that the Divine Spirit may vouchsafe to breathe his blessing upon them.]

[GLASGOW, 17th December, 1844.]

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THE above statement explains the circumstances under which these Lectures were first given to the public; and, while now sending them forth in a collected form, the author cannot refrain from expressing his grateful sense of the reception accorded to them as they successively appeared, and also of the favourable notice taken of them by the religious periodical press.

Short as the period is, since the Course thus completed was commenced, events have occurred which serve to prove still more clearly the necessity of such publications as the present. The

recent measures of our Civil Rulers in favour of Popery; the spirit of religious indifferentism displayed so openly by the political representatives of the country; together with the painful and portentous divisions on points of doctrine prevailing among some of the leading evangelical denominations; all combine to show, that the fervent exhortations of Jude have seldom been more urgently called for than at this particular time. The warnings given by him against the "creeping" encroachments of error, and the solemn appeals with which he charges the members of the Church "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," are peculiarly adapted to the present crisis; and it is therefore conceived that this production, however deficient in other respects, will be found to possess at least one advantage: viz. that to which the wise man adverts, when he says—"a word spoken in season how good it is."

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EXPOSITION  
OF THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

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LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE CHARACTER OF THE WRITER, AND THE PARTIES TO WHOM  
THE EPISTLE IS ADDRESSED.

IN commencing this Series of Lectures, we deem it right to state, at the outset, that it is our design to enter with considerable minuteness into the various topics presented to our notice in this very rich and remarkable Epistle. Instead of confining ourselves to the leading views laid down by the sacred writer, as is the general practice, and the practice which we ourselves are accustomed to follow in the course of our ordinary ministrations, we conceive it to be of some advantage to depart occasionally from what may be called the expansive system of instruction, and to examine more closely and narrowly into the mind of the Spirit, with the view of bringing out in particular detail the less evident, but not always the less essential points, that lie hid beneath the broader principles of Divine truth. The work of Scripture exposition (using that word in its more limited and legitimate sense) we regard as of very high importance. Indeed, there is reason to believe that it was principally in this way that the gospel was first

proclaimed by the Apostles of our Lord ; for while we find them addressing the heathen unbelievers on the great general doctrines of the faith, we may at the same time observe, that, when they turned from the Gentiles to the Jews, they adopted quite a different style of teaching. They took the latter—that is, the Jews—to the law and to the testimony at once. They “reasoned with them out of the Scriptures;” and their reasoning generally consisted of a minute and almost literal analysis of the passages to which they referred them. They appear to have acted with peculiar closeness on the principle, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness;” and that it is by the careful study and sanctified knowledge of its varied lessons, that “the man of God is made perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

We are quite aware that the practice of textual exposition is not by any means so generally relished as the system of doctrinal instruction which commonly prevails; and the reasons on which this preference of the latter over the former is founded are very easily assigned. The great object of textual exposition is to explain the sense of Scripture in detail,—to fix down the attention pointedly and particularly on the precise meaning of its several parts, without leaving scope for those larger excursions and looser illustrations which the system of doctrinal instruction allows; and which, from its wider latitude—and also, we may add, from its greater vagueness—is more agreeable to many minds than the minuter and closer method of which we are just speaking. Besides this, it may be remarked, farther, that expository lectures do not usually admit of the same degree of warmth and animation as doctrinal discourses. They consist more in calm and patient efforts to elucidate the text, than in direct appeals to the understanding or the affections; and those, therefore, who prefer excitement to instruction—who seek to be moved rather than to be enlightened—to be touched rather than to be taught,—all such persons, and they generally constitute the largest class, are more interested by the kind of preaching which stirs their feelings than by that which is calculated to store their minds, to guide their consciences, and to regulate their practical conduct. We may also mention, as another reason which has contributed to render expository teaching less popular than we think it should be, that

it is by many supposed to be a more simple and superficial mode of instruction than that which is usually adopted. Now it is very true that it may be made simple and superficial enough, and we have no manner of doubt that it is because it has been treated too much in this way it has fallen into such general disfavour, and by consequence into such general disuse. But if the work of exposition is gone about in the right spirit—if, instead of being attempted in a loose, unstudied, and hasty style, it is taken up under a proper sense of its true nature and importance, so far from being found an easy exercise, it will be felt to require much more care, reflection, and precision, than are needed in the preparation of more popular discourses.

Without presuming to think that we shall be able to conduct the present Course of Lectures in the style and spirit to which we have thus adverted, we may at least venture to say, that we are fully alive to the duty and necessity of aiming at it; and that we shall endeavour, through the aid and blessing of God, to present the lessons contained in this deeply-interesting portion of Scripture in the manner that we think best fitted to promote the spiritual edification of those who may from time to time come forth to hear us.

Before proceeding to consider the text, there is one circumstance, affecting the general character of the Epistle, which calls for some explanation—and that is, the close resemblance which exists between it and the second chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter. Indeed the leading thoughts are so nearly alike, that it looks as if Jude had heard that chapter read, and had been stirred up by a divine impulse to re-write and reiterate its lessons in another form, in order to enforce still farther the powerful and impressive exhortations which the great Apostle of the Circumcision had already sounded in the ears of the Church. But this resemblance does not extend to the leading thoughts alone: it runs through the entire substance of their matter, and pervades very observably the structure of their respective styles. Their strain of argument is precisely the same—their historical references are the same—their figurative illustrations the same—the characters they are describing and denouncing the same—and in some instances the very words they make use of are identically the same. But, with this close and remarkable similarity, there are still some points of distinction between them.



Jude, if we may venture to say so, presents the subject in a more compact and connected form—leaves out several parenthetical allusions and exhortations introduced by Peter, and closes with a special and beautiful address to believers, not to be found in that part of Peter's Epistle which he evidently had in his eye. Without entering into any speculation, with the view of accounting for the resemblance to which we have thus been necessarily led to refer, we shall content ourselves by saying, that we are fully satisfied with the evidences which go to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the Chapter before us. Our time will not allow us to adduce these evidences in detail; but we consider it proper to state, in one word, that although the inspiration of this Epistle has been questioned by some considerable writers, its title to the place which it occupies in the sacred canon has been established by the general consent of the Church in all ages. With these preliminary observations, we proceed to the exposition of the Text:—

Verses 1st and 2d—"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."

Such is the preface or inscription prefixed to the Epistle, in which the writer states first his *name*, his *office*, and his *best known relative connection*. His name was Jude, or Judas. Our Lord had two Apostles so called. One of them was the wretched traitor that betrayed him—the miserable Iscariot—the son of perdition; whose memory is consigned to the execration of all ages, and who has rendered the very name which he bore a hissing and a reproach! It was, however, an honourable name in Israel, and had descended, through many generations, from Judah, the lineal progenitor of our Lord. The publication of this Epistle, besides the many advantages which the Church has derived from it, has been of this incidental benefit to its author, that it has saved him from the possibility of being mistaken, as he might otherwise have been, even in his own day, and, still more probably, in later ages, for the unhappy man, who, bearing the same name, and holding the same position, might very readily be confounded with him.

With his name, he also refers to his *office*—he calls himself "a *servant* of Jesus Christ." By the Evangelists he is spoken of

as one of the brothers of our Lord, and it is known that he was his near kinsman, according to the flesh. We mention the fact for the purpose of pointing out the faith and spiritual-mindedness of the Apostle. So fully did he realise the personal and official dignity of his Master, that he lost sight of the earthly relationship which existed between them; insomuch that he did not venture to allude to a circumstance which he must otherwise have regarded as so great an honour, but simply spoke of himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ." He was evidently accustomed to look upon Christ not as his relative, but as his Lord; not as bound to him by the natural ties of consanguinity, but as the God-man, who was exalted far above all principality and power, and "to whom every knee must bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth." What is it but the influence of earthly-mindedness that makes the Roman Catholics ascribe so much influence to the Virgin Mary, because of her human connection with the Redeemer? Their whole system of doctrine and devotion bearing on this point is based on the merest dregs of materialism. It tends to degrade and carnalise the sublimest mysteries of our faith, and to lower the Redeemer *practically*, just as much as he is lowered by the Arians and Socinians *theoretically*. The latter wish to make it out that Christ is a mere creature,—that is their theory. The former, admitting his Godhead, regard him and approach him as if he were nothing more than a creature,—that is their practice. In one word, the Papists are in their worship what the Socinians are in their creed.

But we find another proof of the strength of apostolic faith in the language of Jude, when he designates himself "a servant of *Jesus Christ*." A servant of whom?—of One who bore the form of a servant himself! who lived in poverty, and died amid circumstances of the deepest humiliation and disgrace;—One who was branded as an impostor, condemned as a blasphemer, and hung up as a malefactor!—One whom public opinion had reprobated and denounced as the vilest of characters, and whom public indignation had taken and crucified between two thieves! To call themselves the compeers of such a one would, on natural principles, have required some courage; to call themselves his friends would have required still more; but to call themselves his "*servants*" implied, in their case, a most signal and remarkable degree of faith. Removed as we are from the scenes and circumstances which they

personally witnessed, and accustomed as we also are, and have been, to contemplate the essential dignity and glory of Christ, we can scarcely form a clear enough conception of the strength of belief which the Apostles and primitive disciples thus displayed. While the voice of the vast majority—the stream and strength of what we call public opinion (which, in our day, is the sole guide with many, and which weighs very much with most)—held their Master in utter contempt, and regarded him as the worst and meanest of men, such and so victorious was their faith, that they reckoned it an honour to be ranked as his servants.

Having thus referred to his official character, the Apostle goes on to state, that he was the “brother of James.” This James was one of the most favoured and intimate friends of Christ. Peter, and John, and he, seem to have enjoyed his confidence to a much greater extent than the rest of his disciples. They were specially selected to be the witnesses of his transfiguration. They were also those whom he took with him in the season of his agony to the Garden of Gethsemane. The peculiar friendship which their Master manifested towards them they seem to have felt and reciprocated in their turn. Thus, when He was refused admittance into one of the villages of the Samaritans, *James* and *John* were so indignant at the insult offered him, that, in the warmth of their unregulated zeal, they were for calling down fire from heaven to consume the bigoted inhabitants; and again, when our Lord was apprehended by Judas and his band, *Peter* rushed forward with impetuous affection, determined to fight in his defence. From these circumstances it is evident, that there was a kind or degree of personal attachment existing between our Lord and these three followers, such as does not appear to have existed between himself and any of the others. It would be curious to trace the reason of this; but, as it is not a matter of much *spiritual* importance, we hasten to observe, that James does not appear to have had such eminent qualities—or, at all events, such marked features of character—as his two illustrious compeers; for while Peter and John maintain their prominence on other occasions, and appear in connexion with all the leading events in the Saviour’s life, he is never referred to, except on the occasions to which we have alluded. This fact might seem to warrant the inference that he was admitted to the special intimacy of his Master more from his relationship to him (for he was, like Jude, his cousin-german)

than from any recommendations, personal or official, that he possessed. But, in opposition to this view, there is ample evidence to prove that James was a man of the most striking and distinguished qualities; and that he occupied a position of the highest influence among his cotemporaries. He was the first bishop, or pastor, or presbyter, of Jerusalem, which was then the central seat of Christianity—the capital and metropolis of the Apostolic Church. This circumstance of itself shows the eminent light in which he was regarded. Besides this, he was known among the body of primitive believers by the noble designation of “James the Just;” and Paul, when speaking of the three great “pillars” of the Christian party—that is, of Peter, John, and James—mentions the last first, as if he had some pretensions to be considered the foremost of them all. Such, moreover, was the veneration in which he was held, even by the bigoted unbelievers of his time, that Josephus records it as one of the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, “that St. James was martyred in it.” From the traditionary accounts preserved of him, it seems that this holy apostle was a man of grave, cautious, reserved dispositions; with a somewhat stern temper, and a firm, decided, practical turn of mind; and you will have no difficulty in observing that these peculiarities of character are very distinctly stamped on the epistle which bears his name. On the whole, we have reason to believe that James, in point of character, parts, and personal influence, was one of the most distinguished men and ministers of his day; and hence Jude, for the purpose of making it more clearly known who he himself was, and also, doubtless, from a feeling of affectionate reverence for his eminent relative, takes occasion to state that he was “the brother of James.”

Having thus introduced himself to the notice of the reader, by mentioning his name, his office, and his connexion with the well-known pastor of Jerusalem, he then proceeds to describe those for whom the epistle was designed. It is addressed “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.”

The word “sanctified” is commonly used in Scripture in a twofold sense. It is sometimes employed to express the idea of *separation*, which, under the Old Testament, was the typical act which denoted sanctification, as it intimated that the object selected and segregated was withdrawn from a common,

and set apart to a sacred purpose. Hence, in the writings of Moses and the prophets, the term "to sanctify" is almost invariably used as synonymous with the terms "to separate," "to select," "to set apart." In the New Testament, there are several passages in which the same meaning is attached to it, although there it is more generally employed to signify the spiritual purification of the soul through the influence of the Holy Ghost. In the case before us, however, it appears to us that the word is used in the first of these senses—namely, to express separation. In giving this version of the text, we are aware that we put a construction on it which, so far as we know, is not sanctioned by any of the commentators. They (at least such of them as we have seen) reverse the order of the words, with the view, as they suppose, of following more correctly the order of time; and hence they begin with the last particular, regarding the "calling" of the believer first—that being the primary step in the process of regeneration—and they explain the two preceding particulars, about his being "preserved" and "sanctified," as referring to the spiritual care and discipline under which he is put after he is called. But it appears to us that the words as they stand in the passage are more accurately expressive of the order of time than is thus supposed, and that they admit of a different and more direct construction than is usually assigned to them—a construction which will make the "calling" the *last* instead of the *first* step of the course. There is, to say the least, something not consistent with the analogy of Scripture, and calculated to lead to a confusion of ideas, in speaking of believers as being "sanctified" (in the sense of spiritual purification) "by God the Father," and "preserved" (*after* being called or regenerated) "in Christ Jesus." The general strain of Scripture ascribes the work of sanctification to God the Spirit, and it also assigns the keeping or preserving of the believer, after he is called, to the First rather than the Second person of the Godhead. We do not say that no passage can be found to countenance the views against which we are contending; we merely affirm that they are opposed to the general spirit of Scripture analogy; and with regard to the point immediately before us, we are convinced that that analogy will be much better maintained by interpreting the passage as it stands, and taking the interpretation suggested by the natural order in which the particulars are recorded. Recurring, then, to what we have stated

regarding the meaning of the word "sanctified," we conceive that it refers to the predetermined separation or *election* of believers. This act is uniformly ascribed to "God the Father," and it forms the primary movement—the grand basis on which the scheme of redemption proceeds.

Those who have thus been set apart by the Father, acting as the representative of the Godhead, are "*preserved in Jesus Christ.*" Being constituted Mediator, they were "chosen in Him," "predestinated to the adoption of sons" by Him. They were given to Him as a spiritual seed; and, from the first moment that the council of peace was concluded, they were his in the bonds of the everlasting covenant; and hence from that moment they became the objects of his peculiar care. He who "called the things that are not as though they were"—He to whom all time is present, and before whom all objects are immediately and unchangeably unveiled—took his elect ones, even before they were manifest in the flesh, under his special charge; and, when his mediatorial work on earth was drawing on to its close, he could say, as he looked through the whole of it, from the beginning to the end, from the eternity in which it was originally devised to the eternity in which it was to be finally consummated,—“of those whom thou hast given me I have lost none.”

Being thus preserved in Christ Jesus, they are in due time "*called.*" We read that "many are called" though "few are chosen." The many are called externally; they are only the chosen few who are called effectually. The offer is proclaimed to all, but the majority deliberately reject it. They consciously, wilfully, of their free mind and motion, disregard the call, and despise the threatening of the Lord; and they have nothing, therefore, to complain of, if they are left at last to reap the fruits of their own devices. They may assert, that the influence and exclusive efficacy of divine grace converts those who are brought to embrace the invitations of the gospel into mere machines; but they *know*—they are directly convinced from their own experience—that *they* are not machines in rejecting these invitations. They feel that they have no palsied powerlessness about them—that they are not under the influence of any irresistible fatality in refusing to submit to the righteousness of God: they cannot deny that their condemnation, if they persist in their unbelief, is truly set forth in the Saviour's touching complaint, when he says, "Ye *will not* come to me that

ye might have life!" But those who are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, are, in the day of their merciful visitation, made willing to accept of the offer tendered: they are persuaded and enabled to close with the terms of reconciliation held forth in the gospel; and they then become "*the* called according to God's purpose:" thus making, at the same time, their "*calling* and their *election* sure"—sure, at least, so far as the actual possession of these privileges is concerned, though it may not always be sure to them as a matter of personal conviction.

After thus describing the parties to whom the Epistle is addressed, Jude, according to the venerable apostolic practice, pronounces a benediction on those called, and chosen, and faithful ones, for whose guidance and instruction he was writing—"Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied."

Though justified and accepted in the Beloved, they were not placed beyond the need of "*mercy*." Being renewed but in part, they still had the remains of corruption within them, and were therefore not merely liable to fall, but daily (though not deliberately or wilfully) falling into sin. The transgressions thus committed by them exposed them to the moral and judicial displeasure of God, who can never look on sin, wheresoever it may appear, without the holy recoil of abhorrence; and who regards the offences of his people with peculiar detestation, because they are eminently aggravated by the distinguishing light and love which he has graciously vouchsafed to them. As these sins rendered them continually guilty, they stood in continual need of mercy. Though the body of their sins had been cleansed with the pure waters of redeeming grace, they yet required to have "their hands and their feet washed" from the defiling spots that they were daily contracting.

But the apostle prays not only for mercy, but also for "*peace*," in their behalf. Peace, in the case of the believer, is the result and offspring of mercy. His declensions and backslidings, while they grieve God, are also a source of grief and disquietude to himself. The law of the spirit of life within him is broken, and his conscience condemns him. His new nature—his better nature—his divine nature,—is thwarted, offended, mortified. His inner man is, therefore, in a state of conflict; and he cannot forgive himself until God forgives him, nor enjoy rest in his spirit until the mercy of God visits him, and the peace of God descends upon him. Such is the simple, child-like, ingenuous character of a true believer; and

hence sins of which the world knows nothing—sins that would cost the unrenewed man not a single thought—sins that have never been permitted to break forth into act, or to pass out from the guarded inclosure of his own struggling bosom—sins such as these often disturb his repose, awaken his deepest anxieties, and wring from him in secret many bitter tears. O! the pure, the lofty, the holy aspirations, of a genuine child of God! Truly, he is not of the world, for he has nothing of its hard, callous, earthly-minded grossness about him. The world knoweth him not, for the rude multitude cannot understand his hallowed principles, or sympathise with his tender and heaven-toned sensibilities.

But the apostolic benediction, besides peace, includes "*love*." And this love, in a certain sense, is the fruit and effect of peace; at least, the influence of the former is stimulated and increased by the experience of the latter. It is impossible for the believer to think of the mercy that is every moment extended to him, and of the consoling, reconciling peace, that is continually poured into his heart, by a gracious and forgiving God, without feeling his love rising and swelling into greater fervour than before. No one can be more sensible how little he deserves the grace that is bestowed upon him, or how much he has provoked the displeasure that is turned away from him; and when he finds that the Lord is preventing his wants—yea, forestalling his wishes by the blessings of his goodness—when he finds that he is giving him pardon and peace; daily, liberally; without punishing him for the present, or upbraiding him for the past, he cannot but be feelingly alive to the wonderful condescension and long-suffering compassion of God; and this serves to call forth his most grateful affections, and to cause him to abound in all the exercises and labours of love. The Apostle prays that these blessings may be "multiplied to them." They possessed them in some measure already, but it was his benevolent desire that those divine privileges should be perpetually renewed to them—that they should have mercy added to mercy, peace added to peace, love added to love; that all the growing re-actions and accumulations of grace might be experienced by them—that, in one word, they might be progressively advancing in their spiritual acquisitions and attainments, until they came to be filled with "all the fulness of God."



## LECTURE II.

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### THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL SCHEME.

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#### THE SALVATION—THE COMMON SALVATION—THE FAITH.

AFTER specifying the parties to whom he was writing, and expressing his earnest and devout wishes for their welfare, the Apostle goes on to state the subject on which he felt himself called upon to address them. Verse 3—"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." This statement resolves itself into two leading points or particulars. 1st, The description given of the gospel. 2d, The duty laid upon believers in regard to it.

I. The gospel, which is characterised by its spiritual or experimental effect, is here called "*the salvation.*" It is the instrumental medium through which this comprehensive blessing is conveyed to the soul. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Believers are "called" to the enjoyment of their covenant-rights and privileges "by the gospel;" and though we dare not assert that God *cannot* save a sinner without the presentation and spiritual apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus, yet we can with confidence affirm, that salvation by the gospel is the established law of His kingdom, and, consequently, the law by which this matter is ordinarily ruled. What the Divine Being may do by virtue of His royal prerogative, in the case of those to whom the gospel has never been proclaimed, we know not, and

have therefore no right to determine. One thing, however, is very plainly revealed—viz. that the means of religious conviction possessed by the heathen, such as they are, are sufficient to render them responsible. This is evident from the whole drift of Paul's reasoning in the first two chapters of his Epistle to the Romans; and beyond the principle that he thus lays down, no one is warranted on Scripture grounds to go, because there is certainly nothing in Scripture to countenance the supposition that the settled plans of the Divine administration are to be altered, so as to be accommodated to the circumstances of the heathen. There is nothing, within the entire compass of the sacred oracles, from which we can, with any fairness, conclude that those who have not the gospel may be saved without the gospel; but, on the contrary, there is every thing to convince us of the very reverse. We are distinctly and invariably told, that it is by the "word of faith," and by that alone, that sinners shall be saved. In this respect it is expressly affirmed, that "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek"—that is, between the professed believer and the blinded idolator—"for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Such are the limits of the Apostles' liberality. He is directly dealing with this very question, as to the extent of the Divine mercy in relation to the enlightened and unenlightened portions of the human race; and, while he is labouring to convey the largest and most comprehensive idea of this, he states his conclusion in the words which we have just cited: "*Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" And, that no doubt might remain in regard to his meaning, he proceeds to apply the principle to the case of the heathen, and says: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom *they have not heard?*" Here, therefore, we have not an incidental or inferential statement on the subject in question, but an express deliverance given, and that too after a full and formal discussion of the point. We find, in fact, that the principle of election extends to nations as well as to individuals—that it runs through the arrangements of Providence as clearly as it does through the arrangements of grace; and hence we also find, that they who contend for the salvability of the heathen are those who either theoretically deny or practically destroy the doctrine of election. Rather than admit the

exercise of Divine sovereignty, manifested in the one case as well as in the other, they devise or support theories that tend, we hesitate not to say, to overturn the very foundations of Divine truth. For if the heathen can be saved without the gospel, *why not others?* and if others, *why not all?* Who does not see that the argument here broached is essentially dangerous, and such as goes to invalidate the necessity and authority of the gospel altogether.

Thou wilt say then unto me, what is to become of the heathen—are they to be all lost? I answer thee I know not—God knoweth. But if such immense multitudes of the human race are to be regarded as cut off from the hope of salvation—since they are and have been cut off from the *means* of salvation—what is to be thought of the mercy of God? I answer thee—God will take care of his own character—he will maintain and vindicate his own glory. If he considered it inconsistent with his character, or derogatory to his glory, to limit his mercy to the elect and to the religiously enlightened portion of mankind, he would have revealed his designs regarding this more clearly in his word. I am contented to believe what he *has* revealed, and will rather credit his mysteries than thy demonstrations; for however wise thou mayest be, I believe, with Paul, “that the foolishness of God is wiser than man.” Those proceedings of his which appear to be most difficult and obscure as far more to be trusted than all the learned premises and conclusions of thy moral philosophy. But then thou wilt say—it is very cruel to maintain such a doctrine; and sooner than believe it I would be inclined to disbelieve the Bible altogether! I am not concerned, brother, to appear more merciful than God; and if thou callest his revealed purposes and declarations cruel, I would simply remind thee that thou blasphemest! And as to disbelieving the Bible, I question much if thou hast ever believed the Bible at all; for they who believe God on one point will never venture to doubt him on another. And if thou disputest his sovereignty, and demandest a right to extend his mercy before thou wilt consent to acknowledge the truth of his word, then I say to thee—“Get thee behind me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”

But the gospel is not only called the salvation, but “the *common* salvation”—a phrase which may be taken in several senses. It may be intended to intimate:—

1st, That the salvation which the gospel reveals flows to believers from *one common source*;—that is, from Christ, who is the sole object of faith; the living centre and fountainhead of grace, whose name is the only one given under heaven among men, whereby the lost can be saved; and from whom therefore elect sinners derive, in common, the remission of their sins and the redemption of their souls.

Or it may be designed to show, 2dly, That it is *the same salvation* that is enjoyed by all the children of God; that they are not saved by different means, or endowed with different blessings, or guided by different rules; but that they are all saved by the same process, endowed with the same privileges, and guided by the same precepts. Of course, it is not contended that there are not diversities in the circumstances connected with their conversion; neither is it asserted, that they all possess the blessings of grace in a similar degree; nor is it meant that they all yield an equal amount of submission to the law of the Lord. It is merely affirmed, that in these various respects their experience is radically the same; so far at least as to justify us in regarding their salvation as being, in this sense, a common salvation.

Or the expression may be regarded as implying, 3d, That the salvation of the gospel is common to elect sinners *of every age, and class, and clime*; that it was untrammelled by the exclusive distinctions of the ancient economy; that its provisions were extended promiscuously to Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free; that transgressors of all grades and conditions,—from those that are afar off to those that are nigh—from the hooted publican to the applauded Pharisee—from the self-complacent moralist to the self-abandoned sensualist—from the poor beggar on the dunghill to the purple tyrant on the throne,—are equally welcome to embrace its offers and to accept of the blessings it provides.

Or it may, finally, be meant to express, that all true believers have a *common interest* in the salvation by which they have been visited—that they are all alike bound to maintain its doctrines, to vindicate its principles, and to promote its practical designs. Such, we think, is the chief sense in which the word is used in the text, although this idea virtually includes the various other views which have been given of it.

Before dismissing this point, we must not overlook the construction

that is put upon the words we are considering by a certain party, who, we are sorry to think, are becoming too numerous amongst us at present. We allude to those who are attempting to revive some of the exploded errors of Armenianism, and, among others, the plausible doctrine of universal redemption. The passage before us is one of those to which they are accustomed to refer in support of their favourite dogma. That the word "common" is in some rare cases used in the sense of universal may be freely admitted; but that it is usually and properly designed to express what is peculiar to a certain class or community, rather than what pertains to the whole world, no intelligent person will venture to dispute. If then any inference is to be drawn from the meaning of the term here employed, that inference is far more against them than it is for them; for we find that the Epistle is written to believers and not to mankind in general, or even to all the professing members of the Church. It is addressed, as we have already seen, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ, and called; and the Apostle, therefore, evidently intended to intimate, that the salvation of which he speaks was that which he, and the fellow-believers whom he describes, embraced and acknowledged in common. But even supposing, for argument's sake, that the party referred to were correct as to the import of the term in this particular case, the passage would then be found to prove another doctrine which we believe they are not prepared to contend for. It would go to establish the truth, not of universal redemption, but of universal salvation; for the phrase, be it remembered, is—"the common *salvation*." In leaving them, therefore, to take their choice of either receiving the passage in the ordinary sense or in the sense of the Universalists, we still hope that they would not hesitate for a moment to adopt the former.

Were it consistent with the plan of these lectures we would gladly embrace the opportunity for entering into the views which have lately begun to be propagated regarding the nature and extent of the atonement;—views which we hold to be at utter variance with the great fundamental principles of Divine truth, and which, when followed out to their legitimate consequences, are calculated to subvert the sovereignty of the gospel scheme, and to subordinate the will of God to the will of man. Having, however, disposed of the point wherein it touches the language of the text, we cannot, without departing too far

from our immediate design, take up the subject so as to discuss it with the fulness and precision it demands; and we must, therefore, pass on with this general observation, that the opinions to which we have been led to advert have at least this mark of unsoundness visibly stamped upon them—that they leave the sinner something whereon to build, and whereof to boast. The original sin of man was, that he wished to be a god—to be independent of Jehovah, and to rise above the subject and subordinate condition in which he was created. This, from all we can learn, was essentially the sin of the fallen angels also. The great practical object of the scheme of salvation, therefore, was to counteract and crush out every spark of this spirit, and to make men and angels acknowledge the supreme and exclusive sovereignty of Jehovah—to feel that He “is God, and that there is none else beside Him.” This primary and pre-eminent truth—a truth on which not only the glory of the Godhead, but the order and government of the whole universe depends—the fallen angels, and impenitent men, are compelled to acknowledge, by their judicial subjection to the penalties of eternal justice; and redeemed sinners are also brought to acknowledge it, by being made to feel that they are utterly helpless, that they can do nothing to recover themselves from the guilt and misery in which they are involved; and that, if they are rescued from this condition, they owe their salvation solely to the unmerited, unaided, unsolicited mercy of the Lord. Hence it is, that they are so emphatically warned against “setting up their own righteousness,” and so imperatively required to “submit to the righteousness of God.” Seeing, then, that the grand design of the mediatorial dispensation is to teach this mighty lesson,—to uproot every remnant of creature-pride and self-sufficiency, and to establish for ever, the resisted but essential and indispensable sovereignty of Jehovah,—seeing that this is the case, we say that any system of opinions which tends to relax the rights of the Divine sovereignty, and which leaves man room to boast, (by making his salvation depend in any degree upon himself,) dashes against the very foundations of the remedial scheme, opposes the direct object which that scheme was intended to accomplish, and goes to protect and perpetuate the radical evils it was expressly designed to remove. Having thrown out this general principle, which applies to the whole subject, we now return to the regular course of our exposition.

Besides that which we have just been considering, there is another description of the gospel contained in the verse before us. It is designated "the faith once delivered to the saints."

In calling it "*the faith*," the apostle refers to the manner in which the truths of salvation must be regarded, in order to their being rightly and profitably received. They are revealed "from faith to faith"—from the faith of spiritual inspiration in the word, to the faith of spiritual apprehension in the heart. The gospel is essentially a matter of belief. It appeals neither to the understanding, the feelings, or any of the faculties of the "*natural man*;" because, if it did, its appeal would be entirely in vain; for we are assured, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of God; they are foolishness to him; neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The proposition here stated might appear somewhat startling, if it were not so directly supported by the passage we have cited, and by many other passages which might be quoted along with it; and, even as it is, we fear it may be misapprehended without a farther and a fuller explanation. It is admitted, by the best and soundest divines, that man in his natural state is unable to discern the spiritual realities of the inspired Word; that his reasoning faculties have been so perverted by the fall, that he can neither perceive the truth or realise the importance of divine things. Hence he is represented in Scripture as "having his understanding darkened," as being morally "blind" to the mysteries of salvation, and as requiring "spiritual enlightenment," before he can be brought to possess the power of spiritual discernment. The measure of understanding with which he is endowed may suffice to guide him in dealing with the things which are seen and temporal; but when he attempts to apply it to the proper objects of faith—to the things that are unseen and eternal—then, like the mariner's needle, when brought within a certain distance of the pole, it flies into confusion, and utterly loses its power. Nay, so far is the natural man from concurring in, or consenting to the mind of God, that his views and desires run directly counter to it; and accordingly we read, that the "wisdom of God is foolishness with man," and also that "the wisdom of man is foolishness with God." In losing the Divine image, man *lost every principle that he had in common with the Divine being*; and in imbibing the spirit of God's adversary, he imbibed all that was most opposed to the nature, and consequently to the word and

will of God. Hence it follows, that the unrenewed man is not in a condition to comprehend the gospel, which is called "the wisdom of God in a mystery;" and the question therefore arises, whether the gospel was designed to be comprehended by the unrenewed man as such?—whether it is adapted to his natural reason, and capable of being understood or embraced by him in his natural state? On this subject there is a great deal of loose and dangerous speculation at present abroad. It is alleged by some that the sinner is perfectly able to perceive the truth as it is revealed in the Word; that he has the power both of comprehending and believing it if he chooses, and that nothing hinders his reception of the gospel invitations, except his own unwillingness to close with them. According to this theory, *the will* is the only one of the human faculties which has been impaired and corrupted by the fall; all other powers, it is supposed, are still sufficiently clear and unperverted to discern the things of the Spirit of God, to approve of them, and, if the will would but consent, to appropriate them. In correspondence with this view, it is further affirmed, that no special operation of the Spirit is required to enable the sinner to believe; that nothing more is needed for this end, than that the mind should be plied with gospel motives—that the force of moral suasion should be brought to bear upon the obstinate and disaffected will, in order to remove its reluctance to embrace the truth, and to accept the offer of salvation. It is moreover contended, that the measure of spiritual influence which is either promised or imparted, in order to believing, is merely such as produces no change on the natural operations of the human mind—that there is only a certain extent of deficiency supplied—a farther degree of power in the same direction communicated—but no creative renewal, far less any positive reversal, effected in those laws which ordinarily regulate the moral constitution of man. This, we imagine, is a fair and distinct statement of the views to which we refer, and in answer to them we would observe:—

1st, That the parties by whom these opinions are maintained, will find it difficult to reconcile their theory with the declarations of Scripture as to the nature and extent of the fall. To some of these declarations we have already alluded, and, did our time permit, we could adduce many more to the same effect. We have shown you that man is born spiritually blind—that his wisdom is directly opposed to the wisdom of God—that, so far from receiving



the things of the spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, and that he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned—that his understanding is darkened, and that his mind and conscience are defiled. These expressions are sufficient to prove that his mental faculties have been polluted and perverted, as well as his moral feelings, that his understanding is as much under the influence of false views as his will is under the influence of corrupt affections, and that there is therefore no power belonging to him which has not been dislocated and disabled by the fall. We may safely leave it to every devout reader of the Bible, to say whether this be not the light in which this subject is uniformly represented there? and whether, with the Scriptures in their hands, they can really bring themselves to believe that man's powers have only been partially impaired, and not entirely or intrinsically corrupted? That they are *not* so corrupted, is the doctrine maintained by those of whose sentiments we have been speaking; or, at least, the doctrine necessarily involved in the views which are held by them on the point under discussion. But, to show the fallacy of their opinions still farther, we remark:—

2dly, That they will find it equally difficult to reconcile their theory, as to the amount of spiritual influence required in order to believing, either with the *nature of the Spirit's office*, or with the essential laws of the human mind. They say that no special operation of the Spirit is necessary to enable the sinner to believe; that this Divine Agent interferes, simply to the extent of giving greater effect to the influence of moral suasion; and that, in doing so, he never supersedes, or disturbs in any way, the natural workings of the natural mind. They affirm that the sinner himself—the man to whom the gospel is preached—is the party primarily moving in the matter, and that the Spirit is merely present to second his own efforts, and to follow in the line of his own spontaneous volitions. Now the Scriptures throughout represent the Spirit as the prime mover in the work of enlightening the mind in the knowledge of the truth. When he begins to operate, he finds the sinner dead. So far from coming in to aid a work already commenced, the actual fact is, that nothing is done, and that nothing can be done, until he visits and revives the soul; which, before his descent, lies dark and desolate, without a breath of life, polluted and strangled in the serpent coil of sin. As soon might the inanimate corpse rise up

from the bier, shake off the cerements in which it is bound, and begin to engage in the active business of the world, as the soul, by any effort of its own, awaken itself to the work of salvation. In accordance with this, we are told that the same "power which raised up the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead," is required to quicken the soul from its death in trespasses and sins. The scriptures uniformly assert, that the natural man, before he can move one step in the direction of God, needs the communication of a spiritual principle, the insertion of a new nature, the infusion of a Divine life. We need not remind you, that the terms in which the soul's return to God is spoken of all intimate that the process is set in motion by a power from above: hence it is called a conversion, a spiritual resurrection, a new creation. The very first act of the soul, when under this renovating influence—the act of faith—is said to be "the gift of God," and the exclusion of the sinner's own will or power in the matter is most clearly and systematically asserted, in that passage where it is said that believers "are born not of blood, nor of the *will of the flesh*, nor of the *will of man*, but of *God*." It is therefore manifest, from the whole strain of scripture in regard to this point, that it is not with man but with the Spirit of the Lord that the work of salvation really begins.

But we have said that the views which we are now combating are not only inconsistent with the Spirit's office, but also *with the essential laws of the human mind*. "That which is flesh is flesh." We cannot expect any thing *from* man but what is *in* man. No operation of the human faculties can produce any change upon the mind incompatible with its own nature; it can only bring forth what is in it; or, in other words, the mind can only move according to its essential character and tendencies. To suppose it possible for the soul to run counter to its own laws, views, and inclinations, is to suppose a manifest absurdity. It would be just as rational to say, that a stream can arrest its own current, roll back its waters, and remount to its source. To suppose it possible for the soul, not only to reverse its innate and inherent characteristics, but to work out for itself something that is altogether *new and foreign to its nature*, is an absurdity far greater still; and yet those who allege that man, in his natural state, and without one particle of spiritual life, can perform the admittedly spiritual act of believing, assert nothing less than this. "Who," saith the word of truth, "can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one!" But the

parties in question think otherwise; they maintain that this can be done; that not a saint, but even a sinner, can *work miracles*. What is declared to be impossible by God is yet supposed to be possible with man. We trust we need say nothing more to expose the glaring fallacy of these views, and that we may now, without farther reasoning, leave the conclusion with yourselves.

But you surely do not mean to maintain (we think we hear some one say) that man's natural reason has nothing at all to do with the contents of the Divine record? No; we do not mean to say that, for it *has* something to do with what may be called the literalities of that record, and particularly with the evidences on which its credibility rests. These evidences, or at least the class of them that he is capable of dealing with, are of an external and historical kind. They are, to use a learned phrase, "*circa sacra*," not "*in sacris*." They lie within that region of investigation to which the natural understanding has access, and where it is perfectly qualified to examine facts, and dates, and documents, and to come (if unbiassed by false principles or corrupt prejudices) to distinct and demonstrable conclusions. But, after the credentials have been examined, and the record has been found to be authentic; or, in other words, after the Divine origin of the Scriptures has been satisfactorily ascertained, we are to take their contents, not as matters for debate or discussion, but as a "faith," every dictum of which we are bound, with all reverence and submission, to receive. But then, some will say, there are many difficulties in Scripture which we ought, if possible, to solve, and for that purpose we must necessarily use our natural reason; we must apply the faculties which God has given us to these subjects; for if the Bible be the word of God, it can contain nothing that is contrary to reason. Nothing, certainly, that is contrary to *right* reason—to reason in the abstract; but there may be much, and in point of fact *there is* much, that is contrary to the clouded, distorted, short-sighted, reason of the natural man; and those things that he can understand least are the very things that he is disposed to dispute and dogmatise about most. The truths that are essential to salvation are, no doubt, very simple—so simple "that he who runneth may read them;" but even these, simple though they may be in their literal external import, are connected with the profoundest mysteries of revelation. The ultimate reasons on which they are based, and the collateral truths with which they

are combined, take hold of the "secret things which belong to the Lord our God;"—things which the natural man can never fathom, and which, so far as he sees them, he regards as nothing better than foolishness. And hence we are compelled to fall back on the proposition with which we started:—that the gospel, though addressed externally and provisionally to the natural man, is only addressed effectually and purposely to the renewed man, because the natural man cannot understand it; while it is only in the case of the renewed man, that it is "revealed from faith to faith."

## LECTURE III.

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### THE MARKS BY WHICH THE TRUE FAITH IS AUTHENTICATED, AND THE DUTY OF CONTENDING FOR IT.

HAVING in the preceding Lecture pointed out the general nature of the gospel system, as suggested by the terms which are employed to describe it; having shown why it is called the "*salvation*"—"*the common salvation*"—"*the faith*"—we now go on to consider the duty laid upon believers in regard to it. They are required "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." In these words there are three points presented for our consideration:—First—The precise nature of the faith of which the apostle speaks. Secondly—The manner and spirit in which we are to contend for it. Thirdly—The reasons which render this contending necessary.

I. With regard to the precise nature of that faith for which we are exhorted to contend, it is declared to be the faith "once delivered to the saints."

This statement identifies the true faith, by specifying the *channel* through which it was conveyed. It was delivered to "*the saints*,"—to persons whose sanctity was undoubted, and whose spiritual eminence afforded some guarantee for the truth and genuineness of the doctrines revealed by them. In accordance with this, we find the sacred writers invariably represented as men who were peculiarly distinguished for personal holiness. Hence it is said, that "*holy* men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" that "God spake by the mouth of his *holy* prophets;" and John, apostrophising the inspired writers of the Old and New Testaments together, exclaims, "Ye *holy* apostles and prophets." It is, however, at the same time true,

that God has been pleased, on more than one occasion, to make known his mind through the instrumentality of individuals who were far from being entitled to the appellation of saints. Balaam, for example, saw the visions of the Almighty—the spirit of prophecy descended upon him, and one of the earliest and most beautiful predictions respecting the Messiah came from the lips of that false and covetous reprobate. Others also are mentioned, such as Judas the traitor, and Caiaphas the conspirator, who, although wicked and ungodly men, were made use of for uttering the mind of the Spirit, in special cases. But it is to be remarked, that they were not permitted to record the sentiments they revealed: these were written down by the saints—the approved servants—the confidential Secretaries of Heaven; who, at the same time, took care to state what manner of persons those temporary prophesiers were, and the circumstances under which their services were employed. But, with peculiar exceptions, such as we have thus referred to, the will of God was declared through the medium of men whose sanctity was of so high and distinguished a character, that they were universally recognised not only as saints, but as “*the saints*,”—the parties who were principally and pre-eminently known by that sacred name.

2d. But the true faith is identified, farther, by the *manner* in which it was communicated. It was “*delivered* to the saints. It was not invented by themselves: they did not come to the knowledge of it by any reasonings or researches of their own, but, on the contrary, received it by revelation from above. We read that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God;” and, in reference to the Old Testament writings, we are told, that “God spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets;” whilst, in reference to the contents of the New, it is stated, that he who spake to the fathers by the prophets, “hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.” Through the Son, the completed system of Divine truth was communicated to the evangelists and apostles, who were commanded to proclaim by speech, and preserve in writing, what Christ had thus taught them, and what the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did further signify, regarding the mysteries of the kingdom. Agreeably to this, the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, that “he had received from the Lord that which he delivered to them;” and, reiterating the statement, he says on another occasion, “I delivered unto you that which I also received;” and, that no

doubt might exist in regard to this point, he declares that "the gospel which he preached was not after man;" "for," says he, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." It therefore constituted a specific mark and characteristic of the true faith, that it was not devised or invented by man, but was "delivered" by inspiration "to the saints."

3d. But this faith is identified, in the last place, by the circumstance of its being at that time *fully disclosed*. It was "*once* delivered to the saints." Of course we cannot understand the apostle to mean, that the various portions of divine truth were revealed *all at once*, or at the same point of time; for we are informed, on the contrary, that God spake "at sundry times" as well as "in divers manners;" and we know that the canon of Scripture was completed by degrees, and that it is composed of several parts, revealed at different intervals, during the course of many thousand years. Nor can we suppose the apostle to mean, that the whole matter of the sacred oracles had already been published, *once for all*; because he would then be excluding his own epistle, and the Apocalypse of St. John, from the record of inspiration. What the apostle evidently meant to convey was this:—that the gospel, *as a system*, was fully revealed previous to the appearance of the heretics of whom he was writing; that the faith, in all its essential principles, had, before that period, been delivered to the saints and servants of Christ; and that the new revelations, therefore, which these heretics pretended to have received, were not to be trusted, both because they were at variance with the truths already promulgated, and because these truths were so completely and perfectly disclosed, that no new revelations could either be expected or required.

If that then, and that alone, be the true faith which the apostle has thus minutely distinguished, it follows that they are chargeable with the guilt of corrupting the truth, who are found departing from it, or attempting in any respect to alter it. This was the sin of the seducers mentioned in the text; they sought to adulterate the gospel by new doctrines and inventions of their own, and the apostle protests against their views, on the ground that they were at variance with those which had been *previously* delivered to the saints. You will observe, that he refers to the faith as already divulged, and as forming a fixed and final standard of appeal. Look then at the apostle's argument in connection with the doctrine

held by those who contend for the authority of tradition. They affirm, that the Scriptures are not of themselves a sufficient rule of faith, but must be taken along with the traditions of the fathers. If this principle be right, Jude must have been wrong in declaring that the faith was *once* delivered to the saints; for, according to them, it continued to be delivered for centuries afterwards; and it was revealed to the fathers more fully than it was to the apostles themselves; at least it is assumed that the fathers understood it more clearly than the apostles have explained it. But if the true faith be that which was communicated to the saints *who lived before this epistle was written*, communicated by the *Spirit of inspiration*, and communicated *once*—not left to be supplanted or supplemented by subsequent revelations—if this be (as the passage before us expressly asserts) the pure, undoubted, unadulterated gospel, then must the traditional tenets both of the Papists and of the Puseyites fall to the ground, as being nothing better than the fond and fabulous inventions of men “who err, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God.”

Such being the precise nature of the faith to which the apostle refers, we now proceed to consider—

II. The manner and spirit in which we are to contend for it. Jude exhorts us “to contend earnestly.” The word here rendered “earnestly” is much more forcible in the original than it is in our translation. It there means to maintain a hard struggle, to strive vehemently, to put forth all our strength in the contest; and the exhortation therefore implies—

1st. *That we are to regard the purity of the faith as a matter of the last importance.* Such is the close and intimate relation subsisting between the various parts of the Christian system, that error admitted at any point is sure to spread its baneful influence over the whole. Like the spiritual body, which it is designed to nourish, if one member suffers all the other members suffer along with it; or like the human body, from which the figure is taken, a wound in any part of it, yea, even in the remotest extremities, is sufficient to disturb and distemper the entire frame. Even so, a false incongruous principle, if once it creeps into our creed, “eateth as doth a canker,” until it works its way at last into the heart of the system, and pollutes the very vitals of the faith. We have only to examine into the history of religious controversies to see that the most destructive heresies by which the Church



has been rent asunder, have originally sprung from very small beginnings. Some one point is wrongly apprehended—a point slight perhaps in itself, and apparently immaterial. The inconsistency of that point with other parts of the gospel system soon comes to be felt. Honest inquirers after truth stop short at this stage; reconsider the matter; detect the fallacy in which they are involved; and the progress of error in their case is arrested, and the evil eradicated at the very outset. Those, however, who are under the influence of a self-sufficient and dogmatical spirit, act in a different way; they persuade themselves that the wrong view which they have taken up is right, and often for no better reason than because it is *their* view. Their self-love becomes enlisted on its side, and they begin to look at it in the light of a neglected truth, or they regard it, perhaps, as a new and important discovery. Resolved, with conceited and mischievous pertinacity, to adhere to it, they endeavour to bring it into harmony with the other articles of their creed; and when they find that it does not accord with the established doctrines of the faith, *instead of settling the particular point by the general system*, they proceed to *settle the general system by the particular point*: and the consequence is, that an error, which at first appeared but trifling, is made to pervade and to pervert the entire structure of Divine truth. It is in this way that false creeds are fabricated, and heretical sects formed. Hence the importance of preserving the purity of the faith at *every* point, and of contending earnestly against the admission of erroneous views to any extent, however small; for if once we depart in the slightest degree from the true gospel, we shall soon be “removed into another gospel,” which will not be the gospel of Jesus Christ, but a system founded on individual dogmatism, party agitation, and sectarian corruption.

2d. But the language before us implies, farther, that *we are bound to use direct and decisive measures for maintaining the truth, and checking the progress of error*. Earnest contention is something different from simple toleration. It supposes that we are not merely alive to the duty of preserving the gospel pure and entire, but that we are prepared to defend it,—to struggle for it, whenever we find it assailed. It is not enough that we profess the faith purely ourselves, nor is it enough that we feel concerned when attempts are made to corrupt it on the part of others; but we must resist such attempts, and protest against such corruptions.

We must oppose false doctrine openly and resolutely. Even at the risk of breaking the peace of the church, we must go forth and proclaim war against it; determined, by all lawful and scriptural means—by persuasion, by argument, by remonstrance, and, if necessary, by spiritual pains and penalties—to stay its further progress, and to purge it out of the church. We are, however, well aware that the opinion commonly entertained on this subject is widely different from that taught in the text. It is generally admitted, indeed, that we may deal in this decided way with such heresies as may arise in those religious communities with which we are immediately connected. It is not denied that individual churches may call their own office-bearers and members to account, if they are found professing or propagating doctrines at variance with those contained in the standards of these churches;—although, even in that case, the cry of persecution is apt to be raised by that portion of the public who care for none of these things, and who act as if breaches of faith and duty, in regard to the concerns of religion, were the only forms of inconsistency and apostacy that are really excusable. If a man deserts his political creed, and forsakes his political party, the ban-dogs of faction are instantly let loose upon him; his conduct is represented as every thing that is vile, deceitful, and dishonourable; and, strange to say, the parties most vehement in their vituperations, in such a case, are the very parties that step in to protect the religious apostate, and to denounce as bigots and persecutors all who dare to find fault with him, or to take any measures against him. This is strange, but not unaccountable; for these one-sided, left-handed, wrong-headed babblers believe that there is something in politics, while they do *not* believe that there is any thing in religion. They will contend for their political faith, because a political faith of some kind or another they have; but for their religious faith they will contend none—and for this simple reason, that they have none to contend for. But while, in opposition to this extreme class, it is admitted by the great majority that individual churches are entitled to exercise some control over the doctrinal sentiments of their own members, it is, at the same time, held, that we have no right to interfere with the religious sentiments of other bodies. It is maintained that our efforts to preserve the purity of the faith must be strictly confined within the limits of the particular denomination to which we belong, and whatever goes

beyond this is reprobated as an unwarrantable intermeddling with the religion of our neighbours. Is Christ then divided? Is the faith delivered to the saints but the version of a sect? Is the common salvation so partitioned and parcelled out between different parties, as to forbid our following its interests beyond the pale of our own particular communion? The absurdity of such an idea must surely be evident to all! The error of those who entertain it arises from their looking at religion as it exists in the world, not as it exists in the Scriptures. They view it in its external and political aspects, not in its own intrinsic character, as a revelation from heaven, in which all believers are equally concerned, and for which they are all alike bound to contend, without reference to party distinctions, whether civil or sectarian. The Christianity that is proscribed in Italy, or persecuted in the South Sea Islands, is as much entitled to our protection and preservation as that which is Romanised in England, disestablished in Scotland, or trodden under foot by priestly demagogues in Ireland. The contest for the faith is confined to no party and no country;—"the field is the world."

III. We now come to consider, in the last place, the reasons which render this contending for the faith necessary. It is necessary—

1st, Because men are by nature hostile to the truth, and therefore disposed to pervert it. We have already shown that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God—that, in consequence of the fall, he is not only incapable of comprehending the gospel aright, but that he is at heart totally averse to it. His views and feelings run in a direction diametrically opposed to the revelations and requirements of the Divine word; and hence the Apostle Paul, speaking of unregenerate men, declares that they "cannot endure sound doctrine." Like the Jews of old, they prefer what is soothing to what is sound—what is agreeable to what is profitable, and they are equally inclined with them to say to the servants of Christ, "Speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits." It is true that the gospel may be set forth in such a manner as to gain for it the acceptance of the world; and it is also a strange fact, that what is called evangelical religion may sometimes be found in high favour with the multitude, inso-much that one would almost be led to suppose that the enmity of the natural heart to the truth, as it is in Jesus, was wearing fast

away, and the "offence of the cross" entirely disappearing. But a little inquiry will soon enable us to see that such appearances are not to be trusted.

There is a fashion in religion as in other things, and even the doctrines of evangelical truth may for a time be brought into vogue: but when the majority in any case follow a fashion, they follow it simply as a form. They neither inquire into the reasons on which it is founded, nor look at the results to which it may lead. They allow themselves to be carried down with the stream, satisfied because they are in the midst of the crowd; and hence, when evangelical religion is supported by the mass, we must not conclude that they love it as much as they laud it. On the contrary, they laud it just because they care so little about it, that they have never brought it in contact with their minds, or tested its real qualities. They keep it at a distance from them, and admire it as a kind of dim and devout abstraction; whereas, if they applied their thoughts directly and practically to the subject, they would find it less palatable than they imagine it to be. What Paul said of himself is true of every unrenewed man—"I was alive without the law once; but when the *commandment came*, sin revived, and I died." They are alive without the gospel, or because the gospel has not come with clearness and force to bear upon them. Were it only to do so, their affected regard to it would cease, and their lurking hatred to it would start up and manifest itself. Whenever men follow their natural inclinations, they are sure to distort the truth, and to make use of the materials it presents for fabricating refuges of lies. They construe the doctrines of the faith in a sense favourable to their own corrupt prejudices and desires; building up systems of error accommodated to the false views and evil dispositions of their nature. Seeing, therefore, that there is in the heart of man a natural tendency to corrupt the truth of God, it is needful that believers should be exhorted to contend earnestly for the purity of the gospel. It is necessary—

2dly, Because the glory of God is peculiarly connected with the preservation of his truth. "He hath magnified his word above all his name." Through the gospel it is that he has given the clearest and the fullest revelation of his perfections and his purposes. It is, in a far higher sense than the sea or the sky, "the glorious mirror where the Almighty's form glasses itself;" and if the mirror is

darkened, the image is distorted, and the true likeness is lost. Were the writings of any great human author to be vitiated and corrupted—were his sentiments to be twisted from their proper meaning, and principles ascribed to him, not only false in themselves, but utterly opposed to his real views and intentions—his character would suffer, and his name and credit would be proportionably injured. And if it be unjust and unfair to injure the reputation of a fellow-creature by such means as these, it would be impious and disastrous in the highest degree to be guilty of such conduct in reference to God. “No man hath seen Him at any time. The Son, who came from his bosom, he hath revealed him;” and he hath done so not by any specific description of his nature or attributes, but by the practical operation of these, as displayed in the truths which he has communicated, and in the designs which he is carrying on. It is in the gospel that the real character of the Divine mind is reflected; and should the gospel therefore come to be corrupted—should the revelation it contains of the plans and purposes of Jehovah be misrepresented or misunderstood—a false impression is necessarily given of him; his wisdom is brought under reproach; and the world is betrayed not only into error, but into the most serious and destructive of all moral evils—into idolatry and infidelity. Nor is this a mere fanciful representation of the consequences arising from false views of Divine truth; for the result stated has often been practically realised in the experience of mankind. Look at the continent of Europe—at France, Spain, Portugal, Italy—and there you will see the effect of a corrupt system of Christianity in producing infidelity. Being acquainted with no other form of gospel truth than that which is exhibited by the Romish Church, the great mass of the intelligent population of these countries reject the gospel altogether, on account of the errors and absurdities with which they find it defaced. Not knowing the Scriptures, they take it for granted that the doctrines held forth by the Popish Church are those contained in the Divine word; and they have therefore come to the conclusion that Christianity is a fiction—that the faith once delivered to the saints is nothing else than “a cunningly devised fable.” Such is the fruit that may spring from a vitiated and adulterated gospel! This contending is necessary—

3dly, Because the uncorrupted truth is essential to the salvation of man. It is through the instrumentality of the truth that

sinners are converted to God, and that saints are edified and built up in the faith. And, accordingly, Paul says of believers, that they are called to salvation "by the gospel." Peter also declares, that they are born by "the incorruptible seed of the word, which liveth and abideth for ever;" and our Lord, in his intercessory prayer for his disciples, says, "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." We have, therefore, every reason to believe, that the revealed word of God is precisely adapted to the exigencies of man's spiritual condition; so precisely, that if it be perverted or misapplied, its power to benefit the soul is proportionably impaired. In applying the redemption purchased by Christ, the Spirit uses and honours his own truth; and we must necessarily use it in that sense, and that alone, in which He meant it to be understood: and although we may not limit the mercy of the Holy One of Israel, so far as to maintain, that none are ever brought into a state of salvation except those who are enabled to apprehend the gospel clearly and completely; yet we are fully warranted in saying, that, wherever the gospel is misconceived, the progress of vital religion is there hindered to an extent exactly proportionate to the amount of error and misconception which prevails. Where the gospel is *altogether unknown*, practical ungodliness reigns universally; nature remains unchecked and unchanged. Where the gospel is *radically corrupted*, there is but little improvement upon this state of things. In such cases, the rites of religion are generally substituted in place of its realities. There being nothing substantial for the soul, the lack is attempted to be made up by providing ceremonies for the senses. Where there is *some portion of vital truth* taught and maintained, the standard of practical Christianity is found to be raised; although, from the errors still intermixed with the truth, the regenerative power of the gospel is marred, so that it works with a muffled and mitigated force. But where the gospel is held forth *purely and scripturally*—where it is brought fully and faithfully to bear upon the souls of men—there piety, and righteousness, and peace, are seen to pervade the hearts and the habits of the population. We have only to cast our eye over the map of Christendom to be convinced of the truth of these observations, and to find ample proof of the fact, that the pure and unadulterated gospel is alone capable of producing those enlightening and purifying effects which Christianity was designed to accomplish in the Church and in the world; that

in the degree in which the gospel is corrupted, in that very degree is the temporal and spiritual improvement of men hindered, and that we are therefore acting in the spirit of the highest and the holiest charity when we step forth to vindicate the truth of God from the perversions of heretical seducers, and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." But the duty here enjoined is necessary—

4th. In the last place, Because we are bound in this matter to follow the example of our Lord and his Apostles. It is a fact well worthy of our notice, that there is no kind of offence more frequently or emphatically denounced by Christ and his followers, than that of vitiating and perverting the oracles of truth. Notwithstanding the meekness and gentleness by which the Saviour was distinguished—notwithstanding the patient and compassionate tenderness which he manifested towards even the worst class of practical transgressors—tenderness which led his enemies to stigmatise him as "the friend of publicans and sinners"—yet it is very observable how warmly and indignantly he inveighed against those who presumed to adulterate the truth, and to tamper with the records of inspiration. We may with confidence affirm, that there was no class of men, and no species of sin, that met with such unwonted and unsparing severity at his hands. While his language to all others was, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—while he had compassion upon the multitude when he saw them kept in ignorance, and wandering as sheep without a shepherd, he never referred to their false teachers without heaping upon them the heaviest denunciations of wrath: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" was his almost invariable mode of addressing them; and on one occasion we find him speaking to them in these sharp and tremendous terms,—“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?” The Apostles appear to have followed closely the example of their Master, in launching their most withering rebukes against the teachers of error. Think, for example, of the language which Peter used towards Simon Magus, who "deceived the people" by his sorceries:—"Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." Mark also the style in which Paul speaks to another deceiver of the same

description, when, looking him in the face, he said, "O! full of all subtilty, and all mischief! thou child of the devil! thou enemy of all righteousness! Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" And, on another occasion, when he discovered that the Galatians had been so far removed from their stedfastness as to permit certain false teachers to propagate opinions at variance with the gospel which he preached amongst them, he alludes to the matter in these stern and decisive terms:—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;" and, lest this vehement anathema should not make its full impression upon them, he, like a man awfully in earnest, immediately thunders it forth a second time—"As I said before, so say I now again, though we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." But without citing other passages, we would simply quote the words of Jude immediately before us, where he speaks of the false teachers, to whom he refers as "certain men who had crept in unawares, ungodly men, who had turned the grace of God into lasciviousness." Nor need we wonder at these denunciations, when we reflect that, the gospel being the only means of salvation, the man who is instrumental in corrupting it is doing his utmost to decoy souls to destruction; and is therefore guilty of the deepest and deadliest crime that a human being can commit. He who takes away the life of another is by the law adjudged to death; and though God has reserved to himself the right of finally vindicating his own cause, yet surely the man who labours to ruin his fellow-creatures eternally, merits the direst woes that can be heaped upon his head. In order then to counteract the cruel and mischievous conduct of these worst enemies of mankind, let us not be afraid to confront them, and to expose their false and fatal principles, that we may thus fulfil the duty commanded in the text of "contending *earnestly* for the faith once delivered to the saints."



## LECTURE IV.

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### THE CHARACTER OF THE HERETICS DENOUNCED IN THIS EPISTLE.

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#### NAMELESS MEN—DECEIVERS—REPROBATES.

THE Apostle, after calling upon his fellow-believers to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, proceeds to show why "it was needful for him to write unto them, and exhort them," as he does. It appears that it was not without cause that he was led to sound the alarm, and to summon the members of the church to the defence of the common salvation. "For," says he, "there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this verse the sacred writer describes, in the first place, the character of the heretics who were engaged in corrupting the faith; and he sets forth, in the second place, the nature of the heresies maintained by them.

I. The manner in which he speaks of the heretics themselves is worthy of particular notice. He does not mention their names, nor does he point them out by any party designation, but simply alludes to them as "*certain men*." Considering the mischievous notoriety which they had obtained, there can be little doubt that Jude was as thoroughly acquainted with their names and personal circumstances, as we find he was with their doings and their doctrines. He must therefore have had special reasons of his own for not referring to them more explicitly; and it may not be

unprofitable to inquire what these reasons could be. He might have been induced to advert to them in this vague and indistinct manner—

1st. With the view of avoiding those irritating personalities by which religious controversies are so apt to be characterised. It is, in general cases, of much importance to distinguish between “men and measures;” or, in other words, to investigate opinions apart from the individuals by whom they are maintained. If it be our object to elicit truth, and to convince gainsayers of their errors, we must be careful to observe this distinction; for the moment we begin to introduce matters that are merely personal, we not only depart from the abstract merits of the questions at issue, but we draw in elements calculated to disturb our own judgments, and to awaken the hostile feelings and prejudices of those whom we wish to undeceive. To *abuse* is evidently not the way to *disabuse*. So long as we keep within the limits of purely intellectual discussion, we plead at the bar of Truth, where Conscience presides, and calm Order prevails; and Reason is left free to bring forward her arguments fully, and to lay them out with clear and dispassionate accuracy. In such a case, the only emotions that are excited are the moral emotions, which, so far from confusing the understanding, rather help to purify it, and to render it more accessible to the claims of truth. But when we descend from the region of abstract investigation to that of personality and passion, we leave the mount of vision for the valley of mists; we shift the arena from the higher to the lower powers of our nature; we carry our appeal from the soul to the senses—from the man to the brute! And when, especially in religious controversy, the malign emotions of the human heart are aroused, it is found that they rage with a double violence; for, on the one side, conscience and reason, and all the nobler faculties of the soul, are pressed into the service of passion, “giving their power to the beast;” while, on the other, the latent enmity of the heart against divine things is superadded to the heats of personal contention. Hence it has often been remarked, that there is no odium so bitter as the “odium theologicum;”—no conflicts so fierce as those connected with religion; and the reason is, that the best powers of man are, on such occasions, converted into weapons of strife, and the combatants are actually, though it may be unconsciously, violating both tables of the law. They are fighting at

the same moment against God and man. It is therefore of the greatest consequence, that, in contending for the truth, we cautiously eschew all unnecessary, and, particularly, all offensive personalities; because they only tend to breed unseemly discords, and to defeat the very object that we wish to promote.

It would be erroneous, however, to say that there are no cases in which individuals or parties may be specially alluded to; for we find many such cases recorded in Scripture. We find, for example, in the Old Testament, that false prophets were, on several occasions, expressly and personally denounced. We also observe in the New Testament, that our Lord directed his rebukes against the Scribes and Pharisees in the most pointed and public manner; and that his Apostles, in a variety of places, specify the names of particular heretics by whom they and their doctrines were opposed. But if we mark these cases, we will perceive that the heretics thus singled out were wilful and hypocritical perverters of the truth. Their errors sprang not so much from the head as from the heart. There was consequently no use in attempting to convince them; for, "loving the darkness rather than the light," they neither wished nor required to be convinced; and, accordingly, the only way in which it was possible to deal with them was by direct reproof and open condemnation. But wherever erroneous opinions are *sincerely* entertained—wherever they exist as the result of ignorance and misapprehension—there argument and persuasion are to be used, and personality and passion to be avoided; otherwise we shall only confirm the heretics in their errors, and poison their minds against the truth. It was probably for this reason that Jude, instead of naming the seducers to whom he refers, merely notices them as "certain men." Or he might have alluded to them in this general and distant manner—

2d. With the view of marking the holy disdain with which he regarded them; as if he considered them unworthy of being more particularly mentioned. The Psalmist declares it to be one of the characteristics of a righteous man, that "in his eyes a vile person is *contemned*, but that he honoureth them that fear the Lord." It may perhaps be a question with some, whether such a feeling as that of disdain can be warrantably cherished in any sense, or under any circumstances; and it is certainly a question that at least merits some consideration. As to the general principle which regulates the point, we need scarcely state that

the Divine Law requires us "to love our neighbours as ourselves;" and the common saying, which declares that we are bound to love our fellow-creatures "not as saints but as sinners," is one that admits not of doubt; but it is at the same time to be borne in mind, that the love which we are commanded to cherish towards saints and sinners is not, and cannot be, of the same kind. The former are to be regarded by us with the love of complacency, or moral esteem; not so the latter; for to require us to entertain this species of affection towards them, would be to compel us to renounce our judgment altogether, and to confound the distinctions of right and wrong. To look with entire satisfaction on those who are living in open rebellion against God, and who are characterised by such qualities as are most repugnant to a sin-hating and renewed soul, would be in the nature of things impossible. We can only regard the wicked as God himself regards them—that is, with the love of pity; and we find that this affection is not inconsistent with those feelings of disapprobation and displeasure which their spirit and conduct are naturally fitted to produce. He who is the fountain of charity and grace, is represented as being "angry with the wicked every day," as having "no pleasure in them," as "abhorring their works," and as "despising their image;" and if it be said that these emotions, as existing in the Divine mind, are of a moral and judicial, not of a vindictive or malignant nature, we reply that it is precisely in the same form they must exist in our minds. When they partake of the character of passion, and are accompanied by a disposition to injure, then it is that they are evil and sinful.

The distinction commonly made on this subject between the offender and the offence, is one that appears to us very questionable. It is said that "we may hate the sin but not the sinner." Now what is sin apart from the moral agent who commits it? If it were an active, intelligent, responsible thing, there might be some reason for speaking of it in this way; but seeing it is not, to hate it by itself is just like beating the stone by which the child has been hurt. It may, doubtless, by a reflex act of the mind, be the object of abstract hatred and abhorrence; but it is the circumstance of its being the act of a rational and accountable agent that gives it its guilty and offensive character. It is, in point of fact, impossible so to separate the sin from the sinner as to confine our hatred altogether to the former, without allowing any part of it to fall upon the latter; and, even were it possible, we conceive that the

distinction would be sophistical and absurd. Indeed, we question very much whether it be lawful to cherish hatred, in the evil meaning of hatred, against either the one or the other; because we think that a disposition of so dark and malignant a nature is not allowed to be entertained in the bosom at all. Hence we doubt whether we may hate the devil himself, (who is the very personification of sin,) in this violent and vindictive sense; for such a feeling is in its own essence wrong and sinful, whatever be the object to which it refers. And, accordingly, we believe that we may hate the sinner in the same manner in which we hate the sin; with this difference, however, that while we cannot love the sin in any shape, we may love the sinner *as a man*, at the same time that we utterly disapprove of him, despise him, and even abhor him in his character *as a transgressor*. In the former sense we are bound to love him as our brother, in the latter we are bound to hate him as the enemy of God and of all good. This view of the subject is not only more in accordance with reason and with common sense, than that which is involved in the maxim commented on, but is also more consistent with the general strain of Scripture in regard to the question before us.

Besides the statements already adduced, we there find great and notorious transgressors spoken of in language of the most unmeasured censure, detestation, and disdain; and, with reference to this latter feeling, we meet with multitudes of passages in which it is applied to persons of this description. In the second Psalm, for example, the great Jehovah himself is represented as looking, with high disdain, on those princes and rulers of the earth who were combining their strength against him:—"He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh, the Lord will have them in derision." And as to the particular class of sinners to whom the Apostle alludes, we might point to a variety of places in which they are set forth as objects of derision and contempt. We need only remind you of the case of Elijah "mocking" the priests of Baal, and saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." You will also recollect the manner in which Job treated his erroneous and self-sufficient comforters, when he turned upon them with the ironical taunt, "Ye are the men, and wisdom will die with you!" It is also supposed that the language which our Lord used towards the Pharisees, when he

declared "that he came not to call the *righteous* but sinners to repentance," was intended to express a similar feeling. At all events, there is abundant evidence to show that such a spirit, when cherished in the sense we have explained, may be warrantably entertained; and it is therefore possible that it may have been for a reason of this kind, that Jude spoke of the heretics in question as "certain men." But he may have abstained from naming them, or taking more particular notice of them—

Lastly, For the purpose of not adding to the notoriety which they very probably courted. We have seen it somewhere remarked of heretics, that they are generally characterised by an inordinate degree of vanity and self-conceit; and no one, in the least acquainted with the personal history of those who have signalled themselves as broachers of false doctrines, can fail to be struck with the truth of the remark. There are, so far as we know, but two causes by which the conduct of heretics—that is, of persons who dissent from the commonly-received truths of the gospel—can be accounted for: either there must be something *peculiar in their mental conformation*, causing them to look at objects in a different light from that in which they appear to others:—or, they must adopt opinions at variance with the prevailing belief, in consequence of *some predominating evil influence* being at work upon their hearts. If we inquire into the matter, we shall be at no loss to perceive that a considerable number of the most noted teachers of error have been under the influence of the first of these causes. It will be observed, that they have been persons of rare and uncommon character; different, in many respects, from the most of their neighbours, and distinguished by singularities and eccentricities in relation to all other subjects as well as that of religion. Their strange cast of mind has been, in some cases, so marked, that it has appeared in their looks, in their language, in their personal habits, and even in their dress. These curious traits are commonly ascribed to the absorbing enthusiasm by which such individuals are almost invariably marked; but the enthusiasm which is called forth by error, and accompanied by so many odd peculiarities, is itself to be traced to a deeper source—and that is, to an understanding defectively constituted, and radically unsound. It is equally painful and pitiful to think, that the church has often been convulsed by heresies which ought to have been propounded in Bedlam; and that men have been followed by

admiring crowds, who should, in mercy to themselves, and to the multitudes affected in the same way, (and therefore capable of being excited by them,) have been locked up in a lunatic asylum. Eccentricity is in all cases a sign of partial insanity, inasmuch as it indicates a departure from the qualities of the common mind; and wherever there is such an aberration from the general standard, the intellect must be distorted and diseased. No one, in the least acquainted with the character and habits of heretical teachers, can have failed to observe that a large proportion of them have been persons of this incongruous description—men who have been led to adopt false opinions, from the fact of their being naturally predisposed to view objects in a different light from the mass of their fellow-men.

But those otherwise sound in their minds, who are unsound in their opinions, are generally actuated by the other cause we have mentioned—that is, if their errors do not arise from ignorance. It is indeed not only possible, but unhappily too common, to find men involved in error in consequence of the moral and intellectual disadvantages under which they labour. But where such disadvantages do not exist—where the preachers or abettors of false doctrine have opportunities of studying and capacities for comprehending (so far as man *can* comprehend,) the principles of the faith—there is every reason to fear that they are under the influence of some selfish passion which leads them to prefer error to truth. We do not say that they are always conscious of the mental processes or of the moral prepossessions by which they are drawn aside from the faith; but we do believe that they cannot but be aware of a disposition to differ from the rest of their neighbours; and it will be found that this disposition generally proceeds from a spirit of presumption and self-conceit. They persuade themselves that they are wiser and can see farther than others; and hence they are led to question and to cavil at the sentiments that are entertained by the mass. Not contented to follow in the ordinary track, they conceive that their superior sagacity entitles them to shape out a course for themselves, and the consequence is that they soon force their way into some of the many devious paths by which a vagrant fancy misleads the votaries of error. Under the impression that they have lighted on new views and extraordinary discoveries, it very generally happens that they fall in love with some antiquated heresy, which had for a time retired from public notice, but which

now returns with a new face, and a new name, to court the attention of the world. It is, however, by no means surprising that they should be imposed upon, or rather that they should impose upon themselves in this way; for we believe that there is not a single path by which giddy vanity or pompous folly can be decoyed in chase of false doctrine, that has not already been tried and trodden. The various points of divergence from the truth are limited, and may be easily traced; and he who is acquainted with the workings of the human mind, in connection with religious inquiries, will be able to point out, as on a map, the precise lines at which the explorers of error have turned off from the right track, and the peculiar mental and moral influences by which they have been led to pursue the separate courses they have severally followed. But the great—indeed, the almost universal source of heresy, is *vanity*. The idea that we are possessed of clearer perceptions than others, is involved in the very fact of our dissenting from their opinions; and hence it very rarely happens that an avowed heretic returns to the faith he has deserted. He may abandon his first errors, but he will rather reel on from one false system to another, or abjure religion entirely, than come back to the principles he originally professed. The pride which prompted him to revolt will not permit him to return; and, besides this, the circumstance of his allowing his mind to be vitiated with error, unfits him for perceiving or relishing the truth; and thus, by a process of moral perversion as well as by the just judgment of God—"because he has no pleasure in the truth"—he is given up to strong delusion to believe a lie." It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the same spirit of vanity and self-conceit that leads them to suppose themselves superior to the general mass of their fellow-men, leads them also to seek publicity and notoriety. Their grand ambition is to make proselytes, and form a party that may acknowledge their leadership and call them "master." Hence they are unwearied in their efforts to catch the public eye, and to attract attention to themselves and to their doctrines. They will compass sea and land for this purpose. They will lavish their means, and task their strength, and submit to any species of hardship and self-denial, provided only they can succeed in making a noise and securing a name. They rejoice in opposition—they glory in persecution—they esteem it a favour and an honour to be reprobated and denounced; because such treatment keeps them before the public, and serves to make their persons and opinions



more extensively known. To take, however, too much notice of them—in the way, at least, of giving publicity to their names or to their party peculiarities—is just to meet their wishes and to promote their designs; and it was very likely, in order to avoid this, that the Apostle abstained from speaking more distinctly regarding the heretics in the text, and contented himself with referring to them in remote and general terms, “as certain men who had crept in unawares.”

This brings us to notice the second general feature by which these heretics were marked. The Apostle says, that “*they crept in unawares;*”—a statement which may be understood in two ways. It may mean either that the parties in question assumed the office of spiritual teachers, without the knowledge or consent of the brethren; or that they contrived, by false professions, to induce the rulers of the church to admit them to that office.

With regard to the first of these suppositions, we learn that “false prophets” or unauthorised teachers infested the Church from the earliest ages. In the Old Testament we meet with frequent references to such characters; and it would appear that there was no period at which they were so rife as in the days of the Apostles. Notwithstanding the persecution to which the gospel was exposed, yet such was the attention it attracted, and the effect it produced, that designing and ambitious men were found, who were willing to submit to public hardships and sacrifices for the sake of the secret gains, or the party influence, or the personal notoriety connected with their becoming members, and especially office-bearers, of the church. Those who professed to embrace the faith of Christ for these private ends, and who were at the same time conscious of their unfitness to pass through the regular “trials” to which candidates for the ministry were subjected;—such persons endeavoured to effect their purpose by “creeping in unawares.” They entered into the ministerial office—or, in other words, they set up for Christian preachers—without call or commission of any kind. It is very probable that individuals of this character would affect to disregard the spiritual authority of the brethren in such a matter; and insist that they were as well qualified and as much entitled to preach the gospel as the Apostles themselves, who (as they would no doubt take care to insinuate) were originally but fishermen of Galilee—unlettered and uneducated men. However this may be, the fact is certain, that “lay preachers” of this de-

scription abounded in the primitive church, and that they were the means of doing great mischief. Nor could it well be otherwise; for what could be expected from men actuated by such a spirit, and who had crept into the church in such a way, but "confusion and every evil work."

The most probable supposition, however, is, that the Apostle refers to those who had obtained admission into the church by hypocrisy and deception; and who, after creeping into the confidence of the faithful, made use of the opportunities thus acquired for gradually spreading their heretical opinions, and secretly undermining and corrupting the truth. This appears, from the parallel passage in Peter, to be the real meaning of the words; for he speaks not of their coming in privily themselves, but of their "bringing in their heresies privily." To prevent the entrance of unsound and unworthy teachers, the church adopted a double precaution:—

1st. It was necessary, in the first place, that persons seeking admission to the ministry should be examined by the *office-bearers of the church*; and, in the event of their being satisfied as to their Christian character and official qualifications, they were solemnly set apart to the work by prayer and the imposition of hands. From several references to this point that we meet with in the apostolical Epistles, it is evident that this duty was fulfilled with the utmost caution and deliberation. The parties to whom the power of ordination was committed, regarded it as a matter that involved the deepest responsibility; and, lest they should "become partakers of other men's sins," they were enjoined to proceed with great circumspection, and to "lay hands suddenly on no man." The statement of Paul, which we are now quoting, clearly implies that if they, through remissness, allowed improper men to enter into the office of the ministry, they were held accountable for whatever mischief might be done by them, either in their doctrines or in their deeds. This single fact is sufficient to show the careful nature of the scrutiny to which candidates for this office must have been subjected by the rulers of the church.

2d. But this was not enough; for, besides the precautions adopted by the office-bearers, the people, or *members of the church*, were also required to test the qualifications of those who came to them in the capacity of spiritual teachers. The licensing or ordaining "brethren" might have been deceived. Hypocrites, by artful

pretensions, might creep stealthily through their hands; or individuals, whose views were sound at the period when they were examined by them, might have subsequently fallen into heresies or immoralities which they had no means of ascertaining; and, in order that a thorough check might be provided against the spread of error and of evil, the *whole church* (members as well as ministers) was made responsible in this matter; so that the heretics who had eluded the vigilance of the pastors might be detected by the faithfulness of the people. Hence the general body of believers were strictly cautioned to beware of false teachers. *The duty* of examining into the principles of those who presented themselves in the character of spiritual instructors, was expressly laid upon them. (See 1 John iv. 1.) *The test* by which they were to try them was distinctly specified. (See Matthew vii. 15.) *The ability* to apply that test properly was declared to be possessed by them. (See John x. 3-5; 1 John ii. 20.) And *the reason* why they were required to try the spirits was placed clearly before them. (See Mark iv. 24.) In farther illustration of this point, we find that our Lord himself submitted to have his qualifications tested by the word—"Search the Scriptures, (he says) for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me:" and the great Apostle of the Gentiles appealed to the people as competent judges of the truth of his statements—"I speak as unto wise men: judge ye:" and he commended the Bereans highly for being so serious and conscientious as not to take even his declarations upon trust, but "searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." He says that they were "more noble"—that is, more lofty in their character—more spiritually independent—than the Christians of Thessalonica, because they acted in this free and faithful manner.

This subject has been of late so searchingly discussed amongst us, and the consequences to which the discussion of it has led are so marked and memorable, that we deem it enough to indicate the grounds on which the duty of the Christian people rests, instead of entering at length into the exposition of a question with which persons of all parties may be presumed to be thoroughly acquainted. We would merely observe, by way of inference from the point at issue, that the only way in which the errors of those who creep in unawares can be discovered and checked, is by the members of the church possessing and exercising the right of examination to

which reference has been made. The pastors of the church have it not in their power to see whether those whom they have ordained to preach the word continue sound in the faith. They cannot follow them whithersoever they go; but wherever, within the bounds of the church, they may present themselves in the capacity of public teachers, there they are surrounded by the Christian disciples who assemble to hear them; and, if these disciples are faithful to the truth, they will be enabled to ascertain whether such teachers keep by the "form of sound words" or not; and, by this means, those who have either "crept in unawares," by deceiving the brethren, or who have "privily brought in heresies," with which they are attempting to deceive the people, may be detected, denounced, and cast out of the church.

The last feature by which these heretics is distinguished, is, they "*were of old ordained to this condemnation.*" What condemnation? Is it the condemnation of corrupting the truth—of becoming the corrupters and seducers of the church? Were they actually ordained to do evil, and to do it in this particular way? These, it is admitted, are difficult questions to answer; but still it is right that some answer should, if possible, be given to them, for there can be no doubt that the plain meaning of the text places them directly before us. We are aware that certain even of the most approved commentators attempt to get out of the difficulty by putting a different construction on the passage from that which it naturally suggests. This, to say the least, is far from being a safe mode of dealing with divine truth, although we do not suppose it is adopted with any unfair design. We believe quite otherwise. But still we think it is better, in all such cases, either to grapple with the difficulty, or to acknowledge frankly that we cannot solve it, rather than seek to evade it, by altering the obvious sense of the words, and substituting another and more manageable meaning in its place. Some of the commentators take the words as intimating that these heretics were "ordained to condemnation," which rendering lessens the difficulty certainly, though it does not by any means remove it; for it brings them directly into contact with the doctrine of reprobation, which many of them seem afraid to homologate. Others appear to think that the word "ordain" should be translated "forewritten," which, according to them, will make the passage bear that the church was forewarned that such heretics as these should arise. But how

does this reasoning accord with the rest of the words? It plainly runs the text into confusion; for what can be made of a sentence like this? "Certain men, who were of old forewritten to this condemnation." The interpretation first referred to approaches much nearer the natural meaning of the words as they stand; but it leaves out that particular word on which the whole force of the passage rests, and in which the chief difficulty lies. Nor is it pretended that the word is not to be found in the original, or that it has been erroneously introduced. We therefore deem it a wiser and more warrantable course to take the text as we find it, and to see what explanation can be given of the perplexing and mysterious truth which it appears to involve. The truth in question is this:—that these heretics were ordained to the condemnation connected with the particular courses they were pursuing. In attempting to solve this matter, there is one principle that must be kept clearly and steadily in view, and it is this:—

1st. That God cannot ordain what is morally evil, nor prompt any of his creatures to do what he has himself prohibited. Far be such a thing from him, and far be such a thought from us. James, the "brother" to whom Jude refers at the opening of the Epistle, enters his solemn protest against such a profane and blasphemous idea: "Let no man," says he, "say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of *his own lust*, and enticed." This principle, therefore, is so evident and undeniable, that it must always stand untarnished and untouched, for it involves the very character and perfections of the Godhead.—But we remark—

2d. That if God ordains to condemnation, he must ordain *the means* by which that condemnation is eventually secured. We feel that this proposition bears a very startling aspect, and seems to run directly counter to that which we have just established. But let us examine it with the caution which becomes such short-sighted creatures as we are; yet with the unfaltering confidence which the word of God is so well entitled to challenge at our hands. We know that, in the case of those who are ordained to eternal life, the means by which their predestinated glory is to be practically consummated, are ordained also. They are "chosen in Christ," by whom they are "predestinated to the adoption of children," and from whom they "receive power to become the sons of

God." Such are what may be styled the external and mediatorial means by which their election is to be made sure. The internal and experimental means are stated by the Apostle Peter, when he says, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and the effect of this process is set forth in the words of John, when he declares that the elect, being constituted, by covenant, the sons of God, are in due time "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" while the various steps of the course by which they are to arrive at the end of their faith, are systematically laid down by the Apostle Paul: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren: moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Such, then, is the train of means, reaching from the eternity that is past to the eternity that is in prospect, by which God has determined to accomplish his purposes in regard to the elect. Are we then warranted to infer, that, while the means by which the salvation of the elect is to be secured have been specifically ordained and provided, the means by which the condemnation of the reprobate is to be effected have been left entirely out of view, without being contemplated in the scheme of providence, or included in (what we may call) the defensive arrangements of grace.

I think it would lead us into very grievous absurdities, were we to suppose that the character, principles, and proceedings of the reprobate were thus overlooked, especially when it is considered how directly and decisively they bear on the general destinies of the world, and, above all, on the spiritual destinies of the Church. So far as this fallen scene is concerned, Scripture and experience equally declare that the principles of evil are ascendant; and the machinations of evil men constitute, accordingly, the leading and most powerful causes by which its affairs are influenced. To imagine, then, that the devices of the wicked—the means by which they carry on their mischievous designs—were not taken into account in the arrangements of the divine administration, would be just to say, that these arrangements were not only left incomplete, but that the great moving causes by which the events of providence, in regard to this world, are dominantly swayed, were consigned

to the guidance of chance, or rather abandoned to the lawless designs of the workers of iniquity. No one, who believes in any kind of providence at all, can for a moment imagine this. Even those who contend for a general, instead of a particular providence, must see the untenableness and absurdity of such an idea; for even general laws must include those moral forces, by which the leading movements of the world are so influentially affected. Supposing it then to be admitted, that the existence of moral evil, and the means by which it operates in working out its intents, were distinctly foreseen and specifically provided for in the kindred economies of providence and grace, the question comes to be, in what sense were they included in the general scheme of God's moral government?

It is agreed, or, at least, it *should* be agreed, on all hands, that they were not included in any sense that could involve approbation of them on the part of God; far less in any sense that would go to make God the author or originator of sin. That, we again repeat, is a truth essential to the very being of the Deity, and which cannot, therefore, be questioned or compromised for an instant. In what light, then, were these antagonist elements admitted into the plans of the Divine administration? Were they positively "*ordained*," as the passage before us would seem to intimate? Some will be disposed to conclude at once that this could not be, because *that* supposition, they think, would necessarily involve the idea that God either proposed or prompted, or, at least, so far sanctioned them. This inference, however, does not by any means necessarily follow; for God may ordain certain events which he foresees are to happen, in the sense of assigning them their distinct position in the general arrangements of his providence, without being in the remotest degree accessory to their origination, or responsible for their occurrence. He may resolve to regulate and control their operation, so as to fix them down within particular limits of time, and place, and practical influence. Instead of allowing them to break forth uncontrolled, he may see it fit to subject them to the overruling guidance of specific laws; and in that view he may, in perfect consistency with the holiness of his character, ordain or predetermine how they are to take their place in the general train of events out of which his final purposes are to be evolved. Should I, for example, have to deal with an individual whose proceedings are to affect my plans and interests

very materially, my knowledge of that individual may be such as to enable me to anticipate or foresee the nature of the designs which he intends to put in practice against me. If I cannot prevent his having recourse to such proceedings, or, (which applies more accurately to the present subject,) if I see it to be right and advisable to let him reveal his plots, I may, at the same time, resolve so to control his purposes, as that they shall interfere with my measures only at certain points, and to certain particular effects—who would say that my resolutions, or predeterminations, in regard to this, made me responsible for his doings, or involved any approbation of his designs? Even so, God cannot be charged as having any connection with the sinner's guilt, although he foresees it, and foreordains the circumstances in which he will permit it to manifest itself. But could not God, if he chose, have prevented the introduction of sin altogether? That is another question, which we just meet by the fact that God *has* permitted sin to make its appearance. That he has done so for ends that are wise and worthy of himself is not to be doubted, but that he has also adopted means for regulating its course and controlling its operations, is a truth that is equally undeniable. It is in this sense, therefore, that God has ordained the means of the sinner's condemnation. Whether this argument may appear satisfactory to all or not, we confess that in our view it seems to meet the case fully. To us it is new, and that is the only consideration that would lead us to hesitate in propounding it. It may, however, not be new in reality, and those more conversant with the profounder mysteries of the faith than we profess to be may discover difficulties in connection with it which we do not perceive; but that the general principle contended for, of the designs of the reprobate being included in the scheme of providence, is a sound and necessary one, we are fully convinced. Indeed, we cannot conceive how, with any belief in the doctrine of an overruling providence at all, it is possible to come to any other conclusion; and, accordingly, we do not hesitate to take the words before us in their plain literal meaning, and to say, with the Apostle, that the seducers in question were "ordained of old to *this* condemnation."



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## LECTURE V.

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### THE HERESIES CONDEMNED IN THIS EPISTLE.

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#### THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE TURNED TO LICENTIOUSNESS—THE REGAL AUTHORITY OF THE REDEEMER DENIED.

THE first part of this verse, relating to the character of the heretics denounced by the Apostle, having been discussed in the preceding Lecture, we now come to consider the peculiar nature of the heresies which they are represented as maintaining. It is stated that these "ungodly men turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness; and denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." There is reason to suppose that this description refers to one and the same system, although it appears, at first sight, to involve two distinct and separate charges; but, in order that we may have it in our power to bring out the substance of the statement more fully, it will be necessary to examine both points in detail.

I. In reference to the first part of the statement, the heretics in question are charged with the guilt of "*turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.*" By "the grace of God," considered literally, is meant the inherent goodness of God; but this goodness, as displayed towards sinners who have lost all title to the exercise of it, resolves itself into mercy, or free unmerited favour. While the grace of God is shown in the arrangements of providence—in the merciful provision which he makes for the temporal wants and external welfare of man—the grand exhibition of it is that which is found in the gospel, wherein he has provided for their spiritual

exigencies, as lost and helpless sinners. Hence that revelation of mercy is designated, by way of eminence, "the gospel of the grace of God." It is sometimes called the grace of God itself, as containing the great and crowning manifestation of it; and accordingly we read of "the grace of God (meaning the gospel) which bringeth salvation;" and sinners are elsewhere admonished "to see that they receive not the grace of God (or the gospel) in vain." To turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, therefore, is to pervert and abuse the gospel. It is to put such a construction upon its principles as is fitted to lead to impure and licentious practices. It is to make the Divine goodness therein revealed a pretext for indulging in sin, and throwing off the restraints of morality and virtue.

That sectaries holding such views existed in the primitive Church, is a fact that is well ascertained. On consulting the records of ecclesiastical history we find, that, even in the days of the Apostles, the Gnostics, and the followers of Simon Magus, maintained doctrines similar to those which are here described and reprobated by Jude; and if we look into the writings of Paul we shall perceive that the gospel was very commonly abused in this manner. In almost all his Epistles he is protesting against the gross and profligate interpretations which were thus put on the doctrines of grace. "Do we make void the law through faith?"—"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"—"Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?" Such are some of the fiery and vehement interrogatories which he addressed to those who perverted the gospel in this way; and to these interrogatories he generally replies, with instant abhorrence—"God forbid!" while in regard to the men who dared to dishonour the grace of God, by making it the ground of such vile and abominable inferences, he says, with stern and indignant energy,—“their damnation is just!” The corruption of the gospel charged against these primitive seducers has not unhappily been confined to them. Despite of the direct and decisive style in which their heresies were denounced by the inspired Apostles themselves, it is needless to say that the same views have been revived by various parties since that period. The system from which they spring, or with which they are connected, has come to be known under the general name of Antinomianism, and is founded doctrinally on an error respecting the place held by the law in the economy of

redemption. In order to point out the precise sentiments of the sect or party in question, we shall endeavour to show how far they keep by the faith, and where it is that they diverge from it, and "turn it into lasciviousness." In this, as in all other heretical systems, there is some portion of truth, for the supporters of it recognise "the grace of God" by maintaining—

1st. That by the provisions of the Christian economy, believers are freed from the law *as a covenant*. The tenor of the legal covenant, or, as it is more commonly termed, the covenant of works, is, "Obey and live," and all men by nature are placed under this dispensation. The law of the Lord is perfect; all its requirements are holy, and just, and good. They are, therefore, such as God must necessarily have prescribed, and such as man is implicitly bound to obey—"Heaven and earth," says our Lord, "shall pass away, but no jot or tittle shall pass from the law until all be fulfilled." But man, by reason of the fall, lost both the will and the power to comply with the law's demands. Scripture and experience equally declare, that "the natural man is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be." In consequence of this want of submission and obedience to the Divine law, judgment hath passed upon men to condemnation, and the curse of the broken law rests upon every child of Adam: "For cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* that are written in the book of the law, to do them." But the parties of whom we are at present speaking, declare that believers are redeemed from the curse of the law, by Christ consenting to become a curse for them. They affirm, in accordance with the clear tenor of Scripture, that the Divine Mediator has satisfied the penal claims of the law, by submitting to its penalties in the room of those whom he came to redeem; so that all who truly believe upon him are delivered from its condemning power. The atoning merit of Christ's death, (in Scripture called his "righteousness,") is imputed to such as are brought into saving union with him in the day of their effectual calling. In the moment that they are enabled to embrace the gospel offer, and to lay hold by faith of the redemption purchased by Christ, they are released from the law as a covenant. Its thunders roll off from around them to return no more; for being found in Christ, united spiritually to him, and invested with the righteousness which he has wrought out on their behalf, the law, having received satisfaction for them,

has no longer any charge to prefer against them. Hence we read, that there "is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" and the great Apostle of the Gentiles, unfolding the grounds of the believer's security, and flinging them abroad like a flag of victory upon the breeze, sounds this triumphant challenge in the face of heaven, and earth, and hell, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth! Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It is, therefore, an undoubted and a blessed truth that the believer is delivered from the law, in the sense of not being required to fulfil it as a covenant. In this respect he is clear of its claims, for, resting on the obedience which his surety has rendered, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. So far, then, the Antinomian party are right, but their grand error consists in maintaining:—

2d. That the believer is released from the law as *a rule of life*, and that he is no longer subject to it in any sense. They say that it binds us as creatures, but not as Christians—that it lays both its curse and its commandments upon us while we are in a state of sin, but that it sets us free from both when we are brought into a state of salvation. They allege that the gospel is so entirely a system of grace, that it imposes no restraint of any kind upon those who have believingly embraced it—that they are left to be governed solely by their own inclinations, or what they are pleased to call their spiritual desires and affections. In other words, they insist that the precepts of the law have been so completely set aside by the provisions of the gospel, that believers, in the height of their spiritual privileges, are placed on the same footing with heathens in the depth of their spiritual privations. The former, like the latter, "having no law, are a law unto themselves." This is surely a strange practical paradox—a proof that in these, as in other cases, extremes meet. The point before us being one but ill understood, even by many who hold the views of the Antinomians in abhorrence, we deem it desirable to lay down the doctrine of Scripture on the subject as distinctly as possible; and with this design, instead of giving an exposition of our own, we shall adopt that of a writer no less distinguished for his soundness, than for his admirable sense.

"It was solemnly declared by our Saviour 'that he came, not not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it;' yea, 'that heaven and

earth should pass away, but not a jot or tittle of the law should fail.' A considerable part of his Sermon on the Mount is taken up in pointing out the true meaning of its particular precepts, and in enforcing them upon his disciples. To the same purpose the Apostle Paul, after dwelling largely on justification by faith in Christ, in opposition to the works of the law, asks, 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.' But if the law ceases to be binding on believers, Christ did come to destroy its authority over them; and faith does make it void in respect of them. The faith of those who set Moses and Christ at variance has manifestly this effect: it is therefore in opposition to the faith taught by our Saviour and the Apostle Paul." Again, "If the law be not a rule of conduct to believers, and a perfect rule too, they are under no rule; or, which is the same thing, are lawless. But, if so, they commit no sin; for 'where no law is, there is no transgression;' and in this case they have no sins to confess, either to God or to one another; nor do they stand in need of Christ as an advocate with the Father, nor of daily forgiveness through his blood. Thus it is that, by disowning the law, men utterly subvert the gospel." And further, "The Apostle writes as if there were no medium between being under the law to Christ and without law. 1 Cor. ix. 21. If we be not the one, we are the other. Paul declares himself under *the* law to Christ, which implies that Christ has taken the precepts of the moral law as the first principles of his legislative code. Believers, therefore, instead of being freed from obligation to obey it, are under greater obligations to do so than any men in the world. To be exempt from this is to be without law, and, of course, without sin; in which case we might do without a Saviour, which is utterly subversive of all religion.—I have been told that believers are not to be ruled by the law, but by love; and that it is by the influence of the Spirit that they are moved to obedience, rather than by the precepts of the law. To this I answer—1. If a believer be ruled by love in such a way as to exclude obligation, this is the same as if a son should say to his father, I have no objection to oblige you, Sir: I will do your business from love; but I will not be commanded! That is, what he pleases he will do, and no more.—No parent could bear such an answer from a child; and how can we suppose that God will bear it from us! 'If I be a father, where is my honour?'—2. The question is not,

what *moves* or *causes* obedience?—but, What is the *rule* of it? It is allowed that all true obedience is caused by the influence of the Holy Spirit; but that to which he influences the mind was antecedently required of us: He leadeth us ‘in the way that we should go.’—3. If the influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind be made the rule of obligation, and that influence be effectual, it will follow that believers are without sin; for whatever they are effectually influenced to do, they do; and if this be all they are obliged to do, then do they comply with their whole duty, and so are sinless. Thus, methinks, we have arrived at a state of sinless perfection by a sort of back way! But let us not deceive ourselves: God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”\*

This quotation, though somewhat lengthy, appears to us to be so singularly clear and satisfactory, that we could not resist the temptation of placing it before our readers, feeling convinced, as we do, that the most cursory perusal of it will be sufficient to show the dangerous and unscriptural nature of those opinions on which we are now animadverting. Indeed, if we look closely at the controversies in which the Apostles were obliged to engage; we shall find that the various errors against which so many of their Epistles are directed may be traced to two grand sources, which, although running in different directions, take their rise originally from the same fountain:—the two sources are, *self-righteousness* on the one hand, and *self-indulgence* on the other, and both springing from *self-will* as opposed to the will of God.

Paul, in all his letters, but especially in those to the Romans and Galatians, is combating the first of these false principles—he is dealing with that spirit of legality which is so deeply rooted in the human heart, and in virtue of which all men are naturally disinclined to submit to “the righteousness of God *without* the law.” Hence, while advocating the doctrine of justification by faith, the Apostle bends all his efforts to dislodge the impression, so universally entertained, that salvation cannot be by faith alone, but that the deeds of the law—the doings and deservings of the creature—must enter in some shape or another into the conditions of acceptance. This feeling of self-reliance met him at every turn. No matter how clearly he might prove the fallacy of it—no matter how emphatically he might repel the intrusion of it—no matter how indignantly he

\* See Fuller’s Works, vol. V. p. 412.

denounce the obstinate entertainment of it—despite of all his arguments, remonstrances, and denunciations, it still continued to make its appearance, like a snake that lives after it is cut to pieces, or like a noxious plant that clings to the soil, even though every vestige of its roots is apparently extracted. Wherefore this reluctance on the part of man to owe his salvation wholly to the free grace of God? It just arises from the influence of self-will—from a deep and inveterate determination to keep himself up, and not to yield to the entire or absolute sovereignty of God.

But in those cases wherein the doctrine of justification by faith was speculatively admitted, without being experimentally received, the spirit of self-will only gave way here to break forth elsewhere. It was generally among those to whom the gospel was new, and who were but imperfectly acquainted with the nature of the Christian system, that the notion of salvation by works was most prevalent. But when, by dint of frequent explanation and regular instruction, this false principle was thoroughly exposed, and theoretically abandoned, it was found that the inward disposition from whence it proceeded manifested itself under another, and still more dangerous aspect. After professedly submitting to the righteousness of God without the law, the hypocritical professors of the gospel were resolved not to submit to the righteousness of God;—in other words, in the way of obedience to the law, they were willing to receive Christ as their Redeemer, but not as their Ruler—they would give up their self-righteousness, but not their self-will. In order to protect themselves from the commanding authority of God, they affected to believe that they were no longer under the law in any form, but wholly under grace, and that they might, therefore, live as they chose; which just meant, that they were not bound to obey the will of God, but left to follow their own. Now we need not say that the whole controversy between God and the sinner turns on this very point. The grand object of the scheme of salvation is, to bring man to submit to God—to reduce the rebel to subjection—to make him deny his own will—surrender his own inclinations, mortify his own natural desires, that he may conform himself in all respects to the requirements of his Divine Master, and Governor, and Lord. Self-will is Satan's stronghold in the human heart; and so long as the sinner will not submit to God's ruling authority he is still under Satan's power—the spirit of rebellion is in him, and the curse of rebellion upon him. Let him profess to believe

the gospel as he chooses, let him talk of the grace of God as much as he may, till he gives up his own will, and yields himself to the Lord, he is yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Hence it may be observed, that the two grand characteristics of false churches are those we have mentioned. Some deny the doctrine of justification without the deeds of the law; others deny the doctrine of practical submission to the Divine will through obedience to the directive power of the law. The first is the error of ignorant churches; the second, of fanatical and hypocritical churches. The one is the dogma of sects that are not sufficiently enlightened to comprehend the evangelical system; the other the dogma of sects among whom the evangelical system has run to seed; or, rather, like the unused manna, festered into rottenness. The former is the heresy of those on whom the light of religious knowledge has scarcely dawned; the latter the heresy of those who turn the light that is in them to darkness—who shut out the sun that they may enjoy the foul orgies of night at noon-day—a proof that they are sunk into the last stage of carnality and profligacy.

“To turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (says an old divine) is the very height of hypocrisy and profaneness. The excellency of any thing adds to the fault of abusing it: to make a king’s son lackey to a beggar—to make hay with the sceptre-royal—to dig in a dunghill with a golden spade—to stop an oven with the robes of an emperor, are all actions of greatest unworthiness and wild unsuitableness; but to make religion a stirrup to profaneness, and the grace of God a credit to lasciviousness, is a presumption of a higher, and far more unsufferable degree. This is to make God accounted a patron of impiety, and the Judge of all the earth even the greatest malefactor. It is ‘to *profane* his *holy* name;’ it is to fight against him with his own weapons; it is to destroy religion by religion.”\* We may be permitted, on this point, to observe, in conclusion, that it is when the doctrines of grace are generally professed, and most highly prized, that this vile and abominable heresy is apt to spring up. It is the rank overgrowth of a rich and well-manured soil; and we have, therefore, reason to be on our guard against the appearance of it at the present day. Through the sovereign mercy of our God, evangelical religion has been signally revived amongst us of late years, and the fruits of the revival are manifesting themselves in many ways; but we confess that we are

\* Jenkyn on Jude, p. 168, fol.



not without our fears lest the enemy should take advantage of this state of things for bringing in privily the corrupting leaven of Antinomianism. There is in certain quarters an obvious tendency to dwell on "the grace of God," without insisting sufficiently on his regulating and commanding authority; there is a habit of holding forth the privileges, and overlooking the preceptive requirements of the gospel—of preaching Christ in his priestly, far more than in his prophetic and kingly offices. Some of us have been called upon to contend for the crown-rights of Christ, so far as they refer to the general government of his Church;—we have stood up for his "ordinances;" let us stand up with equal zeal for his "statutes." We have asserted his title to rule over his people ecclesiastically; let us as strenuously assert his title to rule over them personally. We have protested in favour of the great truth that He is the "head of his *body* the Church;" let us protest in a spirit of like faithfulness that "the head of *every man* is Christ," and that they that name the name of Jesus must depart from iniquity; because "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation," teacheth us that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we must live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present evil world." And let us do all this directly, pointedly, fearlessly;—not dealing in general exhortations, or mere vague appeals to the religious affections, but bringing the commandment closely to the conscience—laying it like a sharp but healing blister on the inflammatory eruptions of sin; heeding not the wincing recoils of self-indulgent and self-complacent professors, and shaking away from us with utter disregard the charges of legality, with which a false and luxurious evangelism resents every assault that is made on its plethoric spirituality and privilege-fattened pride.

II. But, besides turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, it is further said of the heretics before us, that "*they denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*" We might be apt, at first sight, to suppose that this denial included the first and the second persons in the Godhead, and that the heresy with which they are charged extended to absolute Atheism. It will, however, be necessary to inquire somewhat more minutely into the meaning of the passage, before we can settle its exact import. With this view let us consider; first, who it is that these seducers are represented as denying: and, next, in what sense their denial is to be understood?

1st. It is stated that they denied "the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the opinion of the soundest expositors, that these words refer solely to the Redeemer; the first clause being intended to express his true and proper divinity, which it does by declaring him to be "the only Lord God;" and the last, the special relation in which he stands to believers—"and *our* Lord Jesus Christ." Apart from the textual criticism by which this view is supported, it needs but little examination to feel satisfied that it is and must be correct. It is impossible to imagine that speculative Atheism, or doctrines involving the denial of the Supreme Being, could have existed in the primitive church; for what temptation could persons holding such opinions have for wishing to connect themselves with the followers of Christ, even supposing they would be allowed to join them, which all must see to be a very improbable supposition. In order to perceive the force of this statement, it is only necessary to remember that the Christians in the days of Jude were a sect everywhere spoken against. Like their Master, they were poor and of no reputation; and, therefore, generally rejected and despised; not only so, but they were also subjected to heavy and harassing persecution, by which they were always liable to be deprived of their property, their liberty, and their life. Besides these disadvantages, which would of themselves be sufficient to deter all from joining them who had not been brought to embrace the gospel to some extent at least, they, as a body, were far more stern and uncompromising in their opinions than any other existing class of men, either among the Gentiles or Jews. Such persons, therefore, as were inclined to religious scepticism, and might wish to have free scope for indulging in their infidel or deistical speculations, would never think of connecting themselves with that party whose principles were most diametrically opposed to their own, and who in the maintenance of them were, of all parties, the most rigid and intolerant. With regard to those indeed who had been led to make a profession of the gospel from being convinced of the truth of its evidences, we can well enough conceive of their remaining in the church, though entertaining unsound and heretical opinions on many important doctrines. The force of conviction, so far as it went, combined with the pride of consistency, and the disgrace always connected with direct apostacy, were causes sufficient to account for the continued adherence even of the worst class of Christian heretics; but that

an Atheist—one who did not hold a single principle in common with them—should join a party so poor, so despised, so persecuted;— a party, moreover, who would not give the slightest sanction or toleration to his opinions, and that too when he might obtain whatever latitude he chose, either among the Jewish Saducees or Gentile idolaters—such a thing is not only improbable, but almost incredible. It is therefore clear, from this consideration alone, that the meaning which is commonly attached to the first clause of the passage before us, as if it referred to the denial of the existence of the Supreme Being, is founded upon a misapprehension, and that the Apostle, though he speaks of the “only Lord God, *and* our Lord Jesus Christ,” alludes to the Mediator solely. On looking to the parallel passage in the second Epistle of Peter, we find this confirmed beyond all doubt, for there the Apostle, who characterises the opinions of the parties in question as “damnable heresies,” and who denounces them in the most indignant terms, does not throw out the slightest hint of their being absolute Atheists. He merely says that they “denied the Lord that bought them,” proving that their heresy had reference specially to the Redeemer.

It being then evident, from these circumstances, that the language of Jude is intended to apply to Christ, it is important to notice the manner in which he speaks of him. He calls him “the only Lord God.” It is impossible to conceive of any terms more directly and conclusively expressive of Supreme Divinity than these. Christ is frequently set forth in Scripture as the “*Son of God*,” that being the personal name by which he is distinguished from the first and the third persons in the united and undivided Trinity. But this name is, by the Arians and Socinians, made the foundation of an argument against his equality with the Father, and in effect against his essential Godhead. Savouring not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men, these unchristian heretics are misled by the human associations connected with sonship, and, blending the ideas that men attach to this relationship with the fact of the incarnation, they insist that the name of “Son” implies subordination and inferiority, both in the order of time and of nature. But we find that even the unbelieving Jews knew nothing of those subtle distinctions that the sectaries in question find it convenient to draw; for we read that they took up stones to stone Christ, “because he said he was the Son of God, *making himself equal with God*.” They believed the

Son to be equal with the Father, and when Christ called himself by that name they understood him to mean that he was a Divine person.

But, besides this, Christ is spoken of in Scripture under the titles of "*Lord*" and "*God*." These names are so often used that it is almost unnecessary to cite particular examples. We may, however, in a sentence or two, remind the reader, that it is said that "God purchased the church with his own blood;"—that Thomas exclaimed, as he touched his Master's wounds, "My Lord and my God;"—that Paul speaks of him as "God our Saviour," and "Christ Jesus our Lord;"—that Peter styles him the "Prince of life," and the "Lord of all." These are only a few out of a multitude of passages in which the Redeemer is thus addressed; but the deniers of his Divinity allege that these titles are applied to created beings, and that they, therefore, form no conclusive proof of the Godhead of Christ. They say that angels are called gods; that even Satan himself is designated "the god of this world;" and that the name of "Lord," as expressive of rule and pre-eminence, is often given to princes, magistrates, and others in authority among men. They will, however, find it difficult to show that these names are applied to any order of beings in the same sense in which they are applied to Christ; or that either angels or men are ever addressed as if possessed of supreme, universal, and exclusive pre-eminence—such pre-eminence as places them in the same rank with Jehovah, identifies them essentially with his person, and ascribes to them his attributes, his dominion, his works, and his worship. In all these respects Christ is directly and invariably associated with the Father, and the names of "Lord" and "God" are never applied to him except in this special and supreme sense.

But we have, in the passage before us, a proof in favour of the divinity of Christ that utterly demolishes the miserable distinctions of those who wish to deny the Lord that bought them, for there he is called "*the only Lord God*." We have already shown that it is not the Father that is here meant, because it was impossible that there could have been any in the primitive church professing Atheism, and because Peter, when speaking of the same case, and the same parties, declares expressly that it was Christ they denied. But should any be still disposed to cavil about the point, or pretend that the application of these words to Christ admits of doubt, we have only to refer them to the last verse of this Epistle, where the Apostle, speaking undeniably of Christ, uses words of precisely

similar import to those we are now considering. He calls him "the only wise God our Saviour," and ascribes to him "glory, and majesty, and dominion, and power"—a title and an ascription that no one can presume to say applies to any other than the Supreme Divinity. To call Jesus the "*only* Lord God," and "the *only* wise God," is to identify him inseparably with the Godhead, and to render it impossible for any party whatever to devise a distinction that can explain away the direct and demonstrative proof of his divinity which is thus afforded. It is unnecessary for us to observe, that these words refer to the Trinity in unity—that Christ, as one with the Father and the Spirit in indivisible essence, is called the *only* Lord God; and the meaning of Jude, therefore, corresponds with the language of Christ himself, when he says, "I and the Father *are One*"—"He that hath seen *me* hath seen *the Father*."

2d. Having thus ascertained who it is that these heretics denied, let us now inquire in what sense they did so. And, for the clearer exposition of this point, it is needful to notice that Christ may be denied in a twofold respect; that is, either directly by our *doctrines*, or indirectly by our *deeds*.

In the former sense he is denied, as we know, by many classes of men. The unbelieving Jews, for example, denied his *divine mission*. They rejected the testimonies by which his Messiahship was established, and refused to acknowledge him in any spiritual capacity whatever. Deists and infidels deny his *actual identity*. They profess to regard the gospel history as a fictitious composition; affirming that the facts and circumstances related concerning Christ were invented by the Evangelists, not drawn from any real character. The Ebionites and Cerinthians in the early ages, and the Arians and Socinians since, deny his *divinity*. They maintain that, however superior, or superhuman, or even superangelic, his nature and character may have been, he was still but a finite and created being. The Valentians, Marcionites, Manichees, and others of old, with some small sects of modern times, deny his *humanity*; asserting that the corporeal frame with which he appeared to be invested was only a shadowy form temporally assumed, but not an essential part of his person. The Nestorians, Euticheans, and Sabellians, deny the *hypostatical union* of his Divine and human natures; the first dividing him into two persons; the second commixing and confounding his two natures; and the third resolving his being into that of the Father.

The Papists, Socinians, and Erastians deny him in his *offices*. The Papists deny his *prophetical* office, by taking from and adding to his Word, and by making the Church the only lawful and infallible interpreter of Scripture. The Socinians deny his *priestly* office, by teaching that he died not as a Mediator but as a martyr not for our behoof as a Redeemer, but for our imitation as an exemplar. The Erastians deny his *kingly* office, by alleging that Christ is not the real but only the invisible Head of the Church—that he reigns over her in heaven, but that the powers that be, no matter who or what those powers *may* be—whether Pope or Patriarch, Prince or Parliament—are entitled to reign over her on earth. In these, and various other ways, the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ is doctrinally denied.

But there are many who do not deny him by their doctrines, who yet do so by their *deeds*. It is in this sense chiefly, though perhaps not exclusively, that the charge is brought against the heretics in the text. From all that is known respecting their opinions, we have no grounds for supposing that they were openly or avowedly heterodox, in the common meaning of that term. That they were unsound in point of fact is very evident; but their unsoundness was of a nature not easily defined in words, though it was plainly and palpably enough revealed in their lives and actions. It is possible that they might have denied the *legislative*, while they admitted the *spiritual* authority of Christ. It is even very probable that they maintained some theory of this kind—that they held (as we have already shown their practice clearly indicated) that they were not under law to Christ; that, on the contrary, they considered themselves released from all the rules and obligations of morality; but whether they actually avowed this as a distinct article of belief, is a circumstance that admits of doubt. We are rather inclined to believe, that, while they acted on the principle which we have just stated, they viewed the question under a different aspect from what it bears when it is doctrinally considered. Without professing a naked system of Antimonianism, the probability is that they ran out upon it through the very heart of the gospel; or, in other words, that they fell into heresy through a gross and hypocritical pretence of transcendent orthodoxy; and, if challenged for denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, in any direct or theoretical sense, we can conceive

of their turning upon the accuser with a sigh of supercilious pity, or a scowl of solemn and self-righteous contempt. We find that it is "*the grace of God* they turned into lasciviousness;" and there is reason to think that it was on the ground of magnifying this grace they acted as they did. It was on the score of exalted and transcendental spirituality that they adopted the views and practices by which they were distinguished. They became so boldly familiar with grace, that they played with it as with a confidential companion; they considered it so much their bosom friend, that they introduced to it their secret corruptions, and tried to make it smile upon their lusts. They professed such a degree of love to Christ, that they could not bear the thought of looking upon him in the cold and legal capacity of a Judge and Ruler. They spoke of him so fondly, and trusted him so entirely, in profession at least, that, "like the vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself," they in heart dishonoured him, and in effect denied him. That we may see the amount of guilt involved in their conduct, let it be noticed—

1st, That this practical denial of Christ is the deepest and the darkest of all sins, inasmuch as it has its root in *secret Atheism*. Christ was God manifest in the flesh. No man hath seen Him (the Father) at any time: but our Lord says of himself, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father:" and, accordingly, Christ is to be regarded as the alone representative of the Godhead to man. It is through the Son that the Father is visibly revealed; for he is declared to "be the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." To deny our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is to deny "the *only* Lord God;" and to do so is to be guilty of direct and undoubted Atheism. But these heretics, it may be said, did not deny Christ in this absolute sense; on the contrary, they not only professed to believe upon him, but appeared to regard him with peculiar trust and confidence. Yes! they "professed" and they "appeared"—but professions and appearances are not the tests of belief, but habits and actions. If they really believed in Christ, they would have honoured and obeyed him—if he was by faith admitted into their minds and hearts, he would by his Spirit have ruled over them, so as to have brought them "to delight in his law after the inward man." They could not in such circumstances have turned his grace into lasciviousness; but, instead of this, their lasciviousness would be purified and turned into grace. The fact,

therefore, of their living and acting as they did, proved that Christ was not in them, or recognised by them at all. They might indeed in their declarations acknowledge him, but in their deeds they denied him; and the denial of the deeds is the denial of the heart; and the denial of the heart is the denial of the man; and the man who thus denies the Lord Jesus Christ is in effect an Atheist, for he “denies the only Lord God.”

From hence it follows, that a false and hypocritical professor of the gospel—an individual who pretends to prize the grace without practising the holiness of God—is the guiltiest and most abandoned of all sinners. He is not only without the truth, and *worse than a heathen!* but he denies the faith, and is *worse than an Infidel!!* Nay, more fearful still—disowning the only Lord God, *after having avowedly received and confessed him*—he has sunk into the lowest depth of human depravity, *and is worse than an Atheist!!!* Let it be noticed farther—

2d, That this practical denial of Christ is all the more criminal that it proceeds from the abuse of the best privileges that Christ has bestowed upon his Church. To make the very grace of Christ a reason for rejecting him—the very fulness and richness of his mercy a pretext for crucifying his cause, spurning his authority, and putting him to open shame—is surely the *ne plus ultra* of iniquity. If he who broke Moses' law died without remedy—if he who only “*neglected the great salvation*” cannot escape—what shall be said of him who, after proceeding from the outward reception of the truth to the public profession—from the public profession to the avowed appropriation of its most precious blessings—from the avowed appropriation to the very topmost pinnacle of sanctimonious spirituality—what shall be said of such a man? Will not the language of Christ to Chorazin be emphatically true of him? “Thou art exalted unto heaven, but thou shalt be cast down to hell!” And what shall be the doom of such a foul professor—such an infidel believer—such an evangelical Atheist? His doom is clearly written in the awful words of the Apostle: “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come—” (such is a precise description of the very character we are considering—he is one who has *professedly*



enjoyed all these privileges)—“it is impossible” (says the Apostle) “for such individuals, if they fall away, to renew them again into repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which *drinketh in the rain that comet's oft upon it*, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which *beareth thorns and briers* is rejected and is nigh unto cursing: *whose end is to be burned!*”

## LECTURE VI.

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### THE FATE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL:

#### A WARNING AGAINST THE GUILT AND DANGER OF PRACTICAL APOSTACY.

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IN order to enforce the exhortation contained in the preceding verse, the Apostle proceeds to show, by a series of historical illustrations, the courses pursued by apostates in former times, and the disastrous consequences in which they resulted. Verse 5, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." He takes it for granted that those whom he addressed were familiar with the cases to which he was about to refer; but he seems to be apprehensive, that, although "they once knew them," they had either lost sight of their peculiar significance, or failed to perceive their applicability to the circumstances in which they were placed; and he, therefore, considers it necessary "to put them in remembrance" of these cases again, that they might notice more distinctly their close bearing on the subject to which their attention was called. There is much advantage in being thus reminded of truths already known, especially of those providential occurrences which have happened in the past history of the Church and the world, and which serve to illustrate the principles by which the Divine procedure is regulated. The dealings of God with ancient Israel are particularly worthy of being held in remembrance; for

we are assured that they "were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world have come." The case recorded in the text is designed as a warning against the sin of apostacy; and, in order to bring out this lesson as fully and forcibly as possible, the Apostle refers, in the first place, to the privileges which the Israelites enjoyed; and then sets forth, in the second place, the destruction which came upon them, in consequence of the false and rebellious spirit which they displayed.

I. In regard to the first of these points, he states that "the Lord saved them out of the land of Egypt." The circumstances connected with this signal and memorable event are doubtless familiar to you all; and it will only be necessary for us, therefore, to touch upon them so far as they serve to illustrate the point which the passage before us is intended to inculcate. With this view, let us notice some of the most prominent features by which the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is marked, that we may see the greatness of the Divine mercy towards this sinful and ungrateful people.

1st, We are told that when God first interposed on their behalf, he found them in a state of the deepest humiliation and distress. On their first entrance into the land they were but few in number; consisting only of the patriarch Jacob, his family, and the retainers of his house. These fathers of the Jewish race were received on their arrival with the most distinguished favour, in consequence of the eminent services which Joseph had rendered, by saving the kingdom from a sore famine, and providing for it in such a way as to make it the means of increasing the power, and enriching the treasury of Egypt. Grateful for the benefits conferred upon himself and his subjects, through the instrumentality of this Hebrew youth, the king not only invited his father and his brethren into the country, but had established them in Goshen, one of the richest and most fertile districts in the land, where they were allowed to follow the pastoral occupations to which they had been accustomed. In the course of time, however, another king and another race of subjects arose, "who knew not Joseph," or who, at least, forgot the claims which he and his kindred had upon the gratitude of the nation. This new generation, finding that the children of Israel were aliens in the land, and fearing that they might become too powerful, began to injure and oppress them. They deprived them by degrees of their possessions, their civil

privileges, and, at last, of their personal freedom. Not satisfied with having reduced them to a state of bondage, they proceeded to treat them with the most bitter and barbarous cruelty. They were not only condemned to the hardest and meanest kind of toil, but compelled to work beyond their strength, and punished with the most tyrannical severity, if the tasks imposed upon them were not duly accomplished. The Egyptians being ambitious of having their country distinguished by magnificent temples and great public monuments, the Hebrews were chiefly employed in making bricks for these purposes; and, as a proof of the oppressive treatment to which they were subjected, it is recorded that they were required to produce a certain "tale of bricks" within a given time, while their taskmasters refused to provide them with the straw necessary in the manufacture of that article; and, unless they could both collect the straw and finish their tale of bricks within the time prescribed, they were cruelly beaten and abused. Finding it impossible to submit to this grinding tyranny, they complained to the king, hoping that he would look upon their misery with some degree of mercy. But their complaint was not only received with indifference, but regarded with haughty scorn. Pharaoh derided their sufferings, and dismissed them with scoffing ridicule, saying, "Ye are idle, ye are idle; get you unto your burdens;" ordering their overseers to lay yet heavier tasks upon them, until, as the sacred historian relates, "their lives were made bitter with hard bondage in mortar and brick, and all manner of service in the field." To crown the measure of their aggravated wrongs, Pharaoh issued an edict, commanding that all the male children born to the Hebrews should be destroyed: the tyrant being afraid lest they should multiply to an extent that might prove dangerous to the security of his kingdom. Knowing the deep injuries which were inflicted upon them, he was probably apprehensive that *that* oppression, which "maketh even wise men mad," might, at some crisis or another, instigate the Israelites to rebellion; and in order to prevent this, or, at least, to put it out of their power to rise in any force, the Egyptian ruler resolved to cut off the increase of the Hebrew population. The cruel despot proceeded from bondage to blood—from mockery to murder—from slavery to slaughter. By this inhuman edict the afflictions of the oppressed people had reached the utmost limit of endurance; and hence, despairing of all other help, they cried unto the Lord, who, pitying

their desolate case, interposed for their deliverance. Such being the condition in which He found them, let us now glance for a moment at the means by which "he saved them from the land of Egypt."

2d, He did so, first of all, by visiting the land with a series of plagues. The Psalmist enumerates these plagues in one powerful and beautiful passage, when he says, that the Lord "turned their waters into blood, and their floods that they could not drink: He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them: He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust: He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost: He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts: He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them: He made a way to his anger: He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence: and smote their first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham." Such is the general description which the Psalmist gives of the scenes which are more minutely detailed by the pen of Moses, "the man of God." In the narrative recorded by the latter, we are told that the proud Pharaoh was disposed at first to set the Divine judgments at defiance. He affected to believe that these judgments were the mere tricks of necromancy; and, in order to bring them into ridicule and discredit, he summoned together the magicians of his kingdom, who contrived to get up something like an imitation of the miracles that were performed by the hand of Moses. But finding by degrees that the signs which were wrought were too mighty to be disregarded, and the plagues that were sent too disastrous to be set at nought, he slowly, but sternly and reluctantly, began to yield. From insolently demanding, as he did at the outset, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" he humbly, but hypocritically, said at last, "Entreat the Lord for me: I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous; and I and my people are wicked." But, notwithstanding these fitful relentings, Pharaoh no sooner found that the plagues were, at the entreaties of Moses, removed, than he broke faith with the servants of God, and refused to release the people from their bondage, until at length a judgment was inflicted which he could not withstand—a blow was struck which shook his heart in his bosom, and shivered

his imperious determinations to pieces. The destroying angel was sent down to settle the controversy. Sailing upon the clouds of midnight, that messenger of wrath passed through the land—entered every Egyptian dwelling; and, while there was silence about him, and silence before him, he left the voice of wailing and weeping everywhere behind him; for, as he proceeded on his swift and darkling course, the first-born of Egypt were seized with the agonies of death, and the whole kingdom was plunged in terror and in tears. This finishing stroke—this dreadful and sweeping catastrophe—decided the contest for the time. Pharaoh, overwhelmed with wonder and dismay, not only consented to let the children of Israel depart, but appeared full of impatience till they were gone; as if he felt that every moment they remained was charged with peril to himself and to his kingdom. The Hebrews being thus rescued from the yoke of bondage, let us now follow them in their flight from Egypt, that we may mark the farther and still more signal deliverances which the Lord wrought on their behalf.

3d, The children of Israel were no sooner out of sight than Pharaoh repented of having allowed them to depart. “Why have we done this, (says the hardened and obstinate despot,) that we have let Israel go from serving us?” In this mood “he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him,” and pursued after the liberated captives; “and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth before Baal-zephon.” At this alarming juncture—when the startled multitude discovered that the dreaded tyrant was approaching—when they heard the sound of his chariot wheels, and the hurried trampling of his horsemen—they were filled with the utmost confusion and dismay. In the midst of the rebellious murmurings and craven outcries that arose from the panic-struck fugitives, “The Lord said unto Moses—speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” Such was the command given to their leader; but compliance with that command seemed to all human appearance utterly impossible. They were already standing upon the shore; the waves of the Red Sea were rolling and breaking at their feet. To advance, therefore, was to march into the foaming deep, and to encounter certain destruction. What, then, were they to do? The rocks of the coast hemmed them in on both sides; and the Egyptian army was already so close behind them, that retreat in that direction was also entirely cut off. To add to the consternation that must have prevailed

in this awful and critical emergency, night had settled down upon them while they stood halting irresolute upon the shore; and, as it was seven days after the full moon when they fled from the land of Egypt, there was not even a glimpse of moonlight to relieve the darkness and terror in which they were at that moment involved. The cloud of fire was their only guide; and that stood over the sea, casting its lurid light on the heaving and murmuring billows, and pointing to a path which they could not follow. Imagine, if you can, their feelings, when the cry, "Go forward!" arose thrillingly upon the winds of night. As by one involuntary impulse the mighty host moved: the waves, as if they too heard the command, fell back before their advancing footsteps—reared up their proud crests on either side as they approached, and opened through their dividing bosom a pathway for the ransomed of the Lord. Conceive the solemn awe—the mute and tremulous astonishment—with which that people made their way through the sandy depths of the sea; walled in by the green waters on the right hand and on the left, and listening to the sound of the breaking surges as they foamed and fretted far overhead—restrained by the invisible hand of Jehovah from passing over the barriers against which they were chafing, and from which their spray was dropping down in baptismal showers on the heads of the multitudes, who were marching in darkness and silence below. At last the perilous passage was accomplished—the hosts of Israel emerged from the heart of the deep—defiled upwards along the sands and shingles of the beach, and stood on the rocks to witness the fate of their enemies. Already their drowning cries were heard mingling with the rush of the returning waters, which, released from the restraint that was miraculously laid upon them, dashed down their accumulated floods on the heads of the Egyptians, and next morning Pharaoh and his hosts lay dead upon the sea-shore. "The stout-hearted were spoiled—they slept their sleep, and none of the men of might could find their hands." The rising sun saw them strewn along the beach—their armour rent and rusted with the brine—their chariots the sport of the rolling billows—their war-steeds stretched on their sides, half-buried in the sand; while Israel, standing on the rocks, and beholding the utter wreck of Egypt's pride, made crag and wave and wilderness echo back their song of deliverance, as, with one accord, they lifted up their voice and said—"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his

rider hath he thrown into the sea." No sooner did the strain cease, than, looking across the avenging tide to the clouded shores of Egypt, they caught up the dying sound again and again, saying—"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!" At the head of their liberated maidens, Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances: and, as the voices of that joy-inspired band rose in choral swell from the rocks of the coast, and mingled with the murmurs of the memorable waves, "Miriam answered them, *Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea!*"

Having thus seen how God saved "the people out of the land of Egypt," let us now consider—

II. What befell them in consequence of the false and rebellious spirit which they displayed. The Apostle says, that He "afterwards destroyed them that believed not." In this punishment there are three points which require our notice. 1st, The nature of it: 2d, The sin for which it was inflicted: and, 3dly, The season at which it was imposed.

1st, In regard to the nature of the punishment, we are told that it amounted to "*destruction.*" It is doubtful whether this word is to be understood in a spiritual as well as in a temporal sense; whether it is intended to denote the total and eternal ruin of those who fell in the wilderness. Considering that, with the exception of two individuals, an entire generation, consisting of six hundred thousand, besides women and children, met with this fate, it would be fearful to conclude that all who came short of the promised land, also came short of the rest of which Canaan was a type. Is it possible to suppose that, out of the vast multitude who left the land of bondage, there was not "a remnant according to the election of grace;" that among the crowded thousands who witnessed the plagues of Egypt—who were guided through the depths of the Red Sea—who quaked beneath the flames and thunderings of Sinai—who were clothed with raiment that waxed not old—who were fed with food from heaven, and followed through the arid wastes by the streams of the smitten rock,—is it possible to imagine that they all perished beneath the curse? It would, we think, be very rash to adopt such a sweeping and appalling conclusion; and while there is no statement of Scripture



from which an inference to that effect can be distinctly drawn, it is more consistent to believe that what the Apostle says in regard to the destruction of the Israelites, is designed to apply in a temporal sense only, and not meant to include the spiritual destiny of those to whom he refers. Viewing it in this light, we find that the people fell under the doom in question at different periods, and by different means. Some were slain by the sword\*—some were consumed by fire†—some were cut off by the plague‡—some were poisoned by fiery serpents§—many sickened and died by drinking the waters of Marah—many perished in the gainsaying of Core|| (part devoured by an earthquake, and part struck dead by lightning)—several thousands were swept away by the pestilence that was sent to punish the sins into which they fell with the daughters of Moab¶—besides large multitudes who were killed in battle by the Amalekites and Canaanites.\*\* In these various ways, the whole of “the people who were saved out of Egypt,” with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, “were destroyed.” Verily, no strength of numbers can prevail against the Lord, or protect obstinate transgressors from the power of his wrath!

2d, With the nature of their punishment, the Apostle speaks of the sin for which it was inflicted. This was unbelief: “He destroyed them that *believed not*.” But how did their unbelieving spirit manifest itself? Chiefly in two ways: in sensual indulgences, and in self-willed rebellion. Though their bread was rained down from heaven upon them; and though their water was ever sure, they yet never ceased to complain of the provision that was made for them. They loathed even the manna, and lusted after flesh; and such was the gross presumption and insolent ingratitude they displayed, that if their capricious desires were not, in every case, immediately complied with, they broke out into mutinous murmurings, both against their leader and their Divine Protector. Despite of the miseries they suffered in the land of bondage, and forgetting the cruel and degrading thralldom to which they were there reduced, they only remembered the occasional indulgences which they were permitted to enjoy, and for the sake of these they longed to go back, and bend their slavish necks under the yoke of servitude again. Amidst all the wonders they had seen—the signal deliverances achieved in their behalf—the miracles of

\* Exodus xxxii. 28. † Numbers xi. 1, 2, 3. ‡ xl. 33. § xxi. 6. || xvi. 31.  
¶ xxv. 8. \*\* xiv. 45.

mercy of which they were the daily objects, their thoughts still reverted to the sensual gratifications of which they were deprived, and their removal from the "flesh-pots of Egypt" formed the theme of their constant regrets. What a base and humiliating aspect do they present in the following picture—"The children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes." But they did not confine themselves to mere expressions of discontent. On the contrary, they manifested a spirit of sedition and insubordination throughout. The bondsmen of Egypt would brook no control in the wilderness—the serfs who groaned under the iron despotism of a foreign tyrant would not submit to the mild sway of their own brethren—the crouching vassals of Pharaoh must needs rise up against the paternal authority of Moses. "You take too much upon you"—was their contumacious speech to Moses and Aaron (who were constituted, by Divine appointment, their civil and ecclesiastical rulers)—"Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Like the heretics with whom the Apostle compares them, they denied the authority of God, by denying the authority of those whom God had placed over them. When they "spake against Moses," they, in effect, "spake against God;" for Moses did nothing but as God commanded him. Hence their sensuality and rebellion are resolved into "unbelief," arising, as they did, from a disposition to distrust the divine power and to disobey the divine ordinances. They kicked against the restraints which were laid upon their lusts, and upon their lawless impatience of control, and because of this, though God "saved them out of the land of Egypt, he afterwards destroyed them."

3d, Besides the sin for which this punishment was inflicted, it is also important to mark the season at which it was imposed. It was "*after*" God had delivered the people from the hand of Pharaoh that He visited them with the destruction mentioned. The greatness of the privileges which their Divine Benefactor had conferred, as they were no proof that they deserved them, so they formed no protection in the day of provocation. The goodness of God was designed to call forth their love, to keep them from offending, and to lead them to repentance, should

offence be committed. Ingratitude, unbelief, rebellious disobedience, in the midst of such privileges, only served to add tenfold aggravation to their guilt; and, therefore, notwithstanding all that God had done for them, because his mercies could not melt them, his judgments did not spare them. Nay, his wrath came down upon them with a weight and power proportioned to the worth and preciousness of the blessings which they despised. — “Even miraculous mercies (says an old writer) make no impression on an unholy heart. After all the salvations which God had bestowed upon Israel, they were fit for nothing but destruction. Every step they took in the Red Sea, they trod on a miracle of merciful preservation: every time they tasted a crumb of bread or a drop of water, they took in a miracle of merciful provision: every time they looked up to the heavens, they beheld a miracle of merciful direction: but none of these things could work on stubborn hearts. This makes God to profess that he ‘will consume his people after he has done them good;’ and that he will deliver them no more.” All this was a lesson and a warning for the heretics in the text, who, like Israel, were presuming upon their privileges—perverting and abusing the Divine goodness, and turning the very “grace of God into lasciviousness;” and as the Israelites, though saved out of Egypt, were “*afterwards* destroyed,” these sensual and rebellious seducers, though outwardly delivered from the bondage of Jewish ceremonies, or Gentile idolatries, and called to the knowledge and profession of the gospel, had no reason to suppose that the favour thus shown them was to preserve them from the punishment due to their sins. Their external salvation would form no security against the spiritual destruction which their iniquities provoked; and as sure as their ancient prototypes perished in the wilderness, so certainly would they perish, if they persisted in the course which they had hitherto pursued!

## LECTURE VII.

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### THE FATE OF THE FALLEN ANGELS:

#### A WARNING AGAINST THE SIN OF SPIRITUAL REBELLION.

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WE have already considered the first illustrative example by which the Apostle enforces the exhortations contained in the opening verses of this Epistle. That example is drawn from the fate of the Israelites, who, notwithstanding the memorable deliverances achieved on their behalf, were yet doomed to perish in the wilderness, because of the unbelieving and rebellious spirit which they persisted in cherishing. The second example which the Apostle cites, and which falls to be considered this evening, is that of "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and who are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

These words naturally divide themselves into two leading points of inquiry: the first relating to the apostacy of the fallen angels, and the second to the punishment which followed thereupon.

In proceeding to take up these topics, it is unnecessary for us to observe, that the subject with which they are connected is one that has given rise to much speculation. It has been the favourite theme of theological casuists in every age of the church; and, as might be expected, many are the strange theories and curious disquisitions which it has been the means of calling forth. To attempt anything like a particular review of the various opinions which have been broached on this

point, would require far more time than we can at present spare; but, even though this objection did not exist, we greatly doubt whether such a course would be either advisable or useful. You need not be told, that this is one of those subjects on which the Scriptures speak with marked and manifest reserve; and were we, therefore, to follow the example of some of these theological speculators, to any considerable extent, we should at least run the risk of affecting to be "wise beyond what is written," and seeking to be sage where we are warned to be silent. While, however, we endeavour to keep this consideration in view, let us, at the same time, not be afraid to enter into the subject, so far as the facts and notices of Scripture, with the inferences fairly deducible from these, lend us their guidance; feeling satisfied, as we justly may, that the proceedings of the Most High challenge, in every case, the closest scrutiny; and that the more fully they are unfolded, the more clearly it will be seen that "He is holy in all his works, and righteous in all his ways."

I. In directing your attention, then, to the apostacy of the fallen angels, we would, in the first place, inquire into the fact itself; and, secondly, into the causes which led to this mysterious result:—

With regard to the fact, the Apostle states, that they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." These words, viewed in their simple literal meaning, imply that these apostate spirits incurred, by their sin, a double forfeiture: They forfeited the dignity of their original condition, here called "their first estate;" and, besides this, they forfeited the happiness of their native home, here called "their own habitation."

1st, With respect to the forfeiture of their original dignity, it is proper to mention, that the construction which we put on this clause of the verse is fully borne out, or rather directly suggested, by the language of the text itself; for the word that is translated "first estate," is generally used in the sense of "eminence" or "principality," or "superior dignity." It denotes priority, either in point of time or of rank, according to the connection in which it is employed; and although our version views it in reference to time, yet some of the best critics are of opinion, that it refers rather to the principal rank or position which the angels in question possessed. But, indeed, the meaning is substantially the same, whether we take it in the one sense or in the other; for all who believe in

the existence of angelic spirits, or, in other words, all who believe in the declarations of the Bible, agree in admitting that the first estate of the fallen angels was one of high grandeur and dignity. From the statements of Scripture, we learn that the race of beings with which they were once associated are endowed with great and majestic attributes—that, raised above man in the scale of existence, they stand next in rank to Jehovah himself. We read of them, that they are distinguished by exalted purity—hence they are called the “holy angels;” by eminent power—hence it is said that they “excel in strength;” by the clearness and extent of their knowledge—hence they are styled “the angels of light;” by the glowing activity of their zeal—hence they are represented as “flying” on the messages of their Divine Sovereign; by the depth and fervour of their benevolence—hence it is said that there is “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” These, and a variety of other qualities that are ascribed to them, will serve to give us some faint idea of what the angels are as a race, and what the fallen angels were while they kept their first estate.

The question has often been raised as to what rank Satan and his confederates held previous to their apostacy? It is strenuously contended by some, that they held the *chief place* amongst the angelic hosts, and that he who now reigns in hell was once the highest who served in heaven. This is a point on which no definite information can be gathered from the record; but that there *are* diversities of rank and dignity among the angels, is a fact that seems to be very clearly revealed; for we read of “princes” and “chief princes,” of “cherubims” and “seraphims,” of “thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers;” and the various allusions to the names, offices, and actings of these heavenly messengers, scattered through the Old and New Testaments, serve to place this conclusion beyond a doubt: but whether the apostate angels occupied the *first* rank among their original companions, is a question which can only be settled as a matter of conjecture. It may, however, be admitted, that the idea is not without some colour of probability; for if the vindication of the Divine Sovereignty was the principle intended to be taught by the overthrow of these angels, then the lesson would, of course, be more conclusively conveyed, on the understanding that they were the highest and most powerful of those beings that fell, than it could be on the supposition that they belonged to an inferior class. In the latter case, there

might be room to infer that their fall arose from their inferiority; and it might be imagined that if they had been of the highest order, there would be less danger of their being overcome as they were; whereas, on the other hand, if the angels who fell stood in the first class, the proof would be demonstrative, that the loftiest of created beings were not independent of Jehovah; but capable of yielding to temptation, forfeiting their dignity, and sinking into ruin. This argument affords a strong presumption in favour of the view of those who maintain that the devil and his angels were originally the greatest and most glorious spirits that shone in the realms of light. But, besides the forfeiture of their celestial rank, the words of the text imply—

2d, That they also forfeited the delights of their native home. The Apostle says that "they left their own habitation." Some commentators are of opinion that this clause refers not to their place of abode, but to the posts of duty—the offices which they held; and they rest this opinion on the argument, that there can be no such thing as a local residence for spiritual existences—that bounded habitations are only suited to beings who are endowed with physical properties such as man has been created with. This argument, though it bears a plausible and philosophical aspect, is as much at fault in its philosophy as it is in its scripturality. There can be no doubt that the Scriptures speak of a local heaven—of a particular region in the universe where God more peculiarly dwells, and where the angels and spirits of the just made perfect dwell with him. It is true that the presence of the Lord is illimitable—that his being is unbounded—that he fills all space and all time, so that "the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain him." But whilst this fact is undoubted, yet it is equally certain that God may reveal his presence and perfections more clearly and closely in one place than in another. He does this in a certain sense even among men in this world; and where such manifestations of his grace and glory are vouchsafed, we are accustomed to say that it "is heaven upon earth." The feeling to which Jacob gave utterance, when the Lord drew nigh to him in the exercise of spiritual communion, expresses precisely the truth for which we are contending: "this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." And while Jehovah can thus concentrate his presence within the precincts of a particular locality, we have reason to believe that

a limited habitation is essential to the condition of limited creatures like angels and men, and that without it they would be deprived of the advantages of mutual co-operation and social communion. God alone is sufficient to his own happiness, and needs not the influence of sympathy and companionship to secure his perfect felicity: but all finite and dependent beings require this, inasmuch that to them solitude is the darkest image of helplessness and desolation—hence the necessity of a local heaven, or of a place where the sentient and intelligent creatures of God should meet and enjoy the sweets of social fellowship and sympathetic harmony. And if “*home*” be dear to the children of men—if they have so many fond associations and affecting reminiscences connected with it, we have every reason to think that the same laws which operate upon them, and engender those feelings of attachment by which they are bound to their native region, operate essentially, though perhaps in a different degree, upon the angels also; for though man was made lower than the angels, he was made but “a little lower;” and we know that both classes of creatures were morally and intellectually fashioned after the same image. Human nature differs from angelic nature in this, and in this only, that in man mind is wedded to a grosser physical organisation than that which envelops the more expansive powers of the angels; for it might easily be proved, did the occasion permit, that pure and unmixed spirituality is confined to Jehovah alone; and that all subordinate beings must have more or less of matter about them, to give them their distinct individual subsistence. This is a point, however, on which we do not feel ourselves warranted to dogmatise; but we have thought it right to touch upon it so far, for the purpose of showing that men and angels are not so diverse and dissimilar in their *essential* characteristics as many are apt to suppose. And we think we may venture, with some confidence, to affirm, that those peculiar sympathies by which human beings are led to look with affectionate interest on their accustomed homes, are sympathies to which angelic beings are far from being strangers; because they belong as much to the laws of our moral nature, as they do to the tendencies of our physical system. It was no small or fanciful forfeiture, therefore, which the fallen angels incurred, when, besides the loss of their original dignity, they lost what is here emphatically called “their *own* habitation.” We might at this point be tempted to expatiate on the glories of that habitation—on the pure and perfect delights of



the home which these unhappy spirits left; but we feel that we dare not allow our fancy to sport with such a theme. The very thought is so full of overwhelming grandeur, that the mind sinks beneath the weight of it. Imagination cowers her wing; Reason shades her eyes, unable to gaze on the blinding radiance; and Faith alone ventures to break silence, and to say—"Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" of a home so entrancingly happy—a habitation so ineffably glorious. We may, however, be permitted to present this subject in the sweet and simple strains of consecrated genius:—

I hear thee speak of the better land,  
Thou callest its children a happy band;  
Mother, O, where is that radiant shore,  
Shall we not seek it, and weep no more?  
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,  
And the fireflies glance through myrtle boughs?

Not there—not there, my child!

Is it where the feathery palm trees rise,  
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies?  
Or 'midst the green islands of glittering seas,  
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,  
And strange bright birds, on their starry wings,  
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things?

Not there—not there, my child!

Is it far away, in some region old,  
Where the rivers wander o'er sands of gold,  
And the burning rays of the ruby shine,  
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,  
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand—  
Is it there, sweet mother, that happy land?

Not there—not there, my child!

Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy,  
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy,  
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair,  
Sorrow and death may not enter there,  
Time does not breathe on its fadeless bloom—  
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb—

It is there—it is there, my child!

Having thus treated of the apostacy of the fallen angels, we now come to consider the cause which led to it; and in proceeding

to discuss this point, we must still bear in mind, that while the Scriptures speak clearly and explicitly of the fact of angelic apostacy, they nowhere attempt to account for it. They preserve the most marked and cautious silence as to the history of this mysterious event, nor is there any intimation to be found, within the entire compass of the record, from which the precise nature of their guilt can with certainty be gathered. All that has been written on the subject rests simply on grounds of supposition and conjecture; and hence much has been adventured, in the way of hypothetical reasoning, which it would be very idle and unprofitable to repeat. There are, however, general principles of Scripture analogy which may be warrantably applied to the elucidation of points that are not directly revealed in Scripture itself; and, so long as we pursue our inquiries under the clear guidance of these principles, we may proceed not only with safety, but with some prospect of success. There are, then, two questions which embrace all that is essential in the matter before us:—

1st, How did the fallen angels come under the power of sin?

2d, Wherein did their sin consist?

In order to meet the former of these questions with a distinct and explicit answer, it is necessary to observe, that there could have been nothing in the constitution of their nature inclining them to sin. We are bound to believe that, like man, they were created “upright;” that is, with a pure and untainted spirit. We know that the angels who kept their first estate are holy; and that it is because of their unspotted holiness they have remained in possession of their original habitation, and of their unclouded blessedness. It has never, so far as we are aware, been even surmised that the apostate spirits might have been of a different race from those who maintained their loyalty, or that they were inferior to them in point of moral or intellectual endowments. On the contrary, the prevailing opinion is, (and an opinion which, as we have already shown, has at least very strong presumptions in its favour,) that Satan and his followers stood at the head of all the angelic hosts,—that they were the mightiest peers in the kingdom of heaven—“the brightest and best of the sons of the morning.” But, however this may be, we may affirm, with perfect confidence, that they could not have been formed with any predisposition to evil. It is not possible to conceive that an infinitely pure and holy God could have created

a morally imperfect being—a being in whose nature the elements of sin and of self-destruction were directly and deliberately lodged. Such a supposition would be altogether at variance with the character of the Supreme, and would go to make Him the very author of sin, and the source of misery. Seeing, then, that these angels must have been created pure and holy, the difficulty lies in accounting for the manner in which sin suggested itself to their minds, so as to overcome them. Sin is the result of temptation;—but where was the temptation to come from? The whole universe was at that time free from stain. Satan had no predecessor to suggest evil purposes to him, as he did to our first parents; nor was there anything in the moral or material creation, calculated, in its own nature, to engender sinful thoughts or impure emotions. From whence then, it may be asked, was temptation to arise? In answer to this we may observe, that anything may prove a temptation which *produces a wrong impression, and which exerts an undue influence upon the mind.* If there be, in the world of thought or in the world of matter, any objects or ideas which surpass our comprehension, and sweep beyond the range of our faculties, such objects, however pure in themselves, may operate upon us as temptations: they may lead us to form false conceptions; and these conceptions may give rise to false aspirations, and unlawful desires; and we need not say that such desires, deliberately cherished and practically indulged, constitute *Sin*. If this be the case, (and no one who is qualified to judge can deny the statement,) it is clear that no finite being can be above the reach of temptation; for of no finite being can it be said that he comprehends all things, and that his mind is capable of forming just views, and cherishing right dispositions, in regard to all things. A being limited in his capacities is necessarily liable to fall; because there are always sources and degrees of temptation by which such a being may be overcome. Of God only can it be said that he “cannot be tempted of evil,” because of him only is it true that there is nothing above him and nothing unknown to him. This argument, while it serves to account for the introduction of sin, will also furnish a decisive answer to the cavil of those who are so often found expressing their half-infidel wonder that God should have permitted sin to enter into the universe at all. There are only three conditions on which this could have been prevented:

and the first is one that would leave them no room for cavilling, by leaving them no power of existing. To exclude the possibility of evil, God must have lived in the universe alone, without creating intelligent beings at all; for as there can be but "one living and true God," all other beings must be inferior to him; and, if inferior, they must be finite; and, if finite, they must be fallible. To state the conclusion in more emphatic terms, it was impossible for God, (we say it with reverence, yet with unhesitating confidence,) to create beings naturally incapable of falling. Infallibility is an attribute that is confined exclusively to the Divine nature; and that is absolutely incommunicable.—But there is yet another condition on which sin might have been prevented from breaking forth, either in heaven or on earth; and that is, by God creating beings without liberty of thought or freedom of will. He might have imposed upon them such restraints as would confine them within the limits of obedience despite of themselves. He might have curbed and counteracted the movements of their minds, so as to keep them from ranging beyond the bounds of duty and of safety. But were he to act in this way, he would be reducing intellectual creatures to mere helpless, will-less, incapable, and irresponsible machines.—But there is also a third condition on which the fall of the angels might have been prevented; and that is, by God interposing to deliver them as often as they came into circumstances of danger and temptation. That they might be preserved from falling by such means is not to be doubted; but it must be remembered that God was not bound by any obligation to interfere in this manner. As He had already bestowed upon them all the powers and faculties consistent with their condition—as he withheld from them nothing that was necessary for enabling them to fulfil the duties of the station in which he placed them—they could have no claim upon him for supernatural aid, should they bring themselves into difficulties that required it. Aid granted in these circumstances would be *grace*. It would be God interposing with extraordinary help when he was not called upon to do so,—when the creature had gone beyond his powers—powers that were sufficient both to guide and to guard him, so long as he kept within the limits of his proper sphere. Assistance extended in such an emergency would be purely a matter of favour; and if God was not *obliged* to afford it, he cannot be charged with injustice

if he saw meet to withhold it. This consideration, if rightly apprehended, will put to silence another cavil which has sometimes been raised in connection with the point before us, and which goes the length of arraigning the righteousness of God for declining to come to the aid of the creature, when he saw him dallying with temptation, gradually yielding to its influence, and at last reeling forward, with fatal and disastrous plunges, into the wrecking vortex of sin and ruin. God might have saved him if he chose, but then he was not *bound to do so*, and that is all we are at present concerned to prove; for were we to seek out all the reasons that might have moved him to permit the fall either of the angels or man, we should be venturing into depths where there are no soundings—launching out upon a sea of doubts, which the measuring line of human reason has never yet fathomed.

2d, Having thus shown how the apostate angels might have fallen under the power of sin, we now come to consider the second question, viz. Wherein did their sin consist? What was the particular transgression which led to their fall? Here also we have to make our way through a multitude of conjectures that meet us at every step, and dash against us like night-birds disturbed in their caves, or like blinking bats amid twilight ruins. Of these conjectures we shall only notice one or two, which, though very fanciful, and even absurd, are seriously entertained by many, and firmly believed by not a few. On the authority of a passage in the book of Genesis, it is supposed by some that the sin of the angels consisted in their forming unlawful alliances with the daughters of men. This view of the matter is advocated by several of the fathers; who have invested the subject with all the sombre mystery of a theological romance. But this theory has not been confined to them; it is held by some whose general views are far more sober and trustworthy than theirs; and yet, if we look at the passage in question, and consider at the same time the obvious inconsistencies which such a construction implies, we may well wonder that a notion of so strange and improbable a kind should ever have come to be gravely entertained. The passage, which may be found at the beginning of the sixth chapter of Genesis, is as follows—“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them: that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them

wives of all which they chose." By the "sons of God," the patristic interpreters of Scripture, along with their modern followers, understand the angels; forgetting that the seed of Seth were called by that name, to distinguish them from the descendants of Cain; and forgetting, farther, that the fall of the angels preceded that of Adam; and forgetting especially, (what, if properly considered, would have at once proved the absurdity of such an idea,) that the angels, from the very constitution of their nature, were incapable of the sin imputed to them, being creatures possessed of spiritual bodies, or, in other words, of intangible and impalpable organisations. To this corresponds the saying of our Lord—a saying founded on the necessary conditions of angelic existence—that "the angels in heaven neither marry nor are given in marriage."

Another theory maintained on this subject is, that the angels sinned by envying the honours which they understood were to be conferred on the human race, through the incarnation of Christ. As the covenant of grace was arranged in eternity, the angels are supposed to have heard of its conditions, and to have been moved to envy, by hearing that a class of beings, naturally inferior to themselves, were to be raised above them, by the Son of God condescending to assume their nature. This theory, however, is simply, but, we think, very effectually confuted by Augustine, who says, "that pride must needs go before envy; and that envy was not the cause of pride, but pride the cause of envy; for none can by envy hate the excellency of another, unless by pride he first inordinately love his own." It is in consequence of holding an overweening estimate of ourselves, that we are led to feel aggrieved by being made aware of the real or supposed advantages of others. If the angels, therefore, envied man, it was not their *first* sin, for they must have trespassed by cherishing a spirit of pride before then. But a fact that conclusively disposes of this theory, is that, in regard to the matter in question, they had no occasion for envy, because Christ in his human nature was himself made "a little lower than the angels." This is distinctly asserted in the eighth Psalm, and re-asserted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; so that if Christ in one sense raised men above them, he consented to stoop down, and to stand, for a time, in a condition below them.

The most natural and probable supposition is that of those who maintain that *pride* was the particular sin which led the apostate angels into rebellion. This hypothesis is all the more worthy of belief, that it seems at least to be countenanced by a declaration of Scripture, Paul writing to Timothy says, that "a bishop must be no novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil:" from whence it is inferred, (and certainly the inference appears fair and natural enough,) that the sin for which the devil was condemned was "pride." The view thus suggested gains the strongest confirmation, from all that is known, of the laws by which spiritual beings are influenced. It has been said, in reference to man, and the statement is considered so true and just as to be often repeated, "that ambition (or the pride of rising above our sphere) is the last infirmity of noble minds." It is a well understood fact, that the existence of superior powers is always accompanied by a proportionate desire to excel. The most exalted natures are those that are most apt to seek after the sublime, the unknown, the infinite. The law of progress—the disposition to "reach forth to the things that are before, and to forget the things that are behind"—operates most powerfully on the most powerful minds; and seeing that this law and this disposition spring from a panting thirst after ideal perfection—an eager and intense pursuit of the *highest* end—it is the very temptation that is most likely to beguile creatures that are naturely pure and good. We find, for example, that this was the bait with which Satan tried and deceived our first parents. He, no doubt, adapted his temptation to both parts of their complex nature—he appealed to their sensual appetites, as well as to their spiritual aspirings: the fruit, we are told, was "pleasant to the eyes;" but the lure that prevailed upon them to touch it was the intellectual elevation to which the tempter declared the tasting of it would lead—"God doth know," says the serpent, "that, in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." There is, therefore, every reason to suppose that Satan, in this case, took advantage of his own experience, and that he suggested to Adam and Eve the train of thoughts and influences which proved fatal to himself and to his companions in rebellion. Resting the matter on this hypothesis, which appears to us to be, at least, the most probable

of all the theories which have been propounded on his subject, we now proceed to consider.—

II. The punishment with which the sin of the fallen angels was visited.

1st, In regard to this, we read, in the first place, that they are “reserved in everlasting chains.” From what is stated in the former part of this verse, we find that they suffered the punishment of *loss* involved in the very fact of their fall. By that event they forfeited their original dignity and their celestial habitation; but, besides these heavy calamities, they were also subjected to direct and positive inflictions of Divine wrath. After being cast out of heaven, they were not permitted to roam at large wherever they chose. They were seized as prisoners, and secured “in chains.” These chains are, of course, of a spiritual kind, suited to the spiritual nature of the beings on whom they are imposed; and consist of the judicial and providential restraints under which they are laid, and by which they endure a certain measure of present suffering, while they are at the same time prevented from doing all the evil which their malignity would prompt them to perpetrate. Scripture and experience alike combine to assure us that they have still the power of doing evil to some extent; that the chains in which they are bound are not of a nature to fetter their liberty of action entirely; that, on the contrary, they are allowed “to go about seeking whom they may devour.” The intimations of the Divine word plainly imply, that they, as well as the angels who kept their first estate, have an important part to act in the great drama of redemption. Of the unfallen angels it is said, “are they not *all* (not some of them—not certain orders of them only—but all) ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?” And, in a passage already quoted, we find “the dragon and his angels” represented as “fighting against Michael and his angels:” and the contest is in connection with the kingdom of Christ—the former maintaining, and the latter opposing, its objects and interests. Satan is also declared to be the “father” of the wicked among men—“the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” From these, as well as many other statements of Scripture, we have reason to believe that the two classes of angels, the fallen and the unfallen, are directly employed about, and essentially involved in, the



schemes and issues connected with the work of redemption, Christ, in his mediatorial capacity, is stated to be the original creator of the angels \* as a body. He is also set forth as their ruling Head. † We have, therefore, considerable grounds for inferring that, both as regards the dispensation under which they were originally placed, as well as the condition in which they stand at present, the fortunes of the good and evil angels are linked to those of the human race. Though occupying different positions in the scale of being, the two classes of creatures are endowed with moral and spiritual powers of the same nature. They were, as we have already noticed, formed alike though not equally after the Divine image. The laws prescribed for their observance must necessarily be the same; for God can have but one law, and that law so perfect that it can neither be improved nor impaired. The ends for which they were created—the grand moral purposes they were designed to fulfil—must also be the same; because the desires and determinations of Jehovah are as unchangeable as himself. Hence, instead of supposing that angels and men have been placed under isolated and independent dispensations, as is commonly believed, the suggestions of Scripture clearly favour the idea that the destinies of the human and angelic races form rather separate parts of the same general system—a system extending over all the provinces of the Divine empire—embracing the transactions of heaven, and earth, and hell; and a system in which the interests of all the rational creatures of God, of every class, and grade, and character, are essentially involved: thus forming one mighty plan, of which the cross is the grand centre, and the judgment-seat the terminating stage. Though the fallen angels, therefore, are fettered in their power, they are not altogether deprived of liberty. The part they have to act, in connection with the mediatorial scheme, requires that they should be left free to some extent; but yet their movements are confined within certain limits; they are not allowed to go entirely at large, or to work all the mischief and misery to which their inclinations might prompt them. If they are permitted to range abroad, it is with shackles around them; for the Apostle says that they are “reserved in everlasting *chains*.”

\* Colossians i. 16. † 1 Peter iv. 22. Colossians ii. 10.

2d, You will observe that he speaks of the chains being "everlasting." This is evidently intended to intimate that their penal captivity is designed to be perpetual—that theirs is a case of condemnation from which there is no deliverance. Seeing that God has thought it consistent with his wisdom to provide a Redeemer for man, many are disposed to ask, why should these apostate angels be left without the means of recovery? and several attempts have been made to answer this question. Some conceive that as man was *seduced* into sin, his fall was less criminal, and more worthy of commiseration, than the fall of Satan and his angels; who, sinning without a tempter, and without any external instigation, were altogether without excuse. Others are of opinion that the reason why God did not interfere on behalf of the angels is, that their capacities and privileges being of such an exalted kind, rendered their guilt so pre-eminently heinous that mercy to them would destroy the very name and notion of justice—salvation for such desperate transgressors would, they think, be a stretch of clemency that would go to annihilate all the judicial attributes of the Godhead, and to loosen the reins of the Divine authority for ever; leaving Jehovah "a God all mercy," and, therefore, "a God unjust." A third party endeavour to solve the problem, by supposing that—as only a part of the angels fell, and not the whole race, and as only a part of mankind will be finally redeemed—the two classes of beings, human and angelic, will be continued in their original state through their elect representatives, and will remain as everlasting trophies of Divine grace; while the ruined angels, and the lost portion of our species, will form standing monuments, attesting throughout eternal ages the stern majesty of Divine justice. In order to preserve any remnant of the human race at all, it was necessary to provide for their restoration by a Redeemer; but in regard to the angelic race this was not necessary, because there was a section of them who had stood faithful and kept their first estate. But as the present is a point on which the Word is entirely silent, and a point which obviously transcends the limits of our capacities, it is both safer and wiser to avoid the temptation of theorising upon it. The judgments of God, as regards this matter, are "a great deep," in which the rash explorer runs the risk of sinking beyond the reach of his faculties, and from which he may only rise to sink more blindly

and helplessly again. But whatever may be the reasons which led Jehovah to hold out no hope of redemption for these apostate angels, it is very certain that there is not the slightest prospect of such an event so much as hinted at in any part of the Scriptures. On the contrary, every passage bearing on the subject speaks of their being given over to final and irretrievable perdition; and in accordance with the uniform strain of these passages is the declaration of the Apostle, when he says that they are "reserved in everlasting chains."

3d, But it is stated farther, that, besides the restraints imposed upon them, they are left "under darkness." This, of course, is not to be regarded in a sense merely literal; for, as has been already shown, these ruined spirits are not shut up in some region withdrawn from the light of nature, where they are condemned to close captivity, and from whence they cannot make their escape. It is true that the imagery of the text is taken from a prison-house, and refers to the condition of criminals lying in a sunless dungeon, with chains upon their limbs, waiting the day of trial and the sentence that is to fix their final doom. But, while a small cell may be a fitting place of confinement for a child of earth, where is the prison-house sufficiently spacious for such mighty spirits—for beings who were accustomed to sweep through the wide circuit of the universe with more facility than we can travel over this little globe on which our lot has been cast? The space included within the compass of the solar system, an angel would feel to be more narrow and contracted than the closest cell to which a human criminal has ever been consigned; and the restraints that should limit the range of his liberty within the same bounds, would shackle him as effectually as the tightest chains that ever checked the freedom of a human felon; while the blaze of a thousand suns would, to a being who was wont to gaze upon the ineffable effulgence around the throne, be as dim as the gloomiest shades that ever rested on a human dungeon. When, therefore, we read that these apostate spirits are still allowed to roam through certain parts of the creation, it forms no contradiction of the fact that they are "chained" prisoners; for such a limitation of their movements is, in their case, tantamount to the strictest confinement; and when we are also informed that they have access to realms that are irradiated by the myriad lights of the firmament, it forms

no contradiction of the fact that they are still "under darkness," for the splendours of the starry heavens have to them "no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth;" so that, even in a literal sense, the language before us may be regarded as in some respects true. But the description is to be understood as chiefly applicable to the *spiritual* darkness in which the fallen angels are enveloped, by being deprived of every ray of the Divine presence—every hope of rescue from the Divine wrath, and left in the gloom of wretchedness and despair, awaiting the "judgment of the great day."

4th, But why, it may be asked, are these apostate angels to stand at the judgment-seat? Have they not been already judged and sentenced? They have in part, but not in whole. For reasons unfathomable to us, they have been allowed to interfere in the concerns of the human race, and to mingle as active agents in the various proceedings and events connected with the moral and spiritual history of mankind. They entered as hostile partisans into the controversy between heaven and earth, with the twofold design of exasperating the spirit of rebellion which they were the instruments of kindling at first, and also of opposing and traversing, as far as they could, the remedial measures which God had devised, with the view of "reconciling the world to himself." It is, therefore, necessary that they should appear at "the judgment of the great day," both for the purpose of accounting for the accumulated crimes they have committed since their expulsion from heaven, and of bearing witness as to the conduct of their human confederates in the warfare carried on by them against the Most High. To the interests and fortunes of Adam's descendants they linked themselves by the closest and most fatal ties; and they are, consequently, reserved in chains, to be tried along with them on that dread and decisive day, when the transactions of the whole universe shall be unfolded—when the events that have transpired in heaven, and earth, and hell, shall be openly disclosed—when the eternal decrees of the Godhead, together with the entire chain of events combining and comprehending the destinies of all his intelligent creatures, from the birth of the angels till the end of time, shall be circumstantially detailed—and when proofs, grand, undeviating, and overwhelming, will be brought forth in vindication of the matchless wisdom, the boundless mercy, the unstained justice,

and the untarnished holiness of the Triune God—such proofs as will cause every loyal bosom in the august assemblage to beat high with exultation, and every loyal voice to break forth into one mighty chorus of enraptured praise, saying, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints!” While this triumphant shout swells up to the heavens, and sweeps through the echoing realms of universal nature, Satan, and his train of accursed spirits and accursed men, will fall back from before the face of the throne, and, with a counter cry of hopeless discomfiture, and unending despair, sink down into the blackness of darkness for ever.

## LECTURE VIII.

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### THE FATE OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.

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#### AN EXAMPLE OF THE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES OF LICENTIOUS PRINCIPLES.

THE verse to which we are now come contains the third and last example which the Apostle cites, with the view of enforcing the lessons which it is his object to inculcate. The various cases quoted by him are intended to show the manner in which God dealt with transgressors in former times, and how sinners of different classes, and offences of different kinds, were visited with punishment. The Israelites were punished for apostacy arising from unbelief; the fallen angels for apostacy arising from their abandonment of the position and habitation in which they were originally placed; and now we are called upon to contemplate the case of the cities of the plain, whose inhabitants were punished for apostacy arising from the influence of those fleshly lusts by which men in every age are drowned in destruction and perdition. It is important to remember the precise point which these historical facts are intended to illustrate. The example of the Israelites was designed to prove, that however closely we may be connected with the cause and people of God, and however great the privileges consequently enjoyed by us, we shall not escape the penalties that our iniquities deserve. This was the first lesson that the heretics denounced by the Apostle needed to learn; for it would appear that they considered themselves safe, because they had

outwardly espoused the cause of Christ; were professed members of his church; and had been admitted to the privileges pertaining to his people. The example of the fallen angels again was brought forward for the purpose of showing that a departure from our original principles, and a schismatical separation from the society of the faithful, will not pass unpunished, however exalted our station or our powers may be. This was a second lesson which these seducers required to be taught; for they evidently imagined that they were far more enlightened than the mass of professing Christians around them; that the errors which they had come to embrace were sounder than the views in which they were instructed at first; and that they were entitled, in virtue of their fancied superiority to the rest, to desert their fellowship, and to form themselves into a distinct body apart from them. The example of the cities of the plain, which we are at present to illustrate, was calculated to bear down still more directly on the principles and proceedings of these profligate sectaries, both as it was fitted to show the fearful length to which such principles might be carried, and the disastrous results to which such proceedings invariably lead. Hence the Apostle, proceeding to administer this fitting and formidable admonition, says: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

I. The history of the cities of the plain is recorded in the book of Genesis, and will, doubtless, be distinctly remembered by you all. It will only be necessary for us, therefore, to give such a brief outline of this, as may serve to bring out the lesson which the Apostle draws from it. The cities in question were situated on the banks of the Jordan, and occupied a plain remarkable alike for its scenic beauty and luxuriant fertility. We read, that when a difference arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, the former, in order to prevent the recurrence of such contentions in future, proposed that his relative and he should separate to a greater distance from each other, instead of living in the same place, and feeding their flocks on the same pastures as they had hitherto done. In that spirit of fairness and disinterested integrity which might be expected from the father of the faithful, he thus addressed his friend and kinsman—"Let there be no strife,

I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren: is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." The effect of this proposal was, that Lot agreed to remove, leaving Abraham to remain in the district which they had till then possessed in common; and, while looking for another locality in which he might settle, we are told that he "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." Such is the description that is given of the scene in the midst of which Sodom and Gomorrah stood. In point of graceful and romantic beauty it is likened to Paradise itself: while in point of fruitfulness it is compared to one of the richest valleys of the Nile,—valleys which were then celebrated all over the world for their agricultural wealth.

But, besides the two cities that are named, Jude also alludes to "the cities that were about them." Some writers speak of there being a number of other cities in this fair but fated and polluted district. Strabo enumerates thirteen; others many more; but we read in Scripture of three only in addition to those specified—viz. Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar; and there is reason to believe that the last escaped the destruction which fell upon the rest, it being the place to which Lot was conducted by the angels on the day when the deluge of fire descended. "Sodom and Gomorrah" are specially mentioned because they were the largest and most important of these cities; and being the principal centres of influence, they, no doubt, contributed most to spread that spirit of foetid luxury and foul profligacy which at last awoke the wrath of heaven, and drew down upon them such sudden and signal ruin. The prophet Ezekiel sets forth the chief causes of that corruption which swelled to so dreadful a height. Speaking of Sodom, as the representative of all the daughter cities around her, he says, "this was the iniquity of Sodom; pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy." It is needless to show how the circumstances named by the prophet led



to the sins which followed in their train. "Pride" is a haughty and headstrong passion, which prompts the man in whom it rules to follow his own will, and to trample on every obstacle that may come between him and the gratification of his desires. "Fulness of bread" fosters the bodily appetites, and inflames those fleshly lusts which "war against the soul." "Abundance of idleness" throws the mind open to the assaults of temptation, affords time and opportunity for entertaining evil thoughts, and planning and pursuing evil courses. The want of useful exertion, while it tends to deaden the mental faculties, has also the effect of promoting the development of the animal feelings. And the last feature mentioned, disregard for the "poor and needy," exemplifies the gross selfishness—the heartless avoidance of painful sensations—by which the votaries of a false and lascivious refinement are generally distinguished. It was from the force and concurrence then of these causes, that the peculiar corruptions of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring cities arose; and we cannot fail to see how directly they were calculated to produce the result which the prophet ascribes to them. The prosperity of fools destroys them: and wherever we find pride and luxury, idleness and unfeeling selfishness, prevailing among any class, or predominating in any community, we may be sure that the sins of Sodom are there, and that Sodom's doom is not far distant.

II. Such, then, being the outward circumstances and social condition of the cities mentioned, let us now consider the peculiar nature of their guilt. And, in doing so, let us endeavour to look at the matter in the solemn and sacred light of Scripture, dismissing from our minds those feelings of false delicacy which are apt to be associated with the discussion of subjects like the present, even in the house of God; and let us also beware of giving way to that spirit of thoughtless levity which is sometimes manifested in connection with topics of this nature; and which not only betrays a want of due respect for the Divine word, but forms an infallible indication of evil thoughts and corrupt dispositions. There are, doubtless, individuals who, from their years and experience, are much better fitted for dealing with such matters than others; but still it is the imperative duty of every minister of Christ to declare the counsel of God, in regard to this, as well as to other sins. To neglect doing so, is to go in the very face of his commission,

which requires him to "keep nothing back" of all that God has commanded him to speak; or to pass over the subject in a slight, superficial, or evasive manner, for fear of offending the delicacy either of one class or another, is to expose himself to the charge of unfaithfulness, and to incur the heavy guilt of "handling the word of the Lord deceitfully."

Recurring, then, to the case before us, it is said of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, that "they gave themselves over to fornication, running after strange flesh." "Fornication," in the more limited sense of the term, refers to uncleanness, as committed between persons unmarried; but the word is in Scripture applied to adultery also; and, accordingly, we find our Lord saying, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, committeth adultery." In the text it is intended to include all kinds of impurity or breaches of chastity. It would appear that this base and abominable vice prevailed to the most loathsome extent throughout the cities of the plain. Their luxurious dwellings, and their lovely groves, were converted into haunts of uncleanness and overflowing licentiousness; accompanied, no doubt, by the song and the dance, the festive gaities and the lascivious adornments, by which the proud and the profligate endeavour to throw an air of easy levity around their hideous debaucheries. Instead, however, of enlarging on this subject in language of our own, we prefer giving you the exposition of an old and venerable divine, who says, "that whereas fornication, and following after strange flesh, were the sins of Sodom, we are taught to avoid the sin of fornication, and all sins of uncleanness. For, first, the heavy curse of God is passed not only against Sodom for these sins, but wheresoever they be found, they be sins that burn to destruction. They set families on fire, fill them with disgrace and misery, waste and consume them utterly. Again, no fornicators, adulterers, or whoremongers, shall ever be admitted into the kingdom of God; and the same Apostle, who declares this, propoundeth five reasons why we should flee fornication; first, our bodies are the Lord's, and must be serviceable unto him. Secondly, we look they should be raised to glory on the last day, and therefore we must, in the meantime, keep them honourable. Thirdly, they are the members of Christ, and we may not make them the members of an harlot. Fourthly, whereas all other sins

are without the body, this directly is against the body. Fifthly, the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and these sins make it the devil's sty and stews. Sixthly, our bodies are bought with a price, and it is sacrilege not to glorify God in the body as well as in the soul, seeing that both alike are his. Now, if any man be solicited by temptation unto these sins, and would know how to overmaster them, he must begin with his heart, and obtain and retain within it the fear of God, which only is able to overrule him. Let him remember that this was the shield of defence which protected Joseph, who, when tempted by Potiphar's wife, said, "how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God."\*

III. This leads us, in the last place, to notice the fate which befell these cities. We are told that they are "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

1st, In this language there is an evident allusion, first of all, to the manner in which these cities were destroyed. From the account of this event, recorded in the book of Genesis, we learn that Abraham was visited by messengers from heaven, who apprised him of the evil that was determined upon Sodom and Gomorrah. On hearing these disastrous tidings, the father of the faithful drew near before the Lord, and pleaded in behalf of the cities in question, with a fervency and ingenuity of intercession which has been the admiration of the church in every age, and which places the character of that venerable patriarch in the most sacred and exalted light.† Proceeding from communing with him, the two angels who accompanied "the Lord" on this occasion went on to Sodom, and entered into the house of Lot, who met them at the gate; and pressed them to partake of such hospitality as his dwelling could afford. Ere they had time to rest themselves under his roof, a crowd of lewd revellers assembled around the door, whose detestable language and spirit soon proved to the heavenly guests within, that the cry of Sodom, which had come up before the Lord, was fearfully borne out by the conduct of its inhabitants. Seeing this, the angels said unto Lot, "Hast thou any here besides? Sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which

\* Perkins—p. 532. fol.

† Genesis xviii. 23.

married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.\* Finding that these Sodomite connections refused to receive the warning thus given to them, the angels hastened Lot, with his wife and two daughters, out of the doomed city, and conducted them to Zoar, beyond the reach of the sudden destruction that was at hand. "The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar." "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." Abraham, disturbed in spirit by the event that was revealed to him the day before, and having but too much reason to fear that not even "ten righteous men" would be found in Sodom, rose up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord. This place commanded a view of the whole plain, and of the cities that lay in its fertile and umbrageous bosom, and as the patriarch gazed from the overhanging hills of Palestine, along the valley of the Jordan, "lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." The deed was done! The threatened doom was executed; and the proud cities of the plain were reduced to ashes, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!"

2d, But the language of the text is intended to express much more than the mere external ruin which fell upon these cities. The vengeance of "eternal fire" seems not only to point at the volcanic flames by which the lives and habitations of the Sodomites were consumed; but also at the spiritual destruction by which that calamity was consummated. It would appear, from the intercession of Abraham, as well as from the circumstances related of Lot, that if there was one righteous man in the whole plain he had made his escape; and the narrative leads us to infer, that all those whom he left behind were stained with the pollutions as they who were involved in the judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their fate, therefore, is not only designed to show the temporal disasters to which those who sin after the similitude of their transgression are in every age exposed, but likewise the eternal vengeance awaiting their guilt. Among the sins which are most frequently mentioned in Scripture as excluding the soul from

\* Genesis xix. 12.

heaven, and sealing it up for hell, is that to which they were addicted; and among the various classes that are described as destined to have their place in the lake that burneth, the votaries or the victims of this vice are always prominently noticed. The example before us was, accordingly, cited for the purpose of admonishing the loose and luxurious professors, regarding whom the Apostle was writing, of the consequences to which their lasciviousness would ultimately lead. In the midst of their carnal security, and while rioting in the enjoyment of what they called their evangelical liberty, the Apostle points to the smoking ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah, and bids them take warning from the cities "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

## LECTURE IX.

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### MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL DISPUTING WITH THE DEVIL.

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PROCEEDING to apply the lessons furnished by the historical illustrations cited to the conduct of the unsound and mischievous party to whom he refers, he says: "Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." It is generally supposed that the statement contained in the first part of this verse, regarding the lasciviousness of these seducers, is the only inference designed to be drawn from the three cases specified by the Apostle, and that the two following clauses, describing their seditious and calumnious spirit, are added to the picture as new features in their character—features not involved in the illustrative examples to which allusion is made. Those who look on the passage in this light, endeavour to show that the sin of the Israelities consisted chiefly in the license which they gave to their sensual appetites—a construction that is clearly opposed to the recorded tenor of their history, which shows that, although they did transgress in this respect in the matter of the Moabites, yet it was by no means the prevailing or predominating sin by which they were characterised. For the purpose of supporting the same theory, this class of commentators have adopted the opinion, that the transgression which led to the fall of the apostate angels was of a similar nature; and the passage in the book of Genesis, to which we have already adverted, is cited in

confirmation of their views. The verse before us, however, is sufficient to prove the fallacy of these conclusions. When rightly regarded, it will be found to contain three separate inferences, derived from the three separate cases to which it refers. Proceeding in a converse order, the Apostle compares the seducers of whom he speaks to Sodom and Gomorrah in point of licentiousness; to the angels who kept not their first estate in point of rebelliousness; to the ancient Israelites in point of sedition and disaffection towards their rulers. Like the first, they "defiled the flesh"—like the second, they "despised dominion"—like the third, they "spake evil of dignities."

Having in the preceding Lectures shown the application of these instances to the case of the heretics in question, we now go on to consider the remaining illustration by which the Apostle describes the presumption of their conduct. This he does by comparing it with that of "Michael the Archangel, who, when disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, the Lord rebuke thee."

In order to bring out the various points here suggested, let us consider—

I. The disputants referred to.

II. The subject about which they disputed.

III. The manner in which the dispute was conducted.

I. The disputants are "Michael the archangel" and "the devil." With regard to the first of these, it is supposed by many that the archangel referred to is Christ, the angel of the covenant. This opinion is chiefly founded on the name by which the exalted being in question is called. Michael in the original Hebrew signifies one who is like to or equal with God. But, notwithstanding the peculiar signification of the name, there are several reasons which appear to us to render the supposition we have mentioned on the whole very improbable.

1st, We find Michael the archangel spoken of in the book of Daniel, 10th chapter, 13th verse, and there he is declared to be "one of the chief princes"—a description which cannot apply to Christ; who, so far from being one of the angelic hierarchy, is represented as their sovereign Head and Creator. Again, in the same chapter of Daniel, a certain angel, speaking of the difficulty of the work in which he was engaged, says, that in carrying that work forward there was none that "held with him or strengthened

him *but* Michael." Now, to speak of there being none with us *but* Christ is a mode of expression that is scarcely applicable in such a case, for what further help is needed if he be present. He who has the Son of God to strengthen him, cannot seek or miss the aid of any other. But, besides this, you will observe that Jude calls Michael "an archangel," a designation by which Christ is never spoken of in Scripture. He is, indeed, in the old Testament, frequently represented as an angel, and we read that he often appeared in the likeness of one of these beings; but he is nowhere alluded to under the style and title which is given to Michael. On the contrary, there is a passage in one of the Epistles of Paul, where we find an express distinction drawn between himself and the archangel mentioned in the text. In 1st Thessalonians, iv. 16, the Apostle, describing the descent of Christ at the day of judgment, says: "The Lord shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." But, further, the terms in which Jude speaks of Michael, in the verse before us, are terms which cannot, with any propriety, be predicated of Christ—he states that the archangel "*durst* not bring a railing accusation against the devil." This is not language that could be used regarding one of the persons of the Godhead; and we know that the statement, so far as it refers to Christ, is opposed to fact; for we read in John's Gospel (viii. 44), that our Saviour did dare to say much more of Satan than Michael felt himself warranted to do, for he called him "a liar" and "a murderer," which was just passing upon him the severest sentence that it was possible to pronounce. But the parallel passage in Peter should be sufficient to set the whole question at rest; for, while referring to this very matter, he places the rebuker of Satan directly and distinctively among the ranks of the angels; and the words which he uses are these: "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation," &c. These reasons are, we think, decisive enough as to the fact that the being here mentioned under the name of Michael was not Christ, but a created angel. The question, therefore, which now meets us, is who or what this angel was? His rank is specially stated by the Apostle, who tells us that he was an "archangel," which signifies an angel of the first dignity. In a former Lecture we took occasion to notice that the intimations of Scripture clearly indicate that there are gradations of rank among the angelic race. The classification of names and



of orders that we meet with, in many of the passages in which these spiritual intelligences are spoken of, proves beyond all reasonable doubt that there are distinctions of power and of dignity established between them; but what those distinctions really are, or how many ranks of angels there may in reality be, are points on which the Scriptures give us no definite information.

The schoolmen, however—a class of writers who generally theorise with most confidence on those subjects on which they have the least light—have taken it upon them to settle this matter in the most precise and positive way. They tell us that the whole company of angels is divided into three principal ranks or hierarchies—that from each of these three branches out three subordinate ranks, making in all nine separate classes or orders, and that the archangels stand at the head of all, and form the chief princes of Heaven's vast provinces. St. Augustine, who, as we formerly remarked, is by far the soundest and most sagacious of these ancient writers, says, in reference to the point before us, "How these names of angels differ, let them speak who are able, if yet they are able to prove that they speak. I profess my ignorance, however;" and, in saying so, the worthy father at least proved that he was intelligently ignorant, which is a much higher attainment than being ignorantly intelligent. But whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining the actual number of classes into which the angelic hosts are distributed, and the relative distinctions which subsist between them, the fact of there being such classes and distinctions is too plainly revealed to leave any room for doubt; and, with regard to the case immediately before us, it is important to notice that the Scriptures nowhere allude to a class of archangels. There is only *one* archangel spoken of in the whole range of the sacred oracles. In the passage from the Thessalonians already quoted it is said of Christ that he will descend from heaven with the voice of "*the* archangel;" and the only being to whom the title in question is applied is Michael the archangel referred to in the text, who is also described by Daniel "as one of the chief princes." We know that the apostate angels are under the direction of one sovereign Spirit, and there is reason to suppose that this was the case even before they fell. It is therefore inferred that, as the fallen angels have been from the first ruled by a principal chief, the unfallen angels are subject to the same order of government, and that their feudal head is Michael, hence

called "the archangel" or chief of the angels. In accordance with this, we read in the Book of Revelation that Michael and his angels fought against the devil and his angels—a statement that conveys the idea of two great leaders contending against each other with the forces placed under their command.

2d, So much, then, for the name and rank of the first of the disputants. Let us now turn our attention for a little to the other. Having lately discussed the case of the fallen angels, there does not remain much to be said on this point. It is said that Michael the archangel contended with "the devil." As what has been already stated regarding the ranks of the angels applies to the evil spirits as well as to the good, we do not need to enter into any farther explanations, for the purpose of showing the nature of the position which Satan holds among the spirits who fell with him. The fact of his supremacy over them is so distinctly set forth and so invariably asserted, that it is denied by none who admit the existence of the evil spirits at all; and all that we have occasion to notice on this head, therefore, respects the name by which he is here distinguished. He is called "the devil," a word which means "an accuser." For this reason Judas is called a devil, because he basely accused and betrayed his Lord. The apostle, in 2d Timothy iii. 3, speaks of some who are "treacherous false accusers;" and the word translated false accusers is the same that is elsewhere translated devils: and in Titus ii. 3, he says, concerning the aged women, that they must not be "false accusers," or devils; and it tends to place the sin of slander in a very strong and solemn light—that it is the very sin from which Satan derives his name—the sin for which he is most distinguished, and consequently the sin which partakes most of his spirit. If, therefore, there be any individual who is noted for his slanderous and calumniating disposition, it may be said of him that he is animated by the peculiar temper of Satan, who is just called the devil because he is a false accuser. A man that is addicted to the sins of the flesh degrades himself to a beast—he becomes the slave of his animal passions; but the man who is habituated to the vice of calumny, who goes about maligning and misrepresenting his neighbour, that man sinks below a beast and becomes "a devil;" and yet the world, which scorns the besotted drunkard, smiles at the satanic calumniator. It loathes the beast, but it loves the devil. Satan is called by the name of accuser for two reasons—because he slanders God to man and man to God.

It was by slandering God to man that he effected the fall of our first parents, and it is by slandering man to God that he attempts to destroy those whom God receives into his favour. Witness, as examples of this, the cases of Job, and Joshua the High Priest.

It is also worthy of note that the other name by which the chief of the fallen angels is designated—"Satan"—has a meaning essentially the same. It signifies "an adversary," but not, observe, a direct and declared adversary, but one who pleads against another—who endeavours to put him in the wrong—who seeks, by all the arts of chicanery and malignity, to pervert his cause and to compass his ruin. Hence arises a moral distinction, which, although but little attended to, is of the greatest weight and consequence. The man who attacks you openly, who offers you physical violence, is no doubt a dangerous, and, in a certain sense, a bad man; but still the very openness and direct vehemence of his passion partakes more of the animal than the intellectual nature. It arises from a sudden impulse of the mind, working on the irritability of the nervous system. The explosive heat, the signs of physical commotion by which it is accompanied, puts you on your guard, and prepares you for standing on the defensive; and, unless the case is a very extreme one—unless the assault amounts to actual murder—you escape with, at the worst, some external hurt, which external remedies may speedily remove. But the subtle adversary, the man who labours by tact and sophistry to injure you—who misrepresents your motives, casts the colour of suspicion upon your actions, lays snares for your feet, and plots with cool and deliberate purpose to destroy your good name, to undermine your means of usefulness, to crush your spirit and to break your heart—oh, beware of that man!—That is Satan in his most satanic form!—that is the adversary whom you have the greatest reason to dread. He may not threaten your life or put you in danger of bodily harm, indeed, for he would thereby be committing himself, but he will endeavour to take you off by slow poison—he will touch all that is dearest to you on earth, as his Master touched Job, and he will not rest satisfied till, if he can, he leaves you, like Job, a bare, and blighted, and broken-hearted man. And, while working all this mischief, he will keep out of sight, or if by chance he meets you, he will look as smooth and bland as if he actually loved you. He will, to use the poet's phrase, "smile and smile, and be a villain." Beware, we again say, of such a man, for that is your

enemy in his deadliest shape—the serpent with his sleek skin but mortal fang. It is fearful to think that there can be such men; but no one who has had any experience of the world can doubt that such men there are. As sure as the true believer resembles his Master—shows the simplicity and the godly sincerity by which Christ was distinguished—so sure is it that the children of the devil exhibit the image of their “father,” and carry out his spirit in their designs and actions.

II. Having thus referred to the character of the disputants, let us now consider the subject of their dispute. Jude says that Michael the archangel “disputed with the devil about the body of Moses.” To what, connected with the body of Moses, did the dispute refer? What were the doubtful circumstances in the case that could give rise to disputation? On this point there are various conjectures advanced. Some affirm that by the body of Moses we are not to understand the physical frame of the Hebrew law-giver, but the Jewish Church, which, as being originally founded under the auspices of Moses, may be figuratively called his body, in the same way as the Christian Church is called the body of Christ. But the slightest consideration will be sufficient to show, that, while there is not a figurative but a literal propriety in using this phrase with regard to Christ and his spiritually incorporated Church, there is the utmost impropriety and incongruity in calling the Jewish dispensation the body of Moses, because it was not so in any conceivable sense of the term. Others, however, are of opinion that the contention about the body of Moses took place at the time of his death. We read that, at the command of God, Moses ascended Mount Nebo to die, and we are told that he died there, and that God buried him, and that none of the people ever knew where he was laid. The party of whom we are now speaking allege that the body of Moses, at his death, was committed to the care of Michael the archangel, and that the dispute arose about the propriety of giving him an honourable burial. The devil, they say, opposed this on the ground that Moses had, in a sudden fit of anger, slain the Egyptian—that he was guilty of murder in doing so—and that the disposal of his body consequently belonged to him, and not to the archangel. But this supposition is evidently absurd, because Satan could not but know that the conduct of Moses in that matter (if it was indeed designedly criminal) had been forgiven by God, who had bestowed upon him the most signal

tokens of his favour after the deed was committed. Moses is held forth in Scripture as a model of meekness, and yet we know that he was a man of hasty temper; for, besides the act already noticed, we read of his breaking the tables of the law, which he had just received from the hands of God, in a sudden fit of displeasure at seeing Aaron and the people engaged in worshipping the golden calf when he came down from the mount; and we are also told that he was excluded from the land of promise for speaking unadvisedly with his lips. But still his name stands on the record as the meekest of men; and it stands deservedly, for so he was. Meekness does not consist in callousness of feeling or in passiveness of disposition; neither does it consist in that down-looking "pride which apes humility;" nor in that affected moderation which would fain be taken for wisdom. Far less does it consist in the smiling face or the smooth phraseology that the servile and the plausible find it their interest to affect. It consists rather in that simple and unconscious modesty of mind which arises from the total absence of assumption and ambition—which, although not proof against sudden outbreaks of feeling, is yet, in the general course of events, gentle, patient, and forgiving—like charity, "bearing all things, believing all things, and hoping all things;" and such are the qualities that are most conspicuous in the life and character of Moses, than whom no one ever ruled with less ostentation of authority, greater forbearance in the midst of ceaseless opposition, or more genuine and unpretending humility, while signalised by the highest honours which have ever been conferred upon man. Returning to the point immediately before us, we are inclined rather to coincide in the view of those who think that the dispute between Michael and the devil turned upon the determination of the latter to reveal the place where Moses was buried, in order thereby to seduce the Israelites into the sin of idolatry. Though the Hebrew lawgiver was unworthily and despitefully used during his life, yet, like all great and good men, his value was discovered when he was taken away; and so great was the affection and veneration with which he was regarded by that very people who had so ungratefully treated him while he was amongst them, that he was buried in secret, lest they should be betrayed into idolatry by worshipping him. It is accordingly supposed that the devil wished to lead them into this sin by discovering to them the place where the body of Moses was laid, and that Michael opposed

the adversary in this device, which was the cause of the contest between them. Although this appears a more probable account of the matter in question than the other theories adverted to, yet we are far from being satisfied with it. Having, however, no better explanation to offer, we adopt it as that which seems to us the least objectionable of the various conjectures which have been advanced on the subject. We now come to consider—

III. The manner in which the dispute was conducted. From the language of the text, it is evident—

1st, That Michael the archangel reasoned with the devil regarding the subject on which they differed. He did not think it enough to oppose him dogmatically, or to silence him by a mere exercise of authority, but “he *disputed* with him about the body of Moses,” and the discussion was so close that it amounted to moral “contention.” And, to refer to a yet higher antagonist, we find that our Lord himself condescended to argue and reason with Satan when he tempted him in the wilderness. Both these cases are fitted to teach us how we are to act when placed in similar circumstances. If the Son of God and the great archangel deigned to dispute with the worst and most wicked of all beings—if they laboured to vindicate their proceedings on the grounds of reason and Scripture, and repelled the suggestions of the adversary by fair argument, we surely are not entitled to adopt a different course, when called upon to deal with our fellow-creatures. We owe it to the interests of truth to do what we can to convince the gainsayers, however false their opinions, or however vicious their conduct may be. Cases may no doubt occur wherein discussion does more harm than good; when the enemies of the truth are so bitterly prejudiced, or so extravagantly violent, that they will not listen to sense or reason. In such circumstances, any attempt at argument may only excite the evil passions of our opponents, and expose that which is holy to desecration and abuse. And hence our Lord, with obvious reference to such cases, warns us “not to cast pearls before swine, lest they tread them under foot, and turn again and rend us.” But wherever there is any prospect of vindicating the truth from the aspersions of the heretic or unbeliever, or where there is any chance of reclaiming the ignorant or gaining over the perverted, there we are bound to have recourse to argument and persuasion, in the hope that, through the Divine blessing, they may not prove

altogether unsuccessful. To refuse to contend for the truth, because the gainsayer is very wicked in his principles or conduct, is not always the course of duty. Such a resolution may proceed from the spirit of pride or of selfish prudence, rather than from any regard for the cause of God or the spiritual welfare of man. It ought to be remembered that Michael the archangel did not think it unworthy of his character, or inconsistent with his duty, to "dispute" with the devil. But the passage before us states—

2d, That this dispute was carried on by the archangel with a careful regard to the laws of fair controversy. We read that Michael "durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said the Lord rebuke thee." Wicked as the devil was, Michael had too much regard to the dignity of his own character, as well as to the interests of truth and fair-dealing, to attempt to put him down by the use of railing. Were he to adopt this mode of silencing his adversary, he could, no doubt, find abundance of matter with which to stifle and confound him; but he left this species of warfare to such virulent and dishonest partisans as those to whom the Apostle refers—persons who, under the pretence of contending for the truth, endeavour, by every means in their power, to degrade and vilify all to whom they may happen to be opposed. Not satisfied with attempting to refute them by fair argument, they set themselves to destroy their character by every species of misrepresentation and abuse. This is a common practice with a certain class of religious disputants—a class who cannot distinguish between zeal and rancour—between the duty of maintaining a principle and the vindictive desire to crush an opponent. "The sinfulness," (says the worthy divine from whom we have already quoted more than once,) "the sinfulness of bringing this judgment of railing or evil speaking against others appears—

"1st, In regard of the party who is guilty of it. The sin of evil speaking shows the wickedness and folly of him who indulgeth in it; for, saith Solomon, 'he that uttereth slander is a fool.' Pure religion consisteth not with such a course. 'If any man seem to be religious,' says the apostle James, 'and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.' This practice is the disgrace of them who are addicted to it. They are like to swine, who, if they come into a garden, in one part whereof grow a thousand sweetly fragrant flowers, and in a corner whereof is laid an heap of dung, delight more to be

grovelling in the dung than smelling on the flowers; or who go not to the flowers to smell, but to root them up. They rake up the faults and infirmities of others—their graces they abhor as much to observe, as they do to imitate; like owls, in the dark they see, in the sunshine they are blind. This evil speaking is besides a soul-wasting sin. It wears out, whets out the heart with vexation. Envy, the mother of calumny, is the file and saw of the soul: an evil speaker is his own scourge. Miserable is his life who placeth his content in another's unhappiness instead of his own happiness.

“2d, But the sinfulness of railing and evil speaking appears also in respect of him who is spoken against. It is a sin of the greatest cruelty; it takes away that which is better than honour, riches, yea life; and such a good which, being stolen away, cannot be recompensed, because its worth cannot be estimated. Evil speaking devours the dear precious treasure; the throat of the defamer being herein an open sepulchre. At the best it deals with them as the Ammonites with David's servants, it takes away half their names; cuts their reputation off at the midst; and commonly they who are defamed in some one respect, are suspected and slighted on every occasion. One fly mars the whole pot of ointment, and one defamation will be sooner believed, though reported but by one never so unworthy of credit, than a commendation, though confirmed by the joint suffrages of a hundred faithful witnesses. The reviler lives upon a man's flesh and blood as his meat and drink; nay, upon something better, the name being better than life. By a good name many have done good after their deaths; by the loss of it many have been rendered useless during their lives. The former have lived when they were dead; the latter have been dead while they lived. Evil speaking is more cruel than hell, for hell only demands the bad, but the hell of the tongue the good and bad together.”\*

Such is the commentary given on this passage by one who has studied deeply the Epistle before us; and whose occasional quaintness adds a degree of raciness and force to sentiments in themselves sound, and at all times seasonable. We do not deem it necessary to follow the subject farther, and would therefore conclude with the expression of our earnest hope and

\* Jenkyn, p. 353.



prayer, that those who, like the heretics in the text, are apt to indulge in "railing accusations," under the pretence of forwarding or defending the cause of truth, may lay the lesson here administered to heart. They should especially remember, that if Michael the archangel durst not speak evil even of the devil, they are assuredly not warranted in reviling their fellow creatures, far less in slandering those who are very likely to be better than themselves; for the slanderer, the railer, the accuser of the brethren, cannot easily find any one who is really worse—who has more of the spirit of Satan in him than—*himself*.

## LECTURE X.

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### THE SUCCESSORS OF CAIN, BALAAM, AND CORE.

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AFTER describing the manner in which Michael the archangel acted when disputing with the devil, and showing the peculiar meekness which this exalted being displayed towards the worst and wickedest of adversaries, the Apostle proceeds to point out the very different spirit which was exhibited by the false teachers in the text:—"These speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves." Their ignorance and their knowledge were equally pernicious. The things that they knew not they vilified; the things which they did know in a natural way they turned into sources of sensuality and corruption. Having already indicated, with sufficient distinctness, how they fulfilled this part of the description, we would now go on to consider the still more specific account of their character and principles which follows. "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Core." Here the Apostle reveals the motives by which these heretics were actuated, and the precise nature of the courses which they pursued. He declares of them—

I. "That they had gone in the way of Cain." By this statement, he means to intimate that they were actuated by an envious and malicious disposition. This was the most prominent

feature in the character of the wretched man to whom he refers. You all doubtless recollect the circumstances of his history, as recorded in the book of Genesis. From the account there given we learn, that he was led to entertain feelings of jealousy and ill-will towards his brother, because of the piety by which the latter was distinguished, and the Divine favour that was consequently vouchsafed to him. It happened that, while these dark and malignant feelings were working upon him, he and Abel came together to offer sacrifice to the Lord; and we read that Cain brought an offering of the "fruit of the ground," and that Abel brought of the "firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, referring to this subject, says, "that by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" and the superior excellence of Abel's sacrifice consisted in two things: first, in the nature of the sacrifice itself; and, next, in the spirit in which it was presented. The sacrifice of Abel was a *sin-offering*. He brought of his lambs and slew them before the Lord; thereby recognising the Divine promise respecting the Messiah, and acknowledging that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin:" while Cain, on the other hand, merely presented a *thank-offering*, expressive of his obligations to Jehovah, as the God of providence; but neither implying any confession of sin, or any reference to a Redeemer. The sacrifice of Abel, besides, was offered "by faith;" whereas Cain presented his natural and unevangelical oblation with a cold and carnal heart. We are told that "the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Upon this, it is added, "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell;" and it came to pass, shortly after that, when they were in the field, engaged probably in their rural labours, Cain rose up against Abel and slew him. The moral of this dark and memorable story is given by the Apostle John, when he says of Cain, "he was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him?—because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous."

When Jude, therefore, speaks of the seducers in the text as having gone in the way of Cain, the idea he intends to convey is evidently this, that, like the first murderer, they were fired with malice against the real and faithful followers of Christ. While we are often warned that the world, or the unregenerate portion of mankind, are

opposed to the true people of God—while we are told that they not only do not love them, but that they even go the length of “hating” them—it may at the same time be said, that no class of men regard them with feelings of such bitter disaffection as those who are false and heretical professors of religion. To the instinctive hostility of nature, they add the sullen rancour of religious animosity; and hence we find that our Lord had no enemies so inveterate as the Scribes and Pharisees. Though Herod and Pilate liked him not, they yet marvelled at the implacable malignity of these sanctimonious persecutors; and we read of the latter, that “he knew it was for envy” they had delivered Christ into his hands; and being shocked, as it were, at the extent to which they carried their resentment, he was desirous, if possible, to rescue him out of their grasp, and to let him go. We may also observe, that of all the adversaries whom Paul had to encounter, the false teachers who infested the church were the most determined and unrelenting. They perverted his doctrines; vilified his motives; tore his character to pieces; they laboured, by all the arts of detraction and defamation, to darken his name, and to destroy his influence; insomuch, that we find him, in almost all his epistles, especially in those to the Corinthians and Galatians, obliged to stand forth in his own defence—to reiterate the truths which he had actually preached—to vindicate his official rectitude and his personal integrity—to declare even what his “manner of life from his youth” was, and to descend to the minutest details of his past career and conduct, in order to repel the slanderous attacks of those restless and malicious foes. It is humiliating to think that such a man—a man whose time was so valuable, whose labours were so signally blessed, and whose life was such a scene of earnest simplicity and godly sincerity—should be so frequently compelled to turn round in his course of mighty usefulness, and, as it were, plant his back to the wall and defend himself single-handed against a host of venomous assailants. And who were the assailants? Were they Infidels? No! Were they lewd fellows of the baser sort? No! Were they avowed and branded heretics? No! They were indeed heretics, but neither avowed nor accounted such. On the contrary, they were persons that made a great profession—persons that were believed to be possessed of the most eminent piety; but it is clear *now* that they were persons whose profession was false, and whose piety was rank hypocrisy; otherwise they would be the last to calumniate

such a man as Paul, or be accessory to the smallest act that would go to lessen the influence of one whose gifts and graces were of such importance to the cause of Christianity. They "went in the way of Cain." They hated him for his faithfulness, for his single-hearted zeal, and for his remarkable success in the work of the Lord. Such characters are not confined to the apostolic age. They belong to human nature. They are the world's own children; and will never cease out of the land, so long as a land there is.

II. But Jude says farther, concerning these heretics, that "they ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." The history of Balaam is one that you cannot fail to remember. It is recited at length in the book of Numbers, where we are told that the king of Moab, being at war with the children of Israel, sent to this man an embassy, wishing him to come and curse them, and promising great rewards. His conduct in the course of this transaction we shall give in the words of the eminent Bishop Butler, whose analysis of the case is characterised by his own singular acuteness. "When the elders of Moab," says he, "came to him, though he appears to have been much allured by the rewards offered, yet he had such regard to the authority of God as to keep the messengers in suspense till he had consulted his will. And God said to him 'thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.' Upon this he dismisses the ambassadors with an absolute refusal of accompanying them back to their king. Thus far his regards to his duty prevailed; neither does there any thing appear as yet amiss in his conduct. His answer being reported to the king of Moab, a more honourable embassy is immediately despatched, and greater rewards proposed. *Then* the iniquity of his heart began to manifest itself. A thoroughly honest man would immediately have repeated his former answer, that he could not be guilty of so thorough a prostitution of his sacred character, as, in the name of a prophet, to curse those whom he knew to be blessed. But instead of this, which was the only honest part which in these circumstances lay before him, he desires the princes of Moab to tarry that night with him also; and, for the sake of the reward, deliberates whether, by some means or other, he might not be able to obtain leave to curse Israel;—to do that which before had been revealed to him to be contrary to the will of God, which yet he resolves not to do without that permission. Upon which, as when this nation afterwards rejected God from reigning over them, he gave

them a king in his anger, in the same way he gives Balaam the permission he desired. Arriving in the territories of Moab, and being received with particular distinction by the king, he seeks, by sacrifices and enchantments, to obtain leave of God to curse the people; and he goes on perseveringly in that endeavour after he was again forbidden, and told that God had not found iniquity in Jacob nor perverseness in Israel: so that the state of Balaam's mind was this—he wanted to do what he knew was very wicked and contrary to the express command of God; he had indeed checks and restraints which he could not entirely get over; he therefore casts about for ways to reconcile this wickedness with his duty. How great a paradox soever this may appear, as it is indeed a contradiction in terms, it is the very account which the Scriptures give of him. But there is a more surprising piece of iniquity yet behind. Not daring in his character as a prophet to assist the king of Moab, he considers whether there might not be found some other means of aiding him against that very people whom he was restrained from cursing in words. He could think of no other method than to betray the children of Israel to provoke *his* wrath who was their only strength and defence. The temptation that he pitched upon was that concerning which Solomon afterwards remarked, that it 'had cast down many wounded, yea many strong men had been slain by it.' This succeeded; the people sin against God; and thus the prophet's counsel brought on that destruction which he could by no means be prevailed upon to assist with the religious ceremony of execration, which the king of Moab thought would itself have effected it. Their crime and punishment are related in the books of Deuteronomy and Numbers, where it appears that Balaam was the contriver of the whole matter. It is also ascribed to him in the book of Revelation, where he is said to have taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel."\*

Such is the analysis which the Bishop gives of Balaam's character, as it comes before us in the sacred oracles. The substance of it is, that the false prophet in question seduced the people of Israel into sin, and through it into discomfiture and ruin, for the sake of the reward with which Balak tempted him. To run after the error of Balaam, therefore, is to teach doctrines that are calculated to foster the depraved affections of the heart—doctrines pleasing to "flesh

\* Butler's Sermon upon the Character of Balaam.

and blood," for personal and pecuniary ends. Such was the case with the seducers in the text, and such is the case with false teachers in every age. Having neither the knowledge nor the love of the truth in them, their main concern must necessarily be to turn their teaching to account in the way of advancing their temporal interests. With this view they study to accommodate their doctrines to the prejudices and private likings of human nature, being well aware that, without some dilutions and transmutations of the truth, they will not be so successful in their object. But of all the varied forms of error, the most attractive is that which has the twofold effect of soothing the conscience, and at the same time giving some scope and license to sin. We find that the grand struggle with Balaam was how to reconcile his interest with his duty—how to make his conscience and his covetousness pull in the same direction. In like manner, it is the governing aim of all seducers to devise such a system of opinions as will give peace without requiring purity; and for this end there is no system so effectual as that of the Antimonian perverters of the gospel. A lofty creed and a loose code—Christ in the mouth and Satan in the mind—a believer's profession with a worldly man's practice—if these elements can be combined, they will prove the most seductive to the hearers and the most profitable to the teachers; and hence the object of heretics at all times has been to effect this hollow and heterogeneous combination. But it is stated farther—

III. That they "perished in the gainsaying of Core." The case to which the Apostle here alludes is recorded at length in the book of Numbers, (chap. xvi.) where it is stated that the individual mentioned, in conjunction with Dathan and Abiram, entered into a conspiracy for the purpose of overthrowing the authority of Moses and Aaron, who were constituted by Divine appointment their civil and ecclesiastical rulers. Core, or Korah, the ringleader in this seditious movement, was a Levite, and a near connexion of the men against whom the plot was devised. His father and theirs were brothers; and they therefore stood to each other in the relation of cousins—a circumstance which renders the conduct of Korah still more criminal. Dathan and Abiram were of the children of Reuben, and, that being the eldest tribe, they were entitled, by right of primogeniture, to take precedence of Moses in civil power and position. This was very probably the ground on which they were induced to abet the designs of Korah, who, being

an ecclesiastic, sought for himself the office of chief priest in the room of Aaron. In order to carry their seditious purposes into effect, the three conspirators in question denied the title of Moses and Aaron to the offices respectively held by them, affirmed that they were guilty of usurpation and ambition in assuming these offices, and demanded that they should surrender the powers and prerogatives which they had thus arrogated to themselves. In this sullen and seditious spirit Korah and his confederates stood out against their rulers, gainsayed their conciliatory reasonings, and factiously refused to obey their commands. In order to bring the controversy to an issue at once, Moses proposed to make a direct appeal to the judgment of God: "Hereby ye shall know (says he) whether the Lord hath sent me to do all these things; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain to them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." Such was the ordeal by which Moses desired that the pretensions of his brother and himself, on the one hand, and the allegations of Korah and his company on the other, should be tried. At the time when this decisive test was proposed, the two parties, in conformity to a previous agreement, were assembled together in one place "before the Lord;" and we read that "it came to pass, as Moses had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, lest the earth swallow us up also."

Such is a brief detail of the circumstances connected with the "gainsaying of Core," and with the way and manner in which he "perished." The Apostle declares that the seducers of whom he was writing were animated by the spirit, and destined to suffer the doom of this ambitious and mischievous rebel. Those who "deny the only Lord God" as they did, who make light of the law of heaven, need not be expected to be very sub-



missive to any authority established among men. Such as are false to God will never be true to man; and hence heretics have in every age been found to be seditious subjects and dangerous members of civil society. The very same qualities of character by which they are led to spurn at the will of the Supreme, will necessarily dispose them to resist and despise all other dominion. Witness, in confirmation of this, the whole history of the Papacy. Witness the fierce and bloody revolt of the Anabaptists, and the various classes of licentious heretics that made common cause with them, at the period of the reformation. Witness, at this day, the character and principles of those parties amongst us who are distinguished for their heretical views or infidel opinions—such as Chartists, Socialists, Mormonites, &c.—and you will find them all to be characterised by a spirit of disloyalty and discontent; labouring to spread revolutionary doctrines, and prepared at every difficult crisis to counsel factious measures, and to promote insurrectionary movements. Who are those that have always taken advantage of this country's perplexities to injure its civil interests? Who are they that, in times of war or national distress, have leagued together to paralyse its energies and to foment intestine commotions? They are the Papists, the Socinians; and the semi-Infidel sectaries of every description, that have found a lodgment in the land. And yet our rulers and statesmen most strangely overlook this broad and undoubted fact. They have never been able to see that it is the gospel alone that can keep down the turbulent dispositions, and regulate the moral and social conduct of subjects, causing them "to fear God and to honour the king, and to meddle not with them that are given to change;" and the consequence is, that they are attempting to correct, by political expedients, evils that can only be effectually cured by the dissemination of Divine truth. Faction and the fear of God dwell not in the same heart. The spirit of rebellion is the spirit of Satan; and Satan can only be mastered by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of the Lord. Rulers who patronise heretics encourage "gainsayers," seditious disputants, demagogues, "who despise dominion and speak evil of dignities;" and who are therefore the most mischievous members of civil society, and the most rebellious subjects of the state. Such, then, being the courses pursued by the seducers to whom the Apostle alludes, let us now glance for a moment at the manner in which he speaks of their conduct:—

1st, And here we find that he denounces the most solemn "woe" against them. This woe may be understood either in a threatening or in a commiserating sense. If we take it in the former view, the expression is tantamount to his pronouncing a curse upon them; for the language employed bears that import in many passages of Scripture; such, as for example, in the book of Habakkuk, (ii. 6, 9, 15, 19,) where the prophet utters a variety of "woes" against the enemies of the Church, consigning them to the judicial consequences attached to their sins. There is also some reason to think, that when our Lord uses this word in reference to the Scribes and Pharisees, as he does no fewer than eight times, it was intended not merely as a prediction of what should befall them, but a direct imprecation pronounced upon them for the injury they were doing to the interests of truth. At all events, there can be no doubt that the power of cursing the obstinate adversaries of God, and of God's cause, was given to the Prophets and Apostles, and is also continued in a certain sense to their official successors. Hence we find David, in many of the Psalms, but very markedly in the 109th, praying for the destruction of his enemies; but when we say this, it must always be borne in mind, that he refers to those who were his enemies not in a personal but in a typical point of view—viz. those who were the enemies of that holy cause of which David was so eminent an advocate and representative. Again, we find the apostle Paul desiring that they who "troubled" the Church "might be even cut off;" and, speaking of Alexander the coppersmith, he prays that the "Lord might reward him according to his work;" while, in allusion to the case of another injurious opposer of the gospel, he speaks expressly of "giving him over to Satan, that he might learn not to blaspheme." It seems very evident that Christ has conferred on the Church the right of pronouncing sentences both of absolution and of condemnation in his name. The extent to which this right has been bestowed, and the manner and form in which it is to be exercised, may be points of considerable doubt and difficulty; but that such a privilege actually exists, is a fact which, we think, cannot well be controverted. In proof of this, we may remind you of that much contested passage, in which Christ says to his disciples, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they shall be remitted to them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they shall be retained." In consequence of the mischievous use to which this declaration has been turned by the Romish Church, Protestant

expositors have been tempted to explain it in a way that goes to nullify its meaning altogether. While they cannot deny that it does confer upon the Church the solemn and responsible power which it so plainly expresses, they are yet afraid of setting it forth as a distinct practical truth, or of determining when, where, or by whom, the power in question should be exercised. It is needless, however, to say, that the words themselves are very plain, and that the right of spiritual adjudication, to which they refer, must lie with those by whom the other powers and prerogatives of the Church are wielded. There can be no doubt that the privilege in question is one of tremendous weight and responsibility; and it is equally clear that it is capable of being perverted, as we know it has been, to the worst purposes of spiritual despotism; but yet it is impossible to get rid of the fact, that the privilege does exist, and that it ought therefore to be explicitly recognised and practically used. The passage in question then implies, that the Church, acting through her office-bearers, has the power, in a certain delegated sense, of pronouncing sentence both of absolution and of condemnation, by either remitting or retaining sins, as the circumstances may require. In the former case, she pronounces a blessing; in the latter case, she pronounces a curse or a "woe" against those who obstinately and wilfully persist in their evil ways.

2d, But the woe here uttered may be understood in the sense of prediction, as well as in that of imprecation. It may be regarded as intimating the confident assurance entertained by the Apostle, that the courses followed by these false teachers would ultimately lead to the most fatal and disastrous judgments upon themselves—judgments so deeply merited, and so daringly provoked, that he had no hesitation in foretelling and denouncing them. The word is frequently used in Scripture, especially by the Prophets, in this sense. Hence such passages as these: "Woe unto the wicked, for it shall be ill with them"—"Woe unto them that join house to house and field to field," &c.—"Woe unto them that rise early in the morning that they may follow strong drink"—"Woe to them that be with child and give suck in those days." In the present case, the Apostle was so profoundly convinced of the wickedness of those who were privily bringing in such "damnable heresies," and practically pursuing such ungodly courses, that he had no difficulty in foreseeing the fate that awaited them. He marked the envious malignity with which they regarded the faithful followers of Christ,

and there he detected the spirit of Cain. He marked also the mean and mercenary motives that influenced their conduct, and there he discovered the spirit of Balaam. He marked farther the rankling pride—the seditious and presumptuous contempt of authority which they cherished—and there he perceived the gainsaying spirit of Korah. Seeing, then, that such was their character—that they were habitually swayed by the combined influence of malice, covetousness, and rebellion, he could be at no loss to predict what the end of these things must be; and hence, with all the confidence and solemnity of one who could not be mistaken, he pronounces their doom—“Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and shall utterly perish in the gainsaying of Core.”

## LECTURE XI.

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### THE CHARACTER AND END OF SPIRITUAL SEDUCERS.

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IN examining the Epistle before us, there is one circumstance which cannot fail to strike the attentive reader, and that is, the unity of purpose, and the solemn fervency of spirit by which it is characterised. The Apostle appears to have had but one object in view, and to that object he clings with a strong and rigid grasp throughout, as if resolved not to let it go till he had fully exhausted his mind upon it. In accordance with this, you will observe that he no sooner pronounces the opening benediction than he breaks into the subject to which his Epistle refers. With the view of calling immediate attention to it, he takes up the gospel trumpet, and sounds a note of alarm, both loud and deep, summoning his fellow-Christians to the defence of the faith. He then states the dangers to which the cause of truth was exposed, the parties by whom it was assailed, and the profligate purposes to which it was perverted. After delivering himself on these points with the most remarkable clearness, force, and fidelity, he proceeds to remind the corrupt seducers whose principles he is denouncing of the doom that awaited such conduct as theirs; and this he does by calling to their remembrance the fate of the ancient Israelites, of the angels who kept not their first estate, and of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gommorah. Having thus set forth the destructive consequences which resulted from similar doctrines and practices in

former times, he endeavours to give a still more minute and extended description of the character and proceedings of the heretics before him; exposes their infamous licentiousness; their contempt of authority; their libellous and seditious proceedings; and shows, by a reference to the case of Michael the archangel, that the presumptuous spirit they displayed, so far from being a proof of their superior discrimination, as they supposed, was, on the contrary, the effect of their blind and sottish ignorance, which led them to "speak evil of things which they knew not." In the verse immediately preceding those which form the subject of our present Lecture, the Apostle explains the motives by which the seducers in question were actuated—traces their conduct to the combined influence of malice, covetousness, and rebellion—and declares that they were treading in the footsteps of Cain, Balaam, and Core. Such, then, is the substance of that part of the Epistle to which we have been directing your notice: it also forms a summary of the Course over which we have gone. To bring that Course to a conclusion, at least for the present, it only remains for us to consider the passage which falls to be discussed this evening, and which naturally winds up the first and most essential portion of the Apostle's argument. This passage is one of a very striking and interesting kind. It consists of a group of very bold and graphic images—a series of comparisons, not more expressive as illustrations of the text, than they are grand and rich as examples of picturesque beauty and figurative power. "These—(says the inspired penman, speaking of the pestilent heretics whom he had so indignantly denounced)—are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

With regard to the first of these symbolical descriptions, representing their aspect and behaviour at the sacred feasts, it is by many supposed that the word here rendered "*spots*" has a different and a deeper meaning in the original than that which it bears in our common translation. The phrase here used is one that is not infrequently employed to denote those hidden rocks which are so fatal to mariners, and on which so many a gallant ship has been shattered to pieces. These rocks, when the tide is

at the flood, sink down out of sight; but, as the sea ebbs, they gradually rise above the level of the deep, and appear like dark spots on the surface of the waters. From this derivation of the term, it is contended by some, that the seducers in the text are designed to be compared to these sunken rocks, from being so deceitful in their nature, and so destructive to the spiritual interests of those who come in their way, "causing them to make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience." This view, however, appears to us to be more ingenious than just. The idea intended to be conveyed is evidently that of a "*stain*," a "*blemish*," "*an excrescence*;" and this idea is connected with the crag, not as it lies beneath the waves in bristling and treacherous concealment, but as it looks when its dark head is seen peering above the plain of the ocean, like a black spot on the face of a mirror. It is in this sense that the Apostle speaks, when he says of the false and luxurious professors of whom he is writing—"these are spots in your feasts of charity."

By the "*feasts of charity*" to which the Apostle here refers, we are not to understand those private entertainments given to each other by the members of the Church; neither does the description apply to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, (although there are some who think it does,) but rather to the "love feasts" which existed among the early Christians, and which it was their practice to observe immediately previous to the celebration of the communion. Festivals of this kind were established by Divine appointment in the Jewish Church, where it was the custom to connect them with the offering up of the eucharistical sacrifices;\* and it is supposed that it was in imitation of these that the primitive disciples instituted the feasts of charity which are mentioned in the passage before us. The social meetings in question were particularly designed to promote a spirit of brotherly love and Christian fellowship among the general body of believers; but one main object they were intended to serve, was to relieve the necessities of the poor, whose cases were on these occasions considered and provided for. It is to those religious festivals that Paul alludes, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, (xi. 21,) where he reprobates the contentious and riotous purposes to which they were turned by the members of

\* Deuteronomy xxvii. 7. Exodus xviii. 12.

that particular Church; and there is a statement in Peter's second Epistle, (ii. 13,) which is supposed to refer to them also. As to the fact that such feasts were observed there can be no doubt; for, besides the allusions to them which we find in the apostolical writings, they are frequently spoken of by the early fathers of the Church, one of whom (Tertulian)\* gives a minute description of the manner in which they were conducted. It is, however, questionable whether they received the express sanction of our Lord and his Apostles, or whether they were only permitted in that loose and general sense indicated by Paul, when, in writing to the Romans, (xiv. 5,) he says: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another man esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." But while such observances were included under this general permission, it is at the same time evident, that they were not always regarded with entire approbation; for the same Apostle, in addressing the Galatians, considers their attachment to these practices as but a dubious sign of their spiritual soundness—"Ye observe," says he, "days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." Be this, however, as it may, it would appear that the heretics to whom Jude refers were in the habit of resorting to the feasts of charity maintained by the members of the Church, and, when there, their aspect betrayed the hollowness of their character. To a spiritually discerning eye they were easily distinguished from the rest of their companions. They stood out like dim spots on a clear surface, like defiling stains on a white robe, like rifted crags on the smiling bosom of the sea. The foul practices in which they indulged would overshadow their very countenances while they sat in the presence of the saints; and their utter want of sympathy with the pure feelings and sacred enjoyments prevailing in these Christian assemblies, would make them look dark, and sullen, and scowling, as they mingled with the festive throng.

But however gloomy or uneasy they might feel, they did not

\* Apolog. ix. cap.



allow the sense of their unworthiness to operate upon them so far as to restrain the habitual forwardness and presumption by which they were characterised; for the Apostle says of them, that at those feasts of charity they "fed themselves without fear." From this statement, it would seem that they manifested nothing of that pious reserve, that holy caution, that religious delicacy which such occasions called for. On the contrary, forgetting that these festivals were of a sacred character, they gave way to their sensual appetites with all the gross freedom of greedy epicures. They behaved themselves in a manner which showed that they were more intent on gratifying their carnal propensities than on profiting by the spiritual conversation for which such meetings were intended. And hence Peter says of them, that they "counted it pleasure to riot in the daytime;" that is, that they were so bent on their base indulgences that they pursued them even in the open face of day, without attempting to conceal their excesses: and, accordingly, Paul declares of the same class of licentious heretics, that "their god was their belly, that they gloried in their shame, and that they minded earthly things;" and, summing up their character in one emphatic sentence, he says that they were "earthly, sensual, devilish, having not the spirit."

But the passage before us, besides speaking of their conduct in this respect, sets forth, in another expressive figure, the emptiness and instability of their minds. "Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds." This image is designed to show how vapid, unsolid, and unprofitable, these blustering professors were. Their views were thin and vapoury, like a dry and drifting cloud. They were without settled or substantial principles of any kind—*influenced merely by floating fancies and unreasoning impulses, and hence they were carried away by every gust of temptation that blew about them. Not being rooted and grounded in the truth, they were ready to grasp at every fanciful theory and plausible delusion that came across them; and thus, instead of applying their thoughts calmly and seriously to the study of the truth, they trifled with the oracles of the living God—turned them into topics of mere idle speculation—so that, in the graphic language of Peter, "they sported themselves with their own deceivings."*

They are besides distinguished by the delusive promises they hold out, and the fruitless professions they make. "Trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

Like the productions of a light and barren soil, they promised well, and made a goodly show at first. They sprang up rapidly, and were covered with leaves and blossoms, long before trees of deeper root and of firmer texture put forth any appearance. But their sap, lying merely on the surface, was speedily exhausted; and their blossoms, hanging lightly upon them, were stripped away by the first breeze that swept over them, leaving them "without fruit," notwithstanding their early blossoms and their flaunting display. In the course of time they lost their hold of the ground altogether, and then they ceased to present any appearance of life either in stem or branches. Even the abortive promise that they previously manifested was no longer to be seen. "They were twice dead"—dead within and without; dead at the surface, and dead at the heart; dead at the root, and dead at the branches. They lay withered on the ground, "plucked up by the roots."

But these characters are yet farther distinguished by their restless and ungovernable passions. "They are like raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." This is quite in keeping with the rest of their qualities. Wherever we find forward and sensual men—men of haughty and unstable minds—men of abortive efforts and unproductive promises—we may be sure to find men of strong and unrestrained passions. They are ever swelling and breaking, like the waves of an unsettled sea. Having no principle to steady them—having no depth of understanding to analyse the reasons of things—having no proper knowledge either of themselves or others—they are perpetually dashing their head against the barriers of right and wrong; and hence are perpetually involved in scenes of contention and strife. Being also devoid of intellectual resources and of moral feeling, they are entirely under the influence of their sensual appetites; and they, therefore, give vent to their passions in this respect also; "foaming out their own shame," and plunging, "like natural brute beasts," into every species of violence and vice.

They are finally distinguished by their lawless and erratic course, and by their dark and dreadful end. "They are like wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Their motions are like those of a meteor, wild, irregular, and dangerous; threatening disaster and destruction wherever they go; rushing on with a lurid and portentous light, at which men look with doubt and dismay. Scorning all the settled rules of order—

setting at defiance all the ordinary laws and regularities of life—they have the reckless ambition to follow a course of their own, and to raise the astonishment of the world by the perilous eccentricity of their movements,—till at last, like the meteor that sails out of view into the gloomy regions of night, they sink “into the blackness of darkness for ever.”

Such is a brief outline of what appears to us to be the import of these bold and beautiful figures: and now, in drawing this Course of Lectures to a conclusion, you will permit us to add two or three closing observations. We feel ourselves called upon, in the first place, to express our gratitude to God that we have been preserved in sufficient health of body and of mind to carry our projected scheme to a termination. When we commenced these Lectures, we were not without serious misgivings, lest, amid the increasing duties which have of late devolved upon us, in common with all the other ministers of our Free Church, the amount of preparation required for preaching three times a-day, together with the bodily labour connected with so many services, might be more than our strength could well sustain; but although we have been, with one or two exceptions, engaged to this extent for the last fourteen weeks,\* we have cause to thank God that we are this night enabled to complete our undertaking, with far less either of mental or physical exhaustion than we had reason to anticipate. It having been the practice for several years to have evening Lectures delivered in this place of worship, we were loth to allow the customary services to be altogether discontinued; and, rather than leave the Church silent and vacant, we planned and attempted the series of expositions of which this is the last. Besides the spiritual advantage which we hoped might, through the blessing of God, arise from the discussion and elucidation of that interesting portion of Scripture which we were led to select, we had also another, though a minor, object in view, in carrying out this scheme of Lectures. We need not remind you that it has become a common practice to preach on behalf of charitable and religious objects; that is to say, to afford those who come forth to the sanctuary an opportunity of contributing to the support of the cause of

\* This Course, as originally planned and delivered, consisted of fourteen Lectures; but on preparing these for the press, the author considered it more advantageous to limit them to the number now published.

Christ, when contributions are in any particular instance required. This being the case, and considering that the house in which we are at present assembled is involved in debt to a very heavy amount, we conceived that the assistance contributed on these occasions might, at least, be of some use in the way of lessening the pressure of this burden. In order to aid the object in question farther, the Lectures which you have just heard have been sent to the press, and we hope that something may be realised from this source also. The topics discussed in these Lectures are, we think, of much importance at the present time. We are deeply impressed with the conviction that the worst and the sharpest trial awaiting the Churches of this country is a trial of false doctrine. There are already indications of this manifesting themselves in various forms, and we are thoroughly persuaded that there are false principles, working as yet silently and quiescently, that will start forth into clearer and more formidable development, ere many years are gone by. Entertaining this conviction, we felt ourselves impelled to do what we could to give warning in time—to sound the note of preparation in the ears of those within the reach of our voice—and also to lay down such principles of instruction as we considered best adapted to the prospect before us. If the Lord is pleased to own this effort to any extent, we shall consider ourselves highly privileged. To Him we now commit it, to explain and indicate his own precious truth; earnestly entreating Him to pardon whatever of error or of sin may be mixed up with it; and humbly praying that the Spirit of all grace may be pleased to crown it with his effectual blessing. Amen.

