

L. F. B.

BOOK OF JUDGES. ✓ D

SERMONS

IN EXPLANATION OF

THE SINGULAR HISTORIES

RECORDED IN THE PORTION OF

THE SACRED VOLUME

COMPRISED IN

THE FIRST ELEVEN CHAPTERS OF JUDGES.

THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL NOBLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE PLENARY INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES ASSERTED,"
&c. &c.

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PREFATORY EXPLANATION.

THE delivery of the "Sermons on Judges," now first printed, was commenced by the Author in July, 1822, at the place of worship, which the Cross Street Society then occupied, in Lisle Street, London, and was concluded in February, 1823. They formed, originally, a continued series from chapter i. to chapter xi.; but a portion only of the first sermon has been found, which—is here introduced in the form of Preliminary Observations, and not a vestige of the second; so that the present volume commences with what was really the third sermon of the series. The sixth and seventh verses of the first chapter of Judges, relating to the capture, punishment, and death of Adoni-bezek, formed the subject of the first three sermons, but the text to the third (now the first) had been re-transcribed by the Author, and embraces, as printed, from the first to the seventh verses inclusive. In sermon xviii., the Author intimates that it had been his intention to carry on the series to the end of the history of Samson. The circumstances that prevented it are thus stated,—“ We have but two Sundays more to continue in our present place of worship, and it will not be expedient, on opening the chapel in Hanover Street, where we must invite the public in general to come and hear us, to begin with the latter part of a series of discourses.”

Some of these discourses were delivered on more than one occasion, and alterations were marked in pencil to render them, principally by omissions, suitable for the special purpose; it has been considered desirable however to restore them to their original state as far as possible. Some of them were entirely re-written by the Author: thus of sermon ix. (and x.), relating to the death

of Sisera, which he preached in Cross Street Church, September 13, 1846, he says, "About three years since, in a series of discourses on parts of this book of Judges, I delivered one on the war of the Israelites with Jabin, a Canaanitish prince, who reigned in Hazor, an Israelitish city; as related in the preceding part of this chapter; but I did not then offer any explanation of the extraordinary termination of the conflict, by the dreadful act of a woman; as related in the verses I have now read. Twenty-four years ago, indeed, I delivered a discourse upon *these* verses, and considered the circumstances of the awful narrative at large; but the manuscript of that sermon having been lost by friends, by whom it was borrowed, I have never taken up the subject again, and have not now the smallest recollection of the manner in which I treated it. However, it being so very extraordinary a part of the Word of God, and constituting so important a link in the chain of subjects contained in the present and subsequent chapters, which I have not so very long since considered, I have thought it might not be unacceptable, or unprofitable, if I make it the subject of our meditations afresh."

Sermon xv. was also entirely re-written in 1846, and preached in Cross Street Church. The Author says that above twenty years before, when he originally preached from the Book of Judges, he had fully treated the remarkable circumstances relating to Gideon, contained in chapter vii. verses 2—7, "but that sermon," he adds, "was lost—lost at least to me; as I never could recover it from a gentleman (not a member of the New Church) who borrowed it, though I often applied for it, and he always assured me it was safe."

Thus three sermons were re-written by the Author more than twenty years after the original delivery, in order to make the series complete to a certain point.

All the original discourses appear to have been delivered at Norwich in the year 1828, as the name of that city is written upon the covers. In all probability they were lent to the Society for the use of the leader for the time being. They could not have been delivered there by Mr. Noble, as they were preached on consecu-

tive Sundays through several months, and while he was necessarily engaged in his ministerial duties in London.

Some of the subjects touched upon in this volume are treated more extensively in the Author's celebrated Work,—to which the reader is referred,—entitled *The Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures asserted*, originally published in 1825, but of which a new and cheaper edition has recently appeared.

In preparing these Sermons for the press, the utmost care has been taken faithfully to preserve the original matter intact—nothing has been omitted, added, or altered; some evidently clerical oversights only, having been corrected. That the work may be blessed to the good intended by the Author, and tend to the enlightenment and edification of the reader, is the sincere hope of those who have been active in its publication.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

It is generally admitted by Christians, that the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the wilderness, is representative of the progress of man from a natural state to a spiritual one: though I believe their ideas even when thus spiritualizing, as they term it, the Scriptures, are so external, that they consider the wilderness merely as an emblem of this world, and Canaan as an emblem of heaven. It is true that Canaan represents heaven when it is considered as peaceably possessed by the children of Israel; it is also true that the Christian is really, as to his internal man, introduced into heaven when he arrives at the state represented by the passing over Jordan; but that he cannot be actually in heaven at this time, is evident from this, that he then has to wage a war of extermination with the inhabitants of Canaan; and certainly his warfares must all be ended before he actually goes into heaven. We find however, not only that all the period during which the Israelites were conducted by Joshua, was a period of war, but that a fresh series of conflicts began immediately after his death; the first of which was that which led to the extraordinary occurrence mentioned in the 1st chapter of Judges respecting Adoni-bezek. Here then it is evident that something distinct from the admission of man after death into heaven, must be meant by the introduction of the Israelites into Canaan. As however the nature of the Israelitish history is a very curious and important subject, and a right understanding of which will greatly assist us in obtaining correct ideas of the nature of the Holy Word in general, I will make some general remarks respecting it. And as this whole book of Judges abounds with singular histories, more than any other book of the Word, we probably may afterwards continue our remarks in

a series of discourses on the whole; at present, then, we will confine ourselves to some preliminary observations.

The numerous singular occurrences which distinguish the affairs of the children of Israel, as recorded in the historical parts of the Old Testament, are calculated to excite very different impressions in those who read them, according to the general bias and prevailing inclinations by which they are influenced. The simple and well disposed but un-enquiring mind, beholding in so many instances such extraordinary interferences on the part of a Divine Power, will read with simple devotion, and will gladly appropriate the general lesson, apparent throughout the whole,—of the blessings which are ever consequent upon a faithful obedience to the divine commandments, and the judgments which ever await disobedience and rebellion. They, on the other hand, who, while they pride themselves upon their superior discernment and powers of ratiocination, are too well satisfied with the pleasures and pursuits that the world sets before them, to be willing to think much about a state of future existence, infer from the extraordinary nature of much of the Israelitish history, that more is related than is really true; and as no such instances of immediate interposition from heaven occur at the present time, they conclude that every pretension of the kind, in any age, must be unfounded. They also endeavour to find inconsistencies in the sacred narrative, and where they see any thing that wears the appearance of being such, they assume it as a decisive proof that none of the context could have proceeded from divine inspiration.

Whilst, however, it is a most certain fact, that all denial of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and all reasonings against them, *originated* in human pride, and in a disinclination towards the admission of any thing of a truly spiritual nature, we nevertheless would by no means affirm that all who ever entertained any doubts on these subjects, or who find any difficulties in the Holy Word, which they are at a loss how to reconcile with a belief in its divine origin, are persons of reprobate minds, whose doubts and difficulties are to be treated with contempt. We believe the Holy Word is the great medium of conjunction between heaven and earth,—the

primary vehicle by which divine influences, including all inclinations and thoughts that are really good and true, are conveyed into the hearts and understandings of mankind. If there were no Church existing on the earth, composed of persons whose minds are enlightened by the Holy Word, and who, instructed thence, frame their lives according to its requirements, there could be no communication whatever between the Lord and man, the consequence of which would be that the human race must perish; whereas, whilst there is such a medium for preserving the connexion between the Author of life and the recipients, it is conveyed through all the nations, however uncivilized, that inhabit the globe, who all are kept, by means of it, in a state capable of being saved. For in the eye of the Lord, the whole human race compose, in a manner, one human form, of which the church which reads the Word, constitutes the heart and lungs, whilst the other tribes form the less noble organs and members; and as no single human body could live without a heart and lungs, into which life first flows from the soul, and is thence circulated with the blood throughout the whole of the system: so the body universal of mankind, could not subsist without a church enlightened by the Word to be to it as a heart and lungs, in which spiritual life is first received from the Lord, and is thence distributed through the whole of the mass. Viewing, then, a belief in the Holy Word as being of such great importance, we must needs consider the denial and rejection of it, by any who live where it is known, as a most awful calamity to themselves; and as taking its primary cause, not from any superiority of intellect, as they themselves would fain have us believe, but from a hidden principle of evil in the heart, which exerts an influence upon their understanding, in a manner they do not suspect, and leads them to prefer views which leave them at liberty to act, as far as outward circumstances will permit, according to every impulse which perverted nature may cause to spring up in their minds. This it is that makes them sharp-sighted in detecting what they conceive to be inconsistencies in the writings of which Divine Revelation is composed, and which has given birth to the numerous publications, distinguished sometimes by subtlety and sometimes

by railing, in which attempts are made to overthrow the Christian religion, and, as an important step thereto, to destroy their credibility.

These remarks may tend to prove the duty of making the reading of the Word, both by young and old, a matter of daily practice. The mere reading, even where nothing is understood beyond what the letter expresses, may have the effect of bringing around us a heavenly influence, and of storing in our interiors, affections for divine things and delights in which angels themselves participate. But to have this effect, be it understood, it must be read either by innocent children, or by adult persons who are in the devout acknowledgment of its divine and holy nature. Where it is read with carelessness, as it does not then penetrate into the mind of the reader, it is productive of no communication with heavenly societies; whilst, if read by a person who is not merely ignorant of the true import of what he reads, but who endeavours to apply it to the confirmation of any false doctrine, especially any that tends to sanction an evil life, it not only produces no good effect, but is in reality attended with a bad one; as the Word, when thus falsified in the mind, is exceedingly offensive to angels and good spirits, who immediately avert themselves from the person, and thus heaven, instead of being opened to him, is more firmly closed against him. But the Word is not falsified when any part of it is applied to confirm a doctrine or sentiment that is true in itself, although that doctrine or sentiment may not in reality be taught in the passage applied to it. Be it then our care, and let us esteem it our privilege, often to impress our minds with the lessons of divine wisdom contained in the sacred Volume. Let us, where we understand nothing beyond the mere letter, ever read it with holy reverence and devotion. Let us too be careful to impress upon our hearts the practical precepts which are every where interspersed through it; and let us remember, that to regulate our affections and practice by such precepts, is the only effectual way to acquire any permanent knowledge of the sacred contents that lie within the letter: since whatever is learned in the memory only, without entering the life, never becomes our own, and will finally be taken

from us. How beautiful on this subject are the experimental declarations of the Psalmist! “Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.”—Again; “I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation.” And since the Word is thus, as to its essence, the Very Divine Truth Itself, the eternal truth of God from everlasting to everlasting, how true is the Psalmist’s declaration respecting it: “Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.”

SERMONS ON JUDGES.

SERMON I.

Judges i. 1—7.

“ Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them? And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites: and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men. And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so hath God requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

It is abundantly demonstrated in the doctrines of the New Church, that the whole Word of God contains a spiritual sense under the veil of the literal expression, and that this is true in regard to the historical narratives, as well as in regard to the prophecies, psalms, and the rest. At the same time it is largely shewn in those doctrines, and is a truth never to be laid out of sight, that the existence of a spiritual sense universally, in the Word of God, by no means interferes with the reality of the facts literally recorded. This I mention because our sentiments in this respect have been often misrepresented. We do not, as Paul declares of the Christian dispensation in general, make void the law of God by the faith we possess in its interior contents, but we establish the law; maintaining the literal sense as we found it, and believing the facts

narrated to have really taken place; while we conceive that by believing them all to be at the same time representative of spiritual things, we behold them in a light which renders them worthy of possessing a place in the very Word of God, and we embrace a view of them which does not abolish the sacred Record, but fulfils it, by shewing it to involve contents which fill it indeed, and without which it would be but an empty shell, exhibiting little that could establish its divine original.

In the brief history before us, is contained in general, in the spiritual sense, an account of some of the operations which take place in the human mind in the course of its regeneration; whilst regeneration itself consists in the extirpation from the heart, of those evil inclinations to which we are all naturally prone, and the establishment in their place of heavenly graces, of pure affections, and enlightened perceptions, prompting to, and producing, a life of goodness.

As to the nature and order of regeneration, there cannot be a greater mistake than to imagine, that it is a sudden, instantaneous operation; whether it be supposed to be something of an inexplicable nature which takes place, without any consciousness in the subject of it, at the moment of baptism, or to be the result of an impression on the hearts of persons of riper years, by which, in consequence of their being enabled to lay hold with faith on the redemption by the bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, they experience full remission of their sins, and become sensible that they are the children of grace. What can properly be meant by the forgiveness or remission of sins by the Lord, but the removal of the attachment to them from the human heart? So long as any sin reigns with us, it cannot be forgiven. All sin is the love and practice of evil in contrariety to the Divine laws, and it can only be really remitted to man as he ceases from such love and practice. If then all the evils which lurk in his heart can be desisted from as to all inclination as well as commission, in a moment, then can their remission take place in a moment, and the man be regenerated at once. But how different is this from what any one ever really experienced,—even they who fancy the whole to be an instantaneous work! It is true that states are sometimes enjoyed, in which a peculiar elevation towards the Lord and heavenly things is felt, and it may seem for a time as if nothing could ever more disturb the soul: but although such states may be experienced, not once only, but many times, yet they are always but seasons, as it were, for recruiting the mind, to enable it to support further

conflicts; and no one on this side the grave was ever permitted to abide in them without intermission, and without feeling afterwards that more remained to be done to complete his purification. In short, as it is evident to every one who ever reflects on what passes daily in himself, that the human mind consists of an innumerable variety of faculties, tendencies, and affections, and that new inclinations, such as had not before come to light, from time to time are developed in it; so must it be evident to every one who thinks consistently on the subject, that the renewal of the mind, by the extirpation or removal of whatever it contains which is of an evil nature, and the insemination and confirmation of what is good in its place, which is what is called regeneration, must be a gradual work, and that to expect it to be performed in a moment is just as reasonable as it would be to expect a child at the moment of its birth to spring up a full-grown man, furnished with all the intellectual acquisitions which can adorn the most perfect of the species in its highest state of improvement,—or to suppose that the acorn which drops from the oak to-day, will immediately on its touching the ground, spring up into a tree equal in magnitude to the most magnificent ornaments of the forest.

Whilst, however, we observe, that new stages in the regenerate life will continually open as long as we live here, even with those, (and more with such than with others,) who are most intent on advancing in that necessary work, and of course that new recesses in the human heart will from time to time be opened, and evils not before suspected to exist be brought to light in order that they may be removed,—it is necessary to be understood, that some of the stages of this work are so completely distinct, that part of them may be undergone without the others being ever commenced; which is the reason that there are three distinct heavens, the inhabitants of which have no direct communication with each other. No one can enter into heaven at all, unless the evils of his nature are removed by repentance and regeneration; but with those who enter the first heaven, this takes place only as to the more general and external manifestations of the evil propensities which lurk within us all, whilst the more particular concupiscences of evil which lie further within, are never opened, and having thus never been brought into exercise, do not prevent the person from receiving heavenly graces to such an extent, as to occupy all that part of his mental frame which is actually opened in him, whilst all that lies beyond is completely separated from his perception and observation, and nothing thence is ever permitted to flow to disturb the

peace and happiness of which he is made a partaker. So again with those who rise to the second heaven, whilst the evils of their nature have been manifested, overcome, and removed, in a deeper ground than those of the former, still they have a reserve, as it were, behind, in a quiescent state, of which they know nothing. With those of the third heaven, this again has been brought to light, overcome, and removed; and thus the evils of their nature being extirpated, as it were, from a deeper ground still, their reception of heavenly graces and beatitudes is proportionally more deep and full: though after all, as whatever has once formed part of the mind can never be so extirpated as no longer to exist at all, being in reality only removed from the seat of the person's affections, thoughts, and actual observation, the highest angel can never be so purified but that, as to himself, or his own selfhood viewed by itself, unconnected with what he has received from the Lord, he is still nothing but evil. This he knows, but does not actually experience, because, as just intimated, this is kept for ever withheld from his actual affections; and in this state it is made to him a means of exalting his heavenly attainments by furnishing him with a basis of profound humility, according to the depth of which is his capacity of more fully receiving divine gifts. And what is remarkable, it is in proportion as every thing of man's selfish nature is more completely removed, and as he is thus more free from its influence, that he is more fully sensible of its real quality, and is in consequence more deeply conscious of his own unworthiness; which however becomes in this case not a painful sensation, but the contrary, as it imparts a keener feeling of the Lord's divine mercy, by which such unworthiness is made receptive of such graces and felicities.

Now the passage before us treats of that manifestation of the deep-seated evils of the human heart which takes place after the first general stage of regeneration has been gone through, and the necessity which is then seen, in order to our obtaining possession of our allotted inheritance in the promised land, or being established in a state which will qualify us for the heaven which is now, as it were, opened before us, that these evils themselves should be encountered and subdued. It is hardly necessary to state, that in no part of our religious career is the practice of evil to be indulged in; but it is not till some considerable progress is made, that the nature of the internal concupiscences from which all outward evils have birth, is clearly seen, and that, by divine aid, they are subdued and cast out, so as not to infest us with their influence any more.

This perception is expressed in the first verse of our text by its being said, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, "Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?" And the reason why Judah was pitched upon, is because Judah represents the chief heavenly grace which can have a place in the human mind, and this is declared by the Lord Himself to be the grace of love to him. But as love in the will, unattended by a corresponding perception of truth in the understanding, would not have power to accomplish its own objects, therefore Judah took Simeon his brother to accompany him in the expedition: because Simeon represents that kind of faith which immediately tends to come into action.

Now that it may not appear as if these explanations were offered arbitrarily, or at random, it may be useful to support them with a few explanatory observations

It must have struck every one who ever read the Scriptures with any attention, as a remarkable coincidence, that the number of persons whom the Lord selected to be his more immediate followers, and whom He named apostles, should be precisely the same as that of the sons of Jacob; and there are many things which lead us to conclude that this was not the result of any thing like chance, but of peculiar and important reasons. Thus it is no less remarkable that the number in both cases should be *twelve*, this being a number which is mentioned in the Word on so many occasions, as to make it quite clear that some distinct meaning must be attached to it. Thus Ishmael the son of Abraham, had *twelve* sons as well as Jacob. When the Israelites came to Elim, soon after their deliverance from Egypt, they found there *twelve* wells of water. In the high priest's breast-plate were set *twelve* precious stones. *Twelve* spies were sent to explore the land. The battle for the succession to the throne between the followers of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and the followers of David, was commenced by *twelve* combatants on the side of Ishbosheth, and *twelve* on the side of David. Solomon's brazen sea stood upon *twelve* oxen, and *twelve* lions were sculptured to stand by the steps of his throne. Elijah took *twelve* stones to build an altar; and when he went in quest of Elisha he found him ploughing with *twelve* yoke of oxen. The altar seen by Ezekiel in his vision was *twelve* cubits long and *twelve* broad. A woman healed by the Lord had been diseased *twelve* years. After the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, they took up of the fragments that remained *twelve* baskets full. A damsel whom the Lord raised from the dead was of the age of

twelve years. When Jesus Himself was *twelve* years old he entered into conversation with the doctors in the temple. When the multitude came to apprehend Him, He said that if He were to desire it the Father would presently send Him more than *twelve* legions of angels. The woman seen by John in the Revelation had upon her head a crown of *twelve* stars. The New Jerusalem had *twelve* gates and at the gates *twelve* angels; and the wall had *twelve* foundations, and in them the names of the *twelve* apostles of the Lamb. The *twelve* gates also were *twelve* pearls. The tree of life seen in the street bore *twelve* manner of fruits. The length, breadth, and height of the city was *twelve* thousand furlongs; and that of the wall was one hundred and forty-four cubits, which is *twelve* times *twelve*. So when those of the *twelve* tribes of Israel were sealed, the number sealed was *twelve* thousand of each tribe.

These are but a portion of the passages in which the number *twelve* is mentioned in the Holy Word, but they are amply sufficient to shew, that that number cannot have been selected on so many occasions without a peculiar meaning. What that meaning is could be illustrated from all the instances where it is mentioned, but in none does it appear more evident than in the case of the tree of life. What can be supposed to be meant by the fruits of the tree of life? What but the graces which adorn the minds of those who are the subjects of life eternal? If so, the fruits of the tree of life must include *all* these graces: this then is signified by the number *twelve*. In reference to spiritual things, which are not properly the subjects of the natural qualities denoted by dimension and number, numbers must be interpreted in a manner that can properly apply to them; and the number *twelve* is always used to denote *all* heavenly graces in one aggregate collection, or all the goods and truths of the church brought into one general form. There is however always a variety according to the subject treated of. Thus as fruits always signify such things as have relation to goodness, the twelve fruits of the tree of life signify in particular, *all the kinds of heavenly good*, in one complex, with which man, as to his spiritual part, is nourished by the Lord: but as gates signify what introduces to the church, and this is the knowledge of goodness and truth, therefore the twelve gates of the holy city signify *all the species of the knowledge of goodness and truth* in one complex, that serve for introduction into the church.

Now the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles, signify, in like manner, in a sense abstracted from persons, *all the heavenly graces, or affections of goodness and perceptions of truth, in one*

aggregate collection, that compose and constitute the church among mankind and in man individually; they also signify all the members of the church themselves, or all those in whom the graces constituent of the church have a residence. This is very evident from the Apostle's vision of the New Jerusalem. Whether this vision represented, as we conceive, a new church on earth, or whether, according to the common notion, it represented the state of saints in heaven, it is impossible to suppose that it had any thing to do with the Jews in particular; yet on the twelve gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Can this be supposed to mean that none but the children of Israel according to the flesh, are to enter this city? This is impossible. How plain then is it, that the children of Israel are here mentioned as types of the true members of the church, and that by their names being written on the gates is meant, that all who possess the heavenly graces represented by the children of Israel, will have full means and opportunity afforded of entering into this happy state.

There really does seem nothing more evident to the mind that is willing to see in the Holy Word things worthy of God to reveal, than that such must be the true signification of the children of Israel: All the tribes of Israel represent the various graces constituent of the church, and the persons in whom they dwell; whence it follows that each tribe individually must represent some eminent heavenly grace in particular, and a class of persons in whom that grace is most conspicuously displayed. As then Judah was always the first of the tribes in power and dignity, it is natural to infer that he must represent the first of the graces which distinguish a spiritual mind; and this, as just noticed, is declared by the Lord Himself to be, the love of Him; not a barren love which loses itself in unprofitable contemplations upon His person, but the love of every thing that constitutes His essence or nature; as intimated by the Lord when He says, "If ye love Me, keep my commandments." It is equally evident that Adoni-bezek, against whom the tribe of Judah were obliged to go to war, and whom it was necessary that they should subdue before they could take possession of their allotted portion, must denote that principle of evil in the human heart which is diametrically opposite to this active love of the Lord; and this is the love of self. What then is therefore meant by the victory of Judah and Simeon over him, and the singular manner in which he was treated, being punished with the amputation of his thumbs and great toes?

The cutting off of these members of the body, being those on

which all the power of the body greatly depends, represents the depriving of the principle of self-love, represented by Adoni-bezek, of its power. So greatly is a person crippled by the loss of the thumbs and great toes, that it is a maxim in surgery never to amputate them when hurt by any accidents, unless there are no other means of saving the person's life. The loss of a thumb or great toe is an injury to the power of the human frame next to that which would result from the loss of a hand or a foot. The reason is, because all power is exercised by, and resides in, whatever is last in order, both in living and other subjects; hence the hand, as being the extremity of the arm, and the thumb, as being the chief extremity of the hand, both exercise and form the instruments of the power which the human frame exerts by means of those organs. The case is the same, in a lower sphere still, with the foot and great toe. Thus the hand and thumb are emblems of the power which man exerts from his intellectual and spiritual faculties, whilst the foot and great toe express that which belongs to his mere animal nature. It was in consequence of this representation of the thumbs and great toes, that when the high priest was consecrated it was directed that some of the blood of the sacrifices should be put upon the tip of his right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot; to denote that the divine life or divine truth proceeding from the Lord should not only influence his inward perceptions, and determine them to obedience, signified by putting it on the ear, but should flow thence to the lower principles of his mind and life, to all his outward words and works, signified by putting it upon such extreme parts as the thumb and great toe.

How clear then (surely may we be permitted to say) is the evidence which such circumstances as these afford to the spiritual nature of the Word of God! And how important is the instruction which results from seeing what their spiritual signification is! From the example now considered we see clearly how we are to proceed, to obtain emancipation from any of our evils, and particularly from the love of self. We are to cut off its thumbs and great toes; we are to suppress it in every attempt which it makes to exert its power by coming into act. Thus shall we at length deprive it of all influence over us; and as we do this, the Lord will cause it to die from within us, and will qualify us to take possession of that heavenly Canaan, in which nothing shall resist His influence in our hearts, but He and His love shall be our all in all.

SERMON II.

Judges i. 12—15.

“And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, when she came (to him), that she moved him to ask of her father a field. And she lighted from off her ass. And Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.”

WE proceed in contemplating the singular history with which this Book of Judges begins—that of the defeat of Adoni-bezek, who was afterwards made a miserable cripple, by the amputation of his thumbs and great toes. There is one part of this history, which, it has occurred to me, I scarcely touched upon in a manner sufficiently distinct; and that is, the remarkable confession which Adoni-bezek makes of the justice of the retribution which overtook him. “Threescore and ten kings,” he exclaims, “having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.” Kings, wherever they are mentioned in the Word, denote, in the spiritual sense governing or principal truths, either genuine or perverted. Government properly belongs to Divine truth, according to the dictates of which, all kings are supposed to rule their dominions. The greatest enemies to monarchical power will admit, that the law is that by which the nation should be governed; and all law, so far as it is just, is founded in the Divine Truth. It is composed of regulations deduced from the eternal principles of order, and brought down into a form adapted to the condition of the people who are to be governed by it. Now kings, or the chief governors of nations, by whatever name they may be called, are properly the administrators of this law: and as the law is, or ought to be, founded in Divine Truth; and all its injunctions being so many particular truths; it is easy to see the propriety of mentioning kings in the literal sense of the Holy Word, as representatives of the divine truths

of that Word, which are the eternal laws of divine order, designed for the guidance of the human race, both here and hereafter. The number seventy, which our translation, in the old English style of reckoning by scores, calls threescore and ten, is always used in Scripture, like the number seven, from which it is derived by multiplication, to denote what is pre-eminently holy, and particularly what has relation to the celestial and most holy principle of love to the Lord. When therefore Adoni-bezek, who represents the opposite of love to the Lord, which is the love of self, declares that he had cut off the thumbs and great toes of seventy kings, and reduced them to the slavery of depending for their subsistence on the refuse of his table, the meaning is, that so long as the love of self has the dominion in the heart, the most exalted truths of the Divine Word are deprived of their power, and are made subservient, in the mind in which this bears sway, to its low and unworthy purposes. And most truly indeed is this found to be the case where self-love has the pre-eminence, and is the governing motive of the conduct! In this state, whatever truths a man may know, they are not suffered to take their proper dignity as kings within him, but are deprived of all power, and if they are employed at all, it is only the better to carry on the object which self-love has principally in view—that of obtaining power and influence, by enabling him to assume the appearance of a pious and upright character before the world. How happy then is the deliverance which is experienced, when Adoni-bezek himself is served as he had treated his victims,—when the love of self is itself deprived of its influence; and the deep sense of its contrariety to every thing heavenly and divine, expressed in the acknowledgment which his sufferings wrung from him, is become the permanent conviction of every principle and power of the mind!

That the Holy Word contains in every part of it an internal or spiritual sense distinct from that of the letter, is a truth which cannot be difficult of reception by those, who believe the Sacred Scriptures to be the Word of God indeed. That such a sense should be contained in the prophets, and in all such parts as have an obscure or mystical air, can be surprising to none: but that the same should be the case with plain historical narratives,—narratives which, though often recording very extraordinary things, yet are obviously meant to be relations of things actually transacted;—this certainly is what few would, on first hearing the assertion, suppose. There is something inherent in the nature of every thing presented

as a narrative of facts, which chains the mind down to the facts related, and tends to prevent it from looking for any meaning beyond them. However, if the historical parts of Scripture are really the Word of God as well as the didactic and the prophetic, it is certain that the facts related, though actually transacted, cannot be all that is contained for the instruction of the pious mind: The facts themselves must be of a representative or typical character; and thus must be inwardly replete with spiritual instruction.

We have now selected for our meditation a history which is not less remarkable than the former, though the character of it is very different. No doubt all the particulars of it are also equally replete with heavenly wisdom, though it will probably not be so easy to make this apparent. The general subject is evidently respecting the union of goodness and truth, or of love and wisdom, which is effected in the mind, when evil loves and false persuasions are vanquished and removed; and respecting the increase of heavenly blessings which follows that union. But to obtain any clear views of the spiritual meaning of the relation, it is necessary first to have some acquaintance with the actors and the scene of it.

Caleb is here represented as proceeding to take possession of the inheritance allotted him as the reward of his fidelity, when, forty-five years before, he had visited this part of Canaan as a spy, to carry information respecting it to Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness. This we learn from the 14th and 15th chapters of Joshua. The history of the Spies and their report is recorded in the 13th and 14th chapters of the Book of Numbers; where we read that twelve spies, one selected from each tribe, were sent to explore the land then in possession of the Canaanites, of whom Caleb was selected from the tribe of Judah, and Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim. The report that they brought was, that the land was rich, but that the cities were strongly fortified, and the people of gigantic stature. When the children of Israel began to take alarm at this report, “Caleb,” it is said, “stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.” “But the men that went up with him said,” (with the exception however, as the context shews, of Joshua,) “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” The consequence of this cowardice was, that the people were on the point of electing another leader to conduct them back into Egypt; wherefore the treacherous spies died immediately by a plague, and the people in general

were sentenced to abide in the wilderness till the whole generation had died off. An exemption from these punishments was however made in favour of Caleb and Joshua. The conduct of the former, who seems to have been by far the most active in checking the madness of the people, is repeatedly mentioned with commendation. Thus the Lord says to Moses, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it." So again with respect to Joshua also, Moses was commanded to say to the rebellious Israelites, "Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upwards, which have murmured against me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Now what can be represented by these two faithful spies, one of whom, as before observed, was of the tribe of Judah, and the other of the tribe of Ephraim? What but a principle of goodness and truth immediately and wholly from the Lord in the will and understanding of the regenerating subject? whilst the others, and all the rebellious Israelites, represent spiritual things received from the Lord in the will and understanding, but defiled by a mixture of the selfhood of man, and thus not of such a genuine nature as to be able to stand in the fiery trials of temptation. Of Caleb it is said, that he wholly followed the Lord; evidently denoting a principle of pure love received from him and undefiled by any selfish mixture. And that Joshua was equally approved, is evident from his being appointed to conduct the Israelites after the death of Moses; which clearly shews that he represents a principle of pure truth received from the Lord, and undefiled by man's self-derived intelligence. Thus they both may be regarded as representing the Lord Himself; Caleb representing him as to that Divine Goodness or Love with which he is present with man during his states of temptation; and Joshua representing Him as to that Divine Truth or Word by which He conducts man at the same critical period. That Joshua represents the Lord as to divine truth, and thence His

divine truth in man's understanding, is evident from his being of the tribe of Ephraim, which always denotes the intellectual principle of the church; and that Caleb represents Him as to divine good, and thence a principle of good from Him in man's will, is evident from his being of the tribe of Judah, which represents the highest celestial principle, or that of love to the Lord, which has its seat in the will. It is the characteristic of the celestial man to bring truths, as soon as he hears them, into the life, without first suffering them to lie inactive in the memory; and this we see represented in the promptitude of obedience, together with the ardent and fearless zeal, by which Caleb was distinguished: and this is also why he receives the high commendation of having fully followed the Lord. The Lord is never fully followed but when his whole will is obeyed without hesitation; and nothing but the celestial principle of love to Him can inspire such obedience.

From these considerations, then, it would appear that Caleb represents a principle of pure love or good, immediately from the Lord, in the inmost of the mind; but in order that it may accomplish all the blessed purposes for which it was designed, and in order, likewise, that man may enjoy all the blessedness which it is intended to impart, it is necessary that it should descend thence into the external of the mind also, and come fully into action throughout the whole man. This is what is represented by Caleb's taking possession of his inheritance in the land of Canaan, one of the cities of which was Kirjath-sepher: which, on being captured by him, through the valour of his cousin Othniel, changed its name into Debir. There are many instances of places changing their names on passing from under the power of the Canaanites to that of the Israelites; and no doubt there is always a good reason for it in the internal sense. In cases where the exact meaning of the names cannot with certainty be discovered, it will not be easy to see what is spiritually signified by the exchange: but the meaning both of Kirjath-sepher, and of Debir, is so distinct, that it is not difficult to see the reason for exchanging them. Kirjath means a city, and Sepher literally means a book; and Debir means a word or discourse. Thus the one means written and the other oral language; the one something dead, and the other something alive. All cities, in the Word, spiritually signify doctrines: by this city then, so long as it is called Kirjath-sepher, an inanimate book, is meant the doctrine of truth, such as is suited to the celestial man, so long as it remains a dead letter in the memory; but when it is called Debir—living discourse,—it denotes the doctrine of truth

exalted into the life, so as to live within the man, as the spontaneous conclusions of his own understanding called into activity by a renewed will. And this change of name took place in this city when its wicked inhabitants were destroyed or driven out; to instruct us that our doctrines only acquire life, as the evil propensities and false persuasions, which naturally possess our hearts and understandings, are compelled to give way before the prevailing influence of heavenly affections and the genuine truths of the Lord's Word.

It would appear, too, that this takes place when, after both perceptions of truth and affections of goodness have been inseminated into the mind, they come into a strong desire for union. The stimulating cause of the taking of Kirjath-sepher is expressed by Caleb's saying, "He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife:" upon which declaration, "Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it." Here Achsah the daughter of Caleb, represents the pure affection of goodness in a lower region of the mind, derived from good that is immediately from the Lord in the higher; and Othniel the son of Kenaz, denotes truth from a celestial origin, combating with power against evils and falsities from the desire of conjunction with such affection. There is here also something remarkable in the original, that greatly adds to the beauty of the spiritual sense, which is not so perceptible in the English translation. We might conclude, from the words of the translators, that Kenaz, whose son Othniel is said to be, was the brother of Caleb: but there are other passages which prove that he was the grandfather of Caleb. It is Othniel who is said to be the brother of Caleb, not because he was Caleb's own brother, but because he stood in the same degree of relationship to their common ancestor, Kenaz; brother being a term which is used in Scripture not only to denote the sons of the same father, but all collateral relatives whatsoever: and the reason why it is here used is, for the sake of the spiritual sense, according to which, faith and charity, truth and goodness, love and wisdom, are called brethren to each other; wherefore, as Caleb represents a principle of celestial good, and Othniel truth from a celestial origin, he is properly denominated Caleb's brother. But what our translators have rendered *younger*, is properly "the least from him," namely from Kenaz, denoting not only the least in years but in importance and influence; which circumstance is mentioned to express the *innocence* of the principle represented by Othniel, denoting that

such a principle of truth in the mind has no tendency to self-exaltation, but to humility and self-abasement, teaching him who possesses it, to regard himself as nothing, and the Lord as all. When in all our views of truth this innocent looking to the Lord is within, we shall be able, like Othniel, to overcome all opposition from self and the world, and the infernal hosts also, and to experience in the mind that union of goodness and truth in which are stored all the felicities of heaven.

And when this happy union has thus taken place, it will manifest itself in our outward man also, and will inevitably produce goodness of life as its result. This is implied by its being said, that "it came to pass, when she came (to him,) (or after the marriage,) that she moved him to ask of her father a field." A field, as being without the city, denotes what is respectively external; and as it is ground in which seeds are to be sown, it denotes that good of life which is the proper soil for receiving the truths of faith, and becoming fruitful by their insemination. When the truth we have received from the Lord is united in the mind with a pure affection for him, it will not always remain within the city,—in the contemplation of doctrines, and in lifting the soul upwards in devout aspirations; but it will go abroad into the world in works of usefulness and benevolence, and will thus find a field for the display of such activities as a principle of truly celestial life and love in the heart, will always prompt to and inspire. It was Achsah too, the wife and daughter, that prompted the desire for this field, to shew that it is the love of goodness within that is the moving principle to works of beneficence. And Othniel, at her desire, asked it of her father—of the Lord Himself, as the sole source of the good that can dwell within us. It will amount to much the same if we still consider Caleb as a principle of celestial good immediately received in the heart from the Lord: in which case, the asking by desire of Achsah, will denote a desire in the lower region of the mind, to be more conformed to, and replenished with, the pure love which the Lord has infused into the higher.

But now Achsah herself makes a request: and how did she proceed in doing so? She lighted from off her ass: by which is signified the separation of the mind from what is merely natural, that it may be in a state to perceive the good of the internal. Thus, to alight from the ass seems to represent something similar to the putting off of the shoe, which Moses was commanded to do when in the immediate presence of Jehovah: by which is signified

the necessity of receding from a merely sensual and corporeal state, when elevating the mind to a perception of the Lord. An ass strictly signifies the intellectual principle of the natural man, which is necessary to be made use of when man is in active life, though it then must be kept in due subordination; but to alight from off an ass, is to be separated from this intellectual principle, and to come into the state of humiliation necessary for the reception of divine communications. Such communications are here represented as being consequent upon this state: for "Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water." The south is always mentioned in the Word to denote a state of intelligence, wherefore to have received a south land as a gift from Caleb, denotes to be gifted with a state of intelligence from the Lord, as a consequence of possessing a principle of good immediately from him in the internal man: for nothing can impart a real principle of intelligence to the understanding, but a reception of goodness from a divine origin in the heart. Every one may have observed, that when a strong desire is felt to understand any subject from the real love of it, however intricate it may appear where there is no such desire, it then becomes easy: and there is no real love or desire for spiritual intelligence, but that which is founded in the love of practising those truths which spiritual intelligence discovers. The food however of all spiritual intelligence is truth from the Holy Word, and this is always represented in Scripture by wells or springs of water. And because in the state here represented, there is the requisite love or desire for the perception and enjoyment of these divine truths, therefore it is said that Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether or lower springs; the upper springs are the streams of truth divine that flow from the spiritual sense of the Holy Word for the edification of the internal or spiritual man; and the lower springs are the stores of truth contained in the natural sense of the Holy Word for the edification of the external or natural man. Both are opened to those in whose minds goodness and truth are in a state of conjunction, or in whom the marriage of Othniel and Achsah has taken place. They are in continual communion with the Divine Caleb,—with the Lord himself,—and that good which is immediately from Him, in the inmost of their minds, and thus their souls are like a watered garden, whose waters fail not. Their minds are never destitute of themes of edifying contemplation, but

in the spirit and letter of the Holy Word, they have the upper and lower springs that will cause their souls to produce new plants of paradise both here and hereafter.

Now although the circumstances related in this history are not miraculous, but, in part, of an apparently trivial nature, they certainly are such as would not have been put upon record in the Word of God, but for the sake of the spiritual things which are thereby represented. What historical interest belongs to such circumstances, as that Othniel asked for a field, and Achsah for springs of water? Yet when the signification of the field, and of the springs of water is known, how beautiful and important does the whole become! How full and complete are seen to be the divine gifts which are offered to the sincere seeker after spiritual life and blessing! Let us all, my brethren, be hereby animated to perform the part of a faithful Othniel. Under the impulse of a desire to obtain the pure affection of goodness to unite with our knowledge of truth, let us earnestly engage in the work of purification, and cast out every evil that lurks within our minds. So shall we find a field for the unrestrained exercise of a corresponding life; and the upper and the nether springs,—the Holy Truth, internal and external, of the Divine Word, rendered living by a communication of life from the Lord, will fertilize our souls to every good product and heavenly thought, and we shall have an eternal inheritance in the heavenly Canaan.

SERMON III.

Judges ii. 1, 2, 3.

“And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you; and ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land: ye shall throw down their altars. But ye have not obeyed my voice. Why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides: and their gods shall be a snare unto you.”

WE have been engaged, in two previous discourses, in considering the spiritual instruction to be derived from some of the extraordinary circumstances related in the first chapter of this Book of Judges: on which we entered partly with a design of shewing the true nature of the historical parts of the Old Testament. To continue the same design, it is now proposed, to proceed with the consideration of some of the other remarkable histories related in this book.

All that follows is, in the literal sense, an account of the oppressions under which the children of Israel fell from idolatrous nations—sometimes from those which dwelt beyond the limits of the land of Canaan, and sometimes from those which retained a habitation within its borders; and it includes also the detail of many surprising deliverances which they obtained, by the raising up of judges, who, supported by a divine influence, defeated their enemies and regained the liberty of their country. Our present text, with the remainder of the chapter from which it is taken, gives an account of *the cause* which so far deprived them of the divine protection as so frequently to render them unable to cope with their enemies: The cause was this; that instead of refusing all commerce with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land, and carrying on the war against them till they were entirely expelled, they suffered them to dwell amongst them, and to exercise before them their idolatrous worship: the consequence of which was, as is stated in the thirteenth verse, that they themselves forsook the Lord, and

worshiped Baal and Ashtaroth; and this was necessarily followed by misfortune and servitude.

Whoever has read with any attention the books of Moses, and that of Joshua, must have been struck with the frequency and urgency of the divine command given to the Israelites, to have no dealings with the Canaanites, but to drive them entirely out of the land. At the time of the giving of the ten commandments, at the conclusion of the precepts delivered in the three following chapters of Exodus, the Lord makes a promise to the children of Israel respecting his giving them the land of Canaan; which He finishes with these words: “I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against Me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.” The like injunction is repeated at the time of the renewing the tables of the law: again Jehovali says to Israel, “Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest; lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: but ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.” Similar commands are given over and over again through the remaining books of Moses; and they formed also one of the dying injunctions of Joshua. He had driven out or exterminated a great number of the idolatrous people: but he warns his countrymen against being satisfied with what they had already done, and making peace with the remainder, in these words: “Take good heed to yourselves that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in anywise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these which remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you; know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.” Yet notwithstanding these multiplied warnings, we find that the Israelites were no sooner seated comfortably in the land, than they disobeyed them all. The first chapter of Judges contains the history of the final settlement of the several tribes in their allotments; and of every one of them it is recorded that they shared their possessions with their former inhabitants. Thus of Judah (under which name Simeon appears to be included, as Judah and Simeon made common cause in taking possession of their portions;

it is said, that "the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." But that this "could not" is only said in reference to the faint-heartedness with which they made the attempt, is evident from the answer of Joshua to a similar complaint of Ephraim and Manasseh, who had said to him, "The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron:" to whom Joshua said in his reply, "The mountain shall be thine, for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they be strong." This is a plain declaration that the chariots of iron would not be an insuperable bar to the victories of the Israelites, if they faithfully adhered to the commandments so often given them, utterly to drive out the Canaanites, and if they confided in the divine promise, so often repeated, that nothing, whilst they continued obedient, would be able to stand before them. We find however that Judah, terrified by the chariots of iron, or chariots armed with long knives or scythes, similar to those in use among the original inhabitants of Britain, were content to leave the Canaanites in possession of the valleys or low country, and to be satisfied with the occupation of the mountain or hilly country. So it is said of the tribe of Benjamin, that they did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem, but allowed them to dwell with them. It is in like manner recorded of the tribe of Manasseh, that they "did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but," it is said, "the Canaanites would dwell in that land." It is added, "that when Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out:" which is equivalent to saying, that, contrary to so many divine injunctions, they made with them a covenant or treaty. Much the same is related of the tribes of Ephraim, Zebulon, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan; which, with those before named, and Issachar, of whom nothing is said, form the whole body of the Israelites whose possessions were within the river Jordan, or the country properly called the land of Canaan. All, it appears, disobeyed the divine commandments which contained the very conditions upon which they were to be put in possession of the land: no wonder then if severe sufferings quickly

followed, and if the enemies whom they endured among them occasionally became their masters.

Now it is evident that this history, even in its literal sense, conveys a lesson of great and impressive import. It is stated in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the chapter of our text, that in consequence of Israel's falling away to follow the gods of the people round about them, "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of spoilers that spoiled them, and he delivered them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed." This effect of their disobedience so speedily followed, because with them, who were altogether external men, external rewards and punishments were the invariable consequences of their obedience or disobedience to the divine laws. Under the Christian dispensation, this immediate application, in a sensible manner, of punishment to crime and of blessing to good conduct, does not so regularly take place among either nations or individuals. Both are permitted sometimes to go on for a considerable period in a course of wickedness, without being directly pursued by divine judgments, though they are sure to encounter them at last;—the wicked man after the death of the body, and the corrupted nation after a longer or shorter interval of prosperity. But among the Israelites, with whom every thing was representative, and with whom also natural afflictions were the proper rewards of natural crimes, the outward sin and its visible punishment appear seldom to have been long disjoined. Such occurrences then are well calculated to impress us most strongly with a sense of the necessity of yielding a sincere obedience to the divine commandments; since we may be certain from these examples, that an habitual disregard of them throws us out of the sphere of the divine protection, exposes us to the most injurious visitations, and must, if persevered in, be attended with our final ruin.

The lesson however, will be more clearly conveyed, if we direct our view to the spiritual sense of these occurrences, instead of abiding in the literal sense alone.

The idolatrous nations which the Israelites were commanded to exterminate, represent all the deep-seated evil lusts and false persuasions which lurk in the human heart: of course the command to drive them out, denotes the necessity of expelling them entirely from our bosoms, so that they should not influence our affections

or conduct any more; as on the other hand, to make a league with them is to temporize with our duty, and to tolerate the existence of the principle, though we may think we will be very cautious how we suffer it to come into practice. But the example of the Israelites shews, what the experience of all mankind confirms, how dangerous it is to parley with an enemy of this nature: if we allow any thing that we know to be evil ever to tarry in our thoughts, the infallible consequence will be that it will at last ensnare us, as the Canaanites did the Jews, when they induced them to worship their gods: To worship the gods of the Canaanites, is to give that place in our affections, to the corrupt inclinations of the natural man, which is due to the Lord alone, the consequence of which must be eternal ruin. It appears that when the Israelites made treaties with the Canaanites, they had no thoughts of adopting their habits: the treaties they made were such as are usually granted by a conqueror to a vanquished enemy, the terms being that they should be tributary to them; by which of course is signified, that the evils represented by the Canaanites, though not exterminated, were not to be allowed to exercise any influence, much less to assume the superiority, but were to be kept in a state of subordination; yet we find, owing to the natural bias which the corrupt heart of man has towards selfish and worldly objects, the presence of the Canaanites among the children of Israel was sufficient to lead them into their practices: This fact is replete with the most solemn warnings, typifying, as it so evidently does, the readiness with which man lapses into evil deeds and habits, if he suffers the thought or idea of such things to dwell in his mind, and does not instantly and decidedly reject it. Let us then learn wisdom from this example. Let us learn to keep our minds continually aspiring after further and further purification; and when any corrupt instigation presents itself to our senses and thoughts, instead of yielding to the allurements and appropriating the evil, let it only be the signal for its immediate renunciation. Thus will every thing of the kind be made conducive to our improvement instead of operating to our injury. For no evil inclination could ever spring up within us, either through outward allurements or the instigation of infernals, if there were not a basis of a corrupt nature inherent in our minds, to which evil inclinations and practices are agreeable. Every perception then of any evil inclination, is in fact an outward discovery of some deep-seated corruption of our selfish nature; and when the suggestion is resisted and entirely overthrown, through our forbearing to yield to it and looking to the Lord, that portion of our self-

hood in which it is grounded is removed with it, and thus room is made, as it were, for a more full reception of heavenly graces and their accompanying delights. But this happy result only takes place, (be it well observed,) when the evil is rejected without being entertained and indulged: where *this* is done, that portion of our selfhood in which the evil is grounded, and which before existed in us in a latent state, and, being the result only of hereditary derivation and not of actual life, would not have been imputed to us as sin, is appropriated, confirmed, and made the subject of imputation: and though evils even of this nature may afterwards be removed by serious repentance, their removal will then be attended with many a bitter pang, and the state which may subsequently be attained will after all be inferior to what it might have been, had the evil suggestions been resisted on their first appearance, and had never by their adoption been made our own. How careful then ought we ever to be against making any league with the spiritual Canaanites.

Such is the general purport of the Israelitish history; but it includes likewise a more specific application, of which we will endeavour to offer a slight sketch, with a view of shewing how endless are the stores of divine instruction contained in the Word of God, and at the same time what a boundless career of improvement is open to the sincere Christian, who is willing to follow where Divine Mercy is ever desirous to lead him.

When understood in respect to the regeneration of man as an individual, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and their establishment in Canaan, represents his advance to the second great stage in the regenerate life, or the attainment of that state in which if he die, he becomes an inhabitant of the second or middle heaven. That it is the will of the Lord that man should attain the highest possible state, which is consequent upon his complete deliverance from the influence of his selfish nature, and the extirpation of all the evils with which it is contaminated, seems to be indicated by the command so often given to destroy or drive out entirely the wicked inhabitants of Canaan; the accomplishment of which command would have represented a state, in which man would be no more liable to decline into evils. But such is the depth of man's ingenerate corruptions, and his consequent infirmities, that although this would be possible to him if he would steadily look to and confide in the Lord, yet he in practice does not attain it without making a long abode in the second great stage of the spiritual life, in which further and

further developments of the evils of his nature take place. This appears to be represented by the fact, that the Israelites, contrary to the divine injunction, spared their deadly foes. Their acting thus proved the cause of their suffering many calamities, which were representative of the temptations and vastations necessary to be undergone, in consequence of the depths of evil resident in the corrupt heart of man, before he can attain the perfection of the spiritual state, and be introduced into the celestial. We read in the 7th and following verses of this chapter, that "the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel." This appears to describe the state of obedience from a spiritual ground, which is maintained on the completion of man's regeneration to the second or spiritual degree, being the result of temptations and victories in them wrought for man by the Lord. His experience and acknowledgment of this are meant by its being said of that generation, that they "had seen the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel," But it is immediately added, "And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died;"—"and also all that generation were gathered to their fathers:" then it proceeds, "and there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." These words most strikingly describe the opening of a new region of the mind, the evils belonging to which had not before been brought to light, and of consequence had not been subdued and removed by the temptations which had sufficed for the regeneration of man as to the spiritual degree. It would appear then, that all which follows in the history of the Israelites, to their being carried away to Babylon and brought back again, represents the states which the regenerating mind undergoes, before it can be raised from the spiritual degree of life to the celestial: and when it is considered what depths of arcana must be included in this process, and what innumerable states must be passed through before all the glories belonging to the celestial state can be developed, and also that these can only be developed in proportion as greater and greater discoveries are made of the hidden corruptions of our nature; when we reflect on this, we need not wonder that the detail of them occupies so large a portion of the Holy Word. That this remarkable notice, that another generation arose which knew not the Lord, denotes the opening of a new state after the attainment of the spiritual, is strongly corroborated by this con-

sideration, that it answers so exactly to what is related at the beginning of the sufferings of the Israelites in Egypt; on which occasion it is said, (Ex. i. 8) that "there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph." This expresses the opening of a new state in the natural mind, not perceived to exist before, in which the contrariety of the natural man to the spiritual becomes plainly manifest: so, by parity of reason, the arising, after the time of Joshua, of a new generation which knew not the Lord, must denote the opening of a deeper state in man's selfhood, opposed to the glories of the celestial state, and to the heavenly attainments necessary to be made in advancing to it. The same phrase is not used in the Word on any other than these two occasions; the reason is, because there are no other stages in the regenerate life so strongly marked as these. These denote the openings of those degrees altogether distinct from each other which are called in the New Church Writings discrete degrees; whereas all the other changes that are noted in the Word express different states or stages in the same general degree.

I mention these things for the satisfaction of those who wish to study, in a deeper ground than common, the Holy Word, and the sublime discoveries of heavenly arcana brought to light in the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church: but I am aware that they are things difficult to be made intelligible to the mind which is not in possession of a good deal of previous knowledge on such subjects. Abstruse however as these things may appear, they may give rise to valuable practical reflections. It surely must tend to exalt our admiration and reverence of the Holy Word when we see the endless variety of profound mysteries which it includes within its bosom: it must also bring home to us the exclamation of the Psalmist, and convince us that we are indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made," when we learn that such a boundless store of distinct things and principles is comprised in our spiritual organization; and it must exalt our adoration of our blessed God and Father, when we see in ourselves so strong an image even of His infinity, and become more sensible of what an exhaustless exercise of divine mercies and deliverances is necessary, and is granted by Him, for our complete salvation.

We will conclude with a remark which may be necessary to secure part of what has been said from being misapplied.

We have seen that when the historical facts we have been considering are understood in their general spiritual reference, they shew how necessary it is to guard against yielding on any occasion

to evil influences: and yet it might seem, from what has been said on the specific application of the circumstances, as if such influences must to a certain extent prevail. But it is to be observed that when we apply the Holy Word to the specific states of individual regeneration, all the persons and things mentioned, refer to certain principles in the mind of the individual subject, and do not any of them extend to the whole man himself. Thus in the general sense the Israelites in their states of rebellion and obstinacy represent the members of the church in its state of perversion, who yield to the allurements of evil lusts, and consequently perish, or at least suffer a great injury in their states: but in the particular sense the Israelites do not represent the member of the church himself, but certain states in his mind; and their yielding to the seductions of the Canaanites, does not imply that the real member of the church will in any state fall into the evils represented by the Canaanites, but only that he will become sensible of the existence within him of propensities inclining him to do so, and which, in states of temptation, seem to surround him so closely, that it appears to him as if he must yield to them, and so be eternally lost. That this is the manner in which the transgressions of the Israelites are to be understood in their reference to the individual subject of regeneration, is evident from the case of David, who is known to be in a particular manner a representative of the Lord. The Lord, we know, was without sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: yet David was guilty of the greatest of all possible sins—adultery and murder,—and this effected by the deepest guile. How then could he, in these respects, represent the Lord? The spiritual meaning is, not that the Lord fell into these evils, but that in his states of humiliation He discovered in the human nature taken from the mother, the propensities to these and all other corruptions, which afforded a ground for the infernal powers to assault Him, and to occasion deep temptations: and we know that the result in Him of all such temptations was, not any appropriation of the evils suggested, but complete victory over them. So are all the histories of the lapses of the Israelites to be understood in their reference to the regeneration of an individual: they do not mean that such a man will run into actual evils, but that he will obtain deeper and deeper discoveries of the evils that are in his nature, and will suffer temptations in consequence, but that, supported by the Lord, he will be finally victorious, and be exalted, at length, either to the state represented by the taking possession of Canaan after coming up out of Egypt, or

to the still more glorious one represented by the return to Canaan after the captivity in Babylon. But all depends upon man's resisting the incitements to actual evil whenever they arise. There is no being in any real good except by the rejection of every evil. Let us then look to the Lord that we may first be enabled to discover the evils that are within us, and that we may ever abhor and shun them till we are finally established in the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON IV.

Judges iii. 5—11.

And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, and Hittites, and Amorites, and Perrizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgat the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years. And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years.

It has been endeavoured in some former discourses from this book of Judges, to give a general idea of the nature of the history which it contains. We have seen, that when we regard the whole of the Divine Word as describing the progress of individual regeneration, as no doubt it does, from the first formation of the human being to his highest state of advancement; the histories of this book must have reference to those states which supervene, after man has attained the elevated situation of a truly spiritual man, represented by his establishment in the land of Canaan, and when new openings of the recesses of his nature are made to him, which are necessary to the further extension of his acquirements, and without which he could never attain the state in which are the angels of the highest heavens, and become a truly celestial being. With respect however to the more general manner in which these histories may be regarded, we have seen that they describe states of the church at large, when it suffers itself to fall away from the principle of its foundation, and inclines to the evils and false persuasions which are inherent in the mind of man, and which are

called into activity by the influence of evil spirits, who, when considered in one aggregate, are called the devil, of whom an apostle declares, that he is ever going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

We read in this book of six great oppressions which the Israelites suffered from the idolatrous nations around them, or from those whom they permitted to dwell among them, each of which lasted for a considerable number of years. The first is that related in our text, when the king of Mesopotamia held them in bondage for eight years, till they were delivered by the raising up of Othniel for the purpose. After his death, when the Israelites lapsed again into idolatrous practices, they were subdued by the Moabites, under whose tyranny they groaned for eighteen years, and were delivered by Ehud. After some trouble from the Philistines, who were overthrown by Shamgar, they again did evil in the sight of the Lord, (as is often remarked;) when they were oppressed by Jabin, a Canaanitish prince, and by Sisera, the captain of his forces, for the long space of twenty years; till Deborah and Barak were raised up for their deliverance. They next fell under the power of the Midianites, and were by them reduced to the greatest extremity of distress, for the period of seven years; when they were rescued by the extraordinary exploits of Gideon and his curiously selected band of three hundred men. After his days, except that they suffered from the domestic tyranny of his son Abimelech, they seem to have enjoyed a considerable interval of tranquility under two pacific judges, Tola and Jair; when they were enslaved by the Ammonites for eighteen years, and were rescued by Jephthah. He was succeeded by three judges, of whom little is recorded, when the Philistines obtained the dominion over them; and whose power, notwithstanding the great exploits of Samson, was not completely broken till the reign of David. Thus this book contains the history of the Israelitish nation under the authority of twelve Judges, and of their sufferings under six complete states of subjugation to different nations: in which, however, I have not reckoned their captivity to the Philistines in the days of Shamgar, because this seems to have been but of very partial extent. Of all these, that related in our text (except that connected with Shamgar) is passed over the most briefly. All the others are accompanied with details of considerable length, and some very singular circumstances attended all the means by which deliverance was obtained; whereas in that at present before us, nothing peculiarly remarkable seems to have distinguished the war which was undertaken by Othniel, further

than that Chushan-rishathaim appears to have been easily vanquished. The causes, however, which led to this captivity, are detailed more at length than in most other instances, no doubt to serve as a general introduction to the whole, and to let us know what is included in the brief expression generally used on other occasions—"the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." We will note the chief circumstances stated; which will lead us briefly to explain what is meant by the several nations mentioned; what by the kind of alliances which the Israelites contracted with them; what by the anger of the Lord being kindled against Israel; what by their slavery under Chushan-rishathaim; what by their crying to the Lord; and what by their deliverance through the instrumentality of Othniel.

With respect to the first of these subjects, it is said, that the children of Israel dwelt in the midst of the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites; which are the same that are mentioned elsewhere as being the nations whom the Israelites were to drive out of the land, and by no means to tolerate among them. The wicked natives of the land of Canaan represent the deep-seated evil lusts and false persuasions inherent in the human heart; and no doubt, when they are enumerated in a series, as in the present case, they denote all the corruptions, in a general complex, to which the heart of man is prone. Each one of them, we may be assured, expresses some general class of depraved affections of the will, or false suggestions of the understanding; though how to distinguish in what they differ from each other would perhaps require nicer degrees of spiritual discrimination than we at present possess. The Canaanites usually denote evil in general; but sometimes, when mentioned in connexion with others, they denote that kind of evil which is the result of a man's having previously confirmed himself in false principles of belief. Let us suppose, for instance, a man to be persuaded, as multitudes are, that faith alone is all that is requisite for salvation, and that charity and good works, though useful in society, are of no use whatever in promoting man's justification in the sight of God;—if, under the persuasion that charity or good will not save him, he should begin to think that neither will evil condemn him, and should thus become regardless of the state of his affections, and live in the practice of whatever his corrupt natural inclinations suggest:—such a man is sunk in evil grounded in falsity;—he indulges in evil in consequence of having imbibed, as a principle of doctrine, the notion that faith alone is sufficient, and that where this is possessed,

sins do not appear in the sight of God. So again the Hittites represent such false persuasions in the understanding as give birth to evil indulgences; and these are such notions as just explained respecting the all-sufficiency of faith alone: and many other false notions, whose tendency is similar, exist. The doctrine, for instance, of man's being destitute of free will in spiritual things is a false persuasion that has a direct tendency to beget evil in affection and practice: for he that believes it, will readily say, "If I cannot do good or abstain from evil without an irresistible outpouring of divine grace, and this grace is not given me, I cannot be to blame, let me do what I may:"—and so such a person will indulge in all evil propensities, while in his heart he imputes the blame of them to God. Such notions are spiritual Hittites, to contract an alliance with which is to rebel against the Lord, and to forsake his pure worship for the worship of idols. The Amorites again represent evil in general, specifically such as captivates the external man; as appears from their having their chief residence on the outside of Jordan, where, with their king Sihon, they were vanquished by Moses. The Perizzites, which are next mentioned, denote false persuasions originating in evil of heart, as all false notions originally do, although when once invented, they may be infused into other persons, who may hold them in simplicity, and thus not be sharers in the criminality which is incurred by the inventors of them. Thus, whenever a man is attached to the practice of evil of any kind whatever, though at first he may be sensible that it is very wrong, yet if he does not on this account desist from it, he is sure by practice so to confirm it as to lose all wish to desist from it; and as in such case the thought that it is wrong becomes disagreeable and painful, he first frames for himself some excuse, and at last actually persuades himself that he has a right to do as he does: and this persuasion is truly the falsity grounded in evil—it is false in itself, and evil is its author. And such notions as these are constantly meant by the Perizzites wherever they are spoken of in the Holy Word. The other two classes mentioned—the Hivites and the Jebusites,—also denote evil inclinations and false imaginations, but such as are of a milder kind than the others, as partaking more of ignorance than of intention: but such as are nevertheless highly culpable in a man who, having the Holy Word to consult, and the means of obtaining correct ideas as to its doctrines, neglects these advantages, and following his own inclinations and blind conceptions without caring to have them set right, falls into

the idolatry of regarding external things in preference to internal, thinking much of this life and little of any other.

Such then, are in general the things represented by the six nations here mentioned: of course it is easy to see how great is the wickedness described by the mode in which the Israelites contracted alliances with them, which is what we are in the second place to notice. It is said that "they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their Gods."

Daughters, whenever they are spoken of in the Word, denote affections either of good or of evil, and sons denote perceptions of truth. As the Israelites signify the members of the church, or, specifically that which constitutes the church in man, for them to take the daughters of these wicked nations for wives, denotes the conjunction of the holy things of the Church with evil affections of all kinds; so again to give their daughters to the sons of the wicked nations, is to unite affections of a heavenly origin with false persuasions. For example; whoever, on the one part, has acquired an acquaintance with the genuine truths of the Church, knowing that there is a God, and who He is,—that there is a heaven and hell, and the numerous doctrines that arise out of these general principles; and who does, notwithstanding, encourage affections of an evil nature in his heart, especially if he endeavours to make these heavenly things conducive to worldly and selfish ends, he does what is represented by the Israelites marrying the daughters of the Canaanites—he profanes heavenly things, by mixing them with selfish affections. On the other hand, whoever, in consequence of being acquainted with the truths of the Church, has felt affections for them, and for the Divine realities to which they relate, springing up in his mind; if, for instance, on hearing the doctrine of the Lord unfolded, he has been struck with its reasonableness and beauty, and has felt a delight in it;—or if, on hearing of the nature of the heavenly world, he has been sensible of a desire arising in his heart to be enabled to enjoy the bliss described;—these delights and desires are daughters of Israel:—should he then afterwards embrace any of the specious but false sentiments, either of a nature directly doctrinal or not, which have their origin in the evils of the natural man; should he combine his heavenward aspirations with such notions as these, applying, for instance, his delight on hearing of the Lord and his salvation, to the notion that He is but one of three Divine persons: or seeking to gratify his

longing for heaven by adopting the persuasion that heaven will be opened to him by mere faith, without regard to amendment of life;—or should he in any other way unite the affections that have been produced in his mind by a knowledge of spiritual things, with any persuasions of a false and especially of a worldly and selfish nature;—he then does what is meant by the Israelites giving their daughters in marriage to the sons of the Canaanites. Such marriages, of both kinds, denote the combination of doctrines that are true with affections that are evil, by which the truth becomes falsified; and the combination of affections originally good with doctrines that are false, by which the good becomes adulterated. When this is done, the transition is not great to the state represented by the serving, by the Israelites, of the Gods of the Canaanites; by which is meant, to place the worldly and selfish things represented by the idolatrous nations so high in our affections, as to allow them the station due to the Lord alone. The proper residence of the Lord with man is in the inmost of his mind: but if man's affections are set upon unworthy and evil objects, man's true spiritual internal, where the Lord resides, is not open; all that is open in such a man's mind is a region beneath; and whatever is the object of his supreme regard occupies the inmost or highest station therein; and this is to him, whether he suspects it or not, his God. Whoever, then, devotes his supreme affections to evil pursuits, worships in reality the gods of the Canaanites and the other idolatrous nations.

Now when a man has gone into this extent of transgression, he inevitably will experience what is called in the Holy Word, the anger of the Lord. It is said, "Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel;" by which is meant, not that the Lord really burns with anger, however deserving of it man may be; but that, when a man has suffered evil influences to turn him away from the Lord, so that in his heart, instead of the Lord, he worships some depraved affection, he comes into a state of such contrariety to the Lord, that everything proceeding from the Lord is perceived by him as something just the reverse of what it really is. The change is not in the Lord, but in the man. In the Lord is nothing but love and wisdom, goodness and truth; and nothing but these ever can flow from Him; but when man has averted himself from these Divine graces, and has filled his mind with their opposites, then the Lord's love will appear to him like anger, and the influx of it, instead of recreating his soul with life and enjoyment, as it does when received by the angels, fills him with horror

and dismay, occasioning to him such torment as he conceives cannot be the result of any thing but anger. The case to the sinner is thus exactly the same as if the Lord were really full of anger against him, and this should ever be recollected; otherwise the doctrine that the Lord is nothing but love, would be liable to perversion and abuse. The case to the sinner and his feelings, is exactly the same as it would be if the Lord were really angry and punished him from a motive of vengeance; whereas the appearance of anger and vengeance arises from the state of the sinner alone. He has induced such a state on the spiritual organization of his mind, that pure Divine love and goodness, being things that in reality he hates, occasion to him pain by their presence: hence all in hell, when they have any thought of the Lord at all, think of Him with hatred, and believe their wretched state to proceed from anger in Him, instead of being, as it is, the inseparable consequence of their own state of evil; of their opposition and aversion to every thing that is good.

The consequence of this state, in reference to the particular subjects treated of in our text, is declared to be, that the Israelites were delivered into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, who held them in bondage for eight years. Mesopotamia is that part of the ancient country of Syria which lies between the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Mesopotamia is its Greek name, applied to it in reference to its situation, as it denotes "in the midst of the rivers:" its name in Hebrew expressed the same thing—it was "Aram Naharaim," or "Syria of two rivers." Syria is very often mentioned in the Word, and it always denotes, in the spiritual sense, the knowledges of goodness and truth, either genuine or in a state of perversion. The truths of the Church are called knowledges, while they abide in the memory, but are not appropriated in the life, in which case they are in reality without the man and not within him; just as the country of Syria lay without and not within the land of Canaan, to which it was contiguous. To come, then, under the dominion of the king of Mesopotamia, is to come into a state in which the truths of the church, being no longer alive in us through being lived or loved, only exist as mere knowledges in the memory; and when they even are falsified, so as to be made, by wrong interpretations, to appear to confirm the falsities and evils of the natural man. In this state, the truths of the church, and whatever has been received in the mind from the Lord, are in reality made vile slaves.

This at length the children of Israel felt and deplored, which is

represented by its being said, that they cried to the Lord. It is remarkable that this phrase is used on every occasion of the oppression of the Israelites recorded in this book, and in numerous other instances; as when the children of Israel were oppressed in Egypt, it is said that "they cried, and their cry came up unto God." This denotes, that when man is truly sensible of the state in which he is, and is sincerely desirous to be delivered from it, then, and not before, deliverance is afforded. As, to worship the gods of Canaan, is to give that place in the mind to evil affections, which is due only to the Lord, so to cry to the Lord is to look to him for help from the deepest recesses of the heart—to be actuated by such a desire to escape from the thralldom of our corruptions as has the Lord in reality in it, being a desire of which he is the Author and man the receiver, though a free one, and which, thus coming from him, is sure to reach to him, and then deliverance will follow. This deliverance is here described as wrought by Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother; respecting whom as the conqueror of Kirjath-Sepher, we lately delivered a discourse (p. 9). Suffice it then to state now, that by him is represented a principle of truth originating in good of an elevated order; and by his being raised up for the work by the Lord, is represented, that when such a desire for deliverance as we have already described, is excited, man is gifted in his mind with such a genuine principle of truth derived from good, and invested with such power from the Lord, as will speedily rescue his knowledges of truth from perversion, and restore his mind to order in obedience to the Lord.

Be it then our constant care to prevent our knowledges of Divine things from degenerating into mere knowledges undirected by any view to use: and if we at any time experience a tendency to such perversion, let us not be slow to cry unto the Lord, and to seek from Him such a principle of real truth from good as a governing impulse, as shall restore the state to order, and revive a genuine spiritual principle such as shall prevail through all our life and conduct, securing us for ever in our heavenly inheritance.

SERMON V.

Judges iii. 12, 13, 14.

“ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord : and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon, and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

WHEN we endeavour to unfold in the slight degree in which we are enabled, a few of the innumerable mysteries which are involved in the regeneration of the individual member of the church, it may be necessary now and then to introduce a word of caution, to prevent the simple mind from concluding too hastily, that the work of regeneration is so arduous and complicated a process, that there is no hope of ever being led through what it involves. Whilst the recondite meaning of the Holy Word is only brought forward as a matter of curious discovery, and, in unfolding the spiritual subjects which are contained under the covering of the letter, especially in such extraordinary histories as that of which our text is a part, the chief object is to defend the divinity of the Holy book, and to prove its claims to be received as divinely inspired, by shewing that it contains stores of wisdom within it which none but the Divine Mind could conceive,—even the natural man may feel interested, and take delight, in the discussion : because in this case the heavenly treasures of the Holy Word appear as matters of deep yet amusing speculation ; and the love of knowledge, which is a principle of the natural man, though the highest of which he is capable, is alone sufficient to make such speculations agreeable to us. How powerful a principle the love of knowledge is, is proved by the labours of body and mind which men who make science their pursuit, will often undergo for its gratification ; whilst the melancholy fact that some of the most distinguished of them have been enemies to the revealed will of God, fully evinces that the love of knowledge is one of the affections of the natural man ; though, as just observed, it is the highest of these affections, because it is eminently useful to the spiritual man, being a principle implanted in

our nature to serve as a means of our passing from the dominion of the natural man to that of the spiritual, and without which this great object of our creation could not be accomplished. Now it is inherent in the love of knowledge, to be more delighted with things of a recondite and abstruse nature than with such as are common and plain, or with knowledges of a high, than with those of a low order. The more exalted the subject respecting which the means of acquiring knowledge are presented, the higher is the satisfaction with which the acquisition is made ; and hence, where the mind is not so closed against heavenly things as to deny their reality altogether, knowledge respecting them is capable of affording a delight altogether similar to that experienced on making scientific attainments of an ordinary nature, but with many persons more exquisite, because it is seen that they relate to more noble and exalted subjects. Still this is a natural delight : it is the natural man, or the natural part of our frame which is affected by it ; which, when it regards the profoundest arcana of the Holy Word merely in the light of curious information, feels no repugnance at hearing of it, and experiences in it a gratification similar in its nature to what it feels on hearing of new discoveries in science, or in reading the works of adventurous and intelligent travellers or of elegant historians.

But when, in addition to an exposition of some of the general spiritual contents of the Holy Word, an application is made of them to individual states, there is room to apprehend that some minds, even of those who have entered on the work of regeneration and are sincerely desirous to advance in it, may feel alarm at the apparent magnitude of the work ; and some may conclude, that if the knowledge of these things is necessary to their being safely experienced, as they feel little hope of attaining any sufficient share of such knowledge, so it will be vain for them to expect the blessings consequent upon passing through the states. To guard against the depressing effect which such thoughts must have, it may only be necessary to be assured that they are not founded in truth. It is possible, I have no doubt, to attain a very high state in the regenerate life, without seeing distinctly the application of any great portion of the Holy Word to the states which may nevertheless have been experienced. The Lord declares to the Israelites, at the conclusion of their journey through the wilderness, “ I led you by a way which ye knew not : ” to instruct us, that it is the Lord alone who regulates the steps of our progress, and that in order to arrive safely at the end of it, it is not necessary

that we should have an exact knowledge of the way beforehand. What we have to do is to acknowledge the Lord, (looking continually to Him as the sole Author of every thing that can tend to our true welfare,) and to keep his commandments, striving without remission to recede more and more from the love and practice of whatsoever is contrary to them, and to do continually with more and more affection and diligence whatever they enjoin; and all the rest we may safely leave to the Lord to do for us. When we have reached the desired haven, and especially when our faculties receive that improvement which is consequent upon our passing into the spiritual world, and going to our happy home in heaven, we shall be able to look back upon the road through which we have been led, and to see distinctly what spiritual associates or opponents attended us in the way: but in the mean time this is not practicable; as the Lord said, "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." There is then, no room for discouragement, let our present state be ever so low or weak, in seeing the magnitude of the process of regeneration. Let us remember that the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed; when once it has obtained admission into our hearts, however inconsiderable our first attainments may be, its after growth is almost a matter of course; that is, it will infallibly proceed to maturity, without any anxiety of ours about the result, provided we continue simply to practise what first implanted it within us,—that is, to look to the Lord and shun evils as sins against Him. Besides there are certain great resting places, as it were, in our route. Whoever enters on a spiritual course at all, and does not make shipwreck by the way, cannot, I apprehend, stop, till the contents of the greater part of the book of Genesis are fulfilled in him,—that is, till he attains the state described by the subordination of the land of Egypt under the authority of Joseph: in which case, should he die at that time, or even before its completion, he will attain a state of happiness in the lowest or first heaven. If he goes beyond this, I apprehend there is no permanent abiding place for him till the contents of the remaining books of Moses, those of the book of Joshua, and of the first chapter of Judges, have been spiritually experienced by him; in which case, should he die at that time, or even before it, he will become an inhabitant of the second or spiritual heaven:—for whoever departs from this world after a general stage is entered upon, but before it is finished, has it completed in the world of spirits before he is taken up into heaven. It is not probable that many at the present day go

beyond this. To be qualified for the spiritual heaven is a very high and glorious state. But we know that it is the wish of our heavenly Father to lead us further than even this. He would, if it were possible, raise us to absolute oneness with Himself, so as to impart to us all the divine perfections which constitute His own nature, in all their infinite fulness; but as this is impossible, He ardently desires to raise us to the highest state which a finite creature can be made capable of enjoying; and it is nothing but our own fearfulness and obstinacy which prevents the designs of His boundless love from taking effect. Let us then, not be so unwise as to draw any matter for discouragement from the almost endless succession of states which are represented in the history of the children of Israel after their establishment in the promised land, but let us consider every new scene in which we find the Israelites engaged, not as an additional obstacle to be surmounted, and thus as a discouragement, but as a further height of glory to be obtained, and thus as a stimulus. Most people believe that there will be a continual increase of perfection and blessedness going on for ever in those who attain the regions of heavenly felicity: now there can be no increase in perfection in heaven but by the further and further removal of the seat of our affections from our selfish nature; and this is exactly what is to take place in us while here, and what is represented by the sufferings of the Israelites from their enemies, and their deliverances from them: only there is this difference, that our advancement before we enter heaven is effected by means of conflicts and temptations; whereas, when our state is so far rendered complete as to admit of our being received into heaven, it will then advance without any struggles, and our eternal state will be truly that which is represented by the sabbath of rest. But the basis from whence we commence this career of tranquil advancement there, will be that which is attained by our active advancement here: let us then set our minds upon the things that are before us, and from every history of the Word draw an incentive to our progress.

Our present text details the account of the enslavement of the Israelites by Eglon king of Moab; and it is followed by the description of the very singular circumstances attending the assassination of Eglon, which was the first step to the deliverance of Israel. Some of these particulars we propose to endeavour to elucidate in another discourse; at present we will offer such observations, as appear naturally to arise out of the words before us, and may tend to throw a light on the circumstances mentioned.

“The children of Israel did evil again,” it is said, “in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.” What an important lesson do these words at the very first glance, convey. They plainly instruct us that when we fall into spiritual captivity, so as to lose the freedom which is felt when the mind enjoys a serene consciousness of the divine presence and favour, it is the result of evil done by us, or at least latent in us, and to which we inwardly incline. We see also, that when we are in this state we really are in spiritual captivity: for the Moabites, being a different nation from the Israelites, though descended, but by an unlawful connexion, from the same original stock, must needs represent something of the natural man separate from the spiritual, and, when not under the dominion of the spiritual, in opposition to it. With respect to the man of the church, individually, by the children of Israel’s doing evil in the sight of the Lord, is not meant, that the man who has advanced so far in the regenerate life, as to have attained the state represented by the taking possession of Canaan, will afterwards fall into the habitual practice of gross evils, for if he did he would be guilty of profanation; but by this circumstance is meant, that the man in this state makes a new discovery of some evil tendencies in his nature which he had not been aware of before, and comes into temptation by the excitement of evils to which, of himself, he inclines, although it is in opposition to the new life of heavenly affections which reign in him from the Lord. How far a person really advanced in the regenerate life may by any possibility be guilty of actual evils, perhaps cannot be determined; but that he should commit any of those contained in the decalogue, in their external form, I think can scarcely be supposed. We wish to speak with gentleness on this subject, because we should be unwilling to say any thing which might drive any one to despair; although a right apprehension of the nature of the divine laws can have no tendency to beget despair in any one, as we are assured that it is never altogether too late to begin a new course of life, and that repentance, when of that sincere kind, which alone is called repentance in the Word, and which consists, not merely in sorrow for our sins, but in a real desisting from and forsaking them—that such repentance will always avail in procuring for the sinner a lot in the heavenly kingdom. But we still think it may with certainty be affirmed, that none who is subject to lapses into gross evils, can have previously attained any advanced state in the regenerate life; wherefore if any such have fancied so, let them

from the circumstance learn humility, and be content to take the lowest place, with gratitude that such a place is still left for their attainment. To steal, to lie, to commit adultery, and the like, are evidently crimes which belong only to those who have not entered on a religious life at all, and they must be abstained from before we can advance into the lowest degree of preparation for heaven. But there are many things which are less taken notice of, which nevertheless must be surmounted before we can attain any elevated state in that progress. How much is to be done and endured before our tempers, for instance, are so regulated, as never to betray any indications of dispositions contrary to charity and humility; and even when they are so regulated as never to exhibit the presence of improper affections, how much more is yet to be done before the mind is altogether so free from the influence of such affections, as to be relieved from the necessity of keeping a constant watch over the tempers, in consequence of a renewal of the will itself, so that improper influences can no longer exert a power within us. Thus there are innumerable things in us which at first are little noticed either by ourselves or by others, which yet, as our perception of spiritual goodness and truth becomes more acute, assume in our estimation the form of most serious evils, and are such in reality, because they are connected, as is then plainly discovered, with evil lusts that have a very deep seat in our selfish nature. Besides, we know that all the divine commandments have three distinct senses, a natural, a spiritual, and a celestial, and we shall find in ourselves propensities that are opposed to the two latter, long after an obedience to them in their literal sense has become habitual and easy. It is easy then to see how the candidate for heaven, and who is preparing for a superior station therein, will find such passages as that now before us applicable to his state, long after he has learned to desist entirely from such outward conduct as a common observer can condemn as criminal.

With respect to the particular nature of the state represented by a captivity under the king of Moab, this may, in some measure, be apprehended by those who are acquainted with the views which we have formerly endeavoured to develope on the character of those who are represented by Moabites in the Holy Word. In brief, the Moabites are they, who, while they profess a general respect for the things of the church, adulterate the good of the church by separating it from its truth, considering mere natural affection, separate from an attention to the requirements of the

Holy Word, as sufficient for salvation. It is interesting to observe here the marriage of goodness and truth which every where prevails throughout the Holy Word, by virtue of which no sooner is good the subject treated of, than something immediately follows respecting truth, and *vice versa*. Thus, as was noticed in our preceding discourse, the captivity of the Israelites under the king of Mesopotamia, denotes a state in which knowledges of truth alone are prized and sought after, but which knowledges are in reality falsified in consequence of being separated from the good and love and life with which they should be united: So now, the captivity under the king of Moab represents a state the counterpart of this, in which good alone is extolled as being all that is requisite to constitute the church in man, but in which, as the good is separate from truth, it is mere blind natural affection, defiled by a mixture with the evils of the selfhood. There is reason to believe that the state represented by Moab is one which abounds very much in the church at this day. The numerous good humoured men of the world, who trouble themselves little about matters of doctrine, but pride themselves upon being good sort of people, friendly in their general manners, and capable of feeling the more amiable affections of the natural man, may probably be in general considered as spiritual Moabites. And the man of the true church falls under the dominion of the Moabites, when he suffers his regard to spiritual views and ends to become quiescent, and conforms himself too far to the manners of the world.

The king of Moab however, was unable, it appears, to subdue the Israelites with his own forces alone, but he called in the assistance of the Ammonites and the Amalekites. The Ammonites, whose ancestor was brother to the ancestor of the Moabites, represent a falsification of truth corresponding with that adulteration of good which is denoted by the Moabites. What the specific character of the falsified truth represented by the Ammonites is, I know not that we have sufficient grounds for determining; but I have often thought that the worship of their idol, the horrid Moloch, in honour of whom his worshipers threw their children into the flames, is an apt emblem of the Deity worshiped by those who believe the doctrine of predestination, and suppose that man's eternal state is determined by an eternal decree which no efforts on his part can get revoked, and in consequence of which the greater portion of mankind are unalterably destined to eternal fire. The Amalekites, again, denote a false persuasion of a very deep nature, grounded in interior evil, or in the deep-seated evil

propensities of the natural man. The nature of this may be gathered from the first place where the Amalekites are mentioned, which is in the 17th of Exodus, where it is said that the Amalekites came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. Now this attack of the Amalekites upon the Israelites, took place immediately after the latter had undergone the temptation from the want of water at Massah and Meribah; and by the assault of the Amalekites afterwards is meant a false persuasion arising in the mind, and suggesting to the man that it is in vain for him to persevere in his spiritual course, for that it consists of nothing but trials, in some or other of which he must inevitably be lost. The Amalekites, however, were then conquered by the holding up of Moses' hands, to denote, that while we keep all the powers of the mind elevated to the Lord we shall be secured from every danger, and from the assaults even of despair; from being depressed by any suggestion that may present itself respecting the difficulty and danger of the path to heaven.

These united forces then came and smote the city of palm trees, which was a name given to Jericho, and which probably, after the destruction of Jericho, was a place in its vicinity. The situation of this city, at the entrance of the land of Canaan, shews it to be the principle whereby there is introduction into the church, which is, by the doctrine of truth from good: wherefore to smite this city is to deprive this doctrine of its power, and thereby to prevent any thing from flowing from the spiritual mind into the natural. By the doctrine of truth from good, is meant not a mere principle of doctrine by itself, but a doctrine so combined with affection for the duties which it prescribes, as to be determined forcibly into life and practice. The nature of this principle, however, will be more easily seen, when we come to describe, in another discourse, what is represented by Ehud, who was raised up as a deliverer on this occasion. Suffice it to say, that when the truths we know, or the doctrines we profess, have no determination to life and practice, they are of no avail whatever in promoting or maintaining our state in the spiritual life. The communication is then cut off between the internal man and the external; and such principles as are represented by the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amalekites sway the mind, and threaten the extinction of every spiritual attainment and heavenly hope and prospect.

From this brief view of the invasion of Eglon and its consequences, we see the importance of ever watching against the yielding in any degree, to the suggestions of the natural man in any of

his allurements to evil. If the children of Israel had not done evil in the sight of the Lord, Eglon would have had no power to hurt them; but when this is done in any degree, our security against infernal influences is gone, and nothing but such a repentance as is described in the next verse, and which we shall consider in our next discourse, can save us from ruin.

SERMON VI.

Judges iii. 15—21.

“But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed. And by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab. But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment, upon his right thigh. And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man. And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present. But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him. And Ehud came unto him: and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of (his) seat. And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.”

WE have already, in our last discourse, considered the state of captivity into which the Israelites had fallen to Eglon the king of Moab, as related in the three verses which precede those just read, and the means of their deliverance from which are described in the singular history which we have now taken for our text. We have seen that, when understood in its spiritual sense, according to the relation which it bears to the advancement of an individual member of the Lord's church in the regeneration, it describes a state of temptation which is incurred, in consequence of the opening of a new depth in the corrupt part of the human mind, in which the man is infested by the predominance of merely natural ends and objects, such as are regarded by those who entertain the persuasion that natural goodness alone will suffice for their salvation, and under the influence of which he is in danger of becoming a mere man of the world. We, in the same discourse, also offered some observations with a view of guarding the inexperienced mind from concluding, that regeneration must be a state unattainable, if such a boundless variety of distinct steps are included in it; by shewing

that provided we are attentive in the performance of the two conditions on which alone it depends, which are, to acknowledge and ever look to the Lord alone, and to obey His commandments, we may rely upon being led safely on, whether we have any very distinct views of the roads, and places of sojourning, or not. But it may be asked, If this is all that is absolutely necessary on our parts, what need to be prying into these deep mysteries? And if but few attain the degree of advancement internally described in the book of Judges, what use can it be to us to know any thing of its nature? Both these questions may be answered by observing, That, as it is absolutely necessary, to advance in the regeneration at all, we should learn to look to the Lord and keep his commandments, it is also necessary that all religious instruction and exhortation, especially that delivered from the pulpit, should ever keep these objects in view. But always to dwell upon them in their simplest form only, would become tedious by its sameness and by the frequent repetitions to which we must have recourse: all which are avoided by unfolding passages of the Word which have reference properly to distinct states; whilst the same end is obtained when it is shewn, as every part of the Word must shew, that the same general lesson results from them all. Surely the necessity of acknowledging the Lord and keeping His commandments, must press upon us with tenfold force, when we thus find it meeting us, as it were, at every corner. As observed on former occasions, although the states to be passed through at different periods have specific differences, yet they have general similitudes: and thus from a description of what takes place in a higher state, we may derive instruction suited to our improvement in a lower. In the second place it may be observed, that knowledge respecting states beyond those which we may at present have attained, ought surely to be as delightful to the mind intent upon spiritual improvement, as knowledge respecting remote countries or objects is found to be to the students of natural science. To acquire information respecting the remote countries on this globe, the nature of their soil and productions, and the manners of their inhabitants, is found to be a wish so congenial to human nature, that many expeditions, attended with great danger and expense have been fitted out with this object alone. Nor is the love of knowledge, so natural to man, satisfied with learning what is to be seen and is contained in the whole of the earth we inhabit, but it has pushed its researches into other worlds, and seeks information, not only respecting the planets which belong, with our own earth, to the same solar sys-

tem, but respecting the other “systems distant far, spread through the boundless skies.” Numerous are the ways in which the ingenuity of man has been exerted to gratify this thirst; and the little which has thus been discovered respecting the innumerable systems of worlds and of suns which every where fill the regions of interminable space, is prized in proportion to the difficulties which lay in the way of its attainment. Now surely it should not be said, that in this respect the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. Surely some acquaintance with the more advanced states in the course of the regeneration, being what we all may, and ought to desire to attain, ought to be far more interesting to us, than the knowledge of remote countries and distant worlds, where they never can go, are found to the disciples of natural science. And if such attainments in natural science, though not conducive to any immediate use, are still highly beneficial by their tendency to enlarge the faculties of the mind, and by the light they often throw upon things of more direct utility, doubtless the study of such subjects as we have been speaking of, must improve the mind in general, and tend to throw light upon subjects connected with our immediate states, in a far higher proportion. Besides, though we have remarked that but few can have really entered into the states described in the historical relations we are at present considering, yet we cannot say but that *some* may have done so. Let us then endeavour to enlarge our views of spiritual subjects by the occasional contemplation of such as we have been speaking of: but let us, whatever our own state may be, endeavour to render such contemplations truly profitable to us, by appropriating the incentives which they afford to a more earnest pursuit of heavenly objects, to a more entire rejection of evil from the heart and life, a more faithful cultivation of the truly saving principles of love and charity, a more complete confidence in the Lord’s mercy and assistance, and a more settled habit of keeping the mind elevated continually to Him, with that interior prayer which opens it for the reception of blessings from Him.

The subject however which is at present before us, while it shews in what manner the state in the regenerating individual represented by the captivity of the Israelites under Eglon, is terminated, also shews how judgment is performed on such persons as are represented by Eglon and the Moabites, when they have so filled up the measure of their iniquity as entirely to have separated themselves from all connection with the heavenly kingdom, and thus to be beyond the sphere of divine protection. We will therefore, by way of varying the scene,

consider it chiefly in this reference, which is a very awful and impressive one ; but first to continue the connection of the subject in the other point of view, we will as briefly as possible, touch upon the relation of the history to individual states.

As we have before shewn that the Moabites, in a general sense, represent those who, without much regard to the spiritual things of the church, think to be saved merely in consequence of possessing some amiable dispositions from nature, it of course follows, that when applied to the states of the regenerating member of the church, they must represent the tendency to such a persuasion existing in every human mind,—or those principles in the constitution of the natural man, which, if allowed to obtain the decided rule within us, would make us altogether of this character ourselves. The nature of this principle, and the kind of adulteration of good which it induces, we have considered at large on former occasions. Ehud, then, by whom the deliverance of the Israelites was effected, must of course signify something directly the reverse of this—that kind of good which is not the spurious offspring of mere nature, but such as results from bringing the truths of the Word into the life, the good actions springing from whence are not the offspring of a blind impulse, but of an enlightened apprehension of the will of the Lord; being what is sometimes called in the the New Church Writings, *truth in act*. As this might be inferred from the character of the enemies to whom Ehud was opposed, so is it rendered certain by the information which is given respecting his family ; for it is said that he was a Benjamite ; of course he must represent some specific heavenly grace of the same general character, which is represented by Benjamin the founder of his tribe ; and what this is, is made evident in the history of Joseph and his brethren. When Joseph was ruler over the land of Egypt, he represented the celestial internal within the natural ; and his brethren, by whom he had been sold into slavery, and who had even entertained the thought of killing him, represented the truths of the church as first existing in the external man, in which though they are the offspring of the internal, they at first appear in the shape of the mere knowledges of heavenly things, and being as yet only conjoined with such affections as belong to the external man, they are unwilling to become obedient to the pure affections of the internal, represented by Joseph. At last however, this takes place, but not till a real disposition is felt to bring into life whatever is known respecting spiritual subjects from the Lord. This is the only medium by which the internal man and the external can be

conjoined ; and this is what is represented by Benjamin : this, then, is the reason why, notwithstanding the penitence which Joseph's brethren manifested for their former ill-treatment of him, he did not discover himself to them till they brought with them Benjamin. Thus Benjamin represents truth in act ; which is a disposition and determination in the external man to bring into practice the heavenly will of the internal : and when this exists in the external, the external and internal can be in conjunction, and not before.

Now, as Benjamin denotes a principle of action in the external from the internal, we see the propriety of its being said, that Ehud, who delivered the Israelites from the oppression of the king of Moab, was a Benjamite. For the king of Moab, we have before seen, represents a principle of seeming but not genuine good that is of the natural or external man alone ; and he acquires an influence in the mind by obtaining possession of the city of palm trees ; by which is represented, the shutting up of the communication between the spiritual man or mind and the natural, or the internal and the external : deliverance then from a domination of this kind, must needs be effected by opening with power a principle in the mind, by which the communication between the internal and external is restored, and the natural man seeks to do good from the spiritual, and not from itself alone. This then is what is represented when it is said, that the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite. It denotes the opening in the natural man, by a strong influx from the spiritual, and from the Lord Himself, who is inmosty present therein, of a determination to bring into practice all the divine commandments, and the fixing in the mind of a steady principle, of which this is always the tendency and object. When this is fully formed within us, the tyranny of Moab cannot last much longer. So long as light from the internal man, or what amounts to the same, from the Lord Himself through heaven, is shut out, it may be possible to imagine that the exercise of the more amiable of the natural affections, may be sufficient to qualify us for heaven, and even that the indulgence of any of the impulses which have a basis in our natural dispositions will not exclude us : but when the communication between the internal man and the external is open, in which case the rational faculty is truly enlightened, it is seen that all good, to be genuine, must have respect to eternal considerations and to the Lord Himself, and that, in reality, no good that may appear such outwardly is such inwardly, except so far as evils are resisted and held in abhorrence as sins against God. A determination inspired

by the Lord, continually to act under the influence of these convictions, is what is represented by Benjamin in the Holy Word, except when he is described as being in a state of rebellion; and the specific application of this general principle to the removal of the influence of the evil represented by the Moabites, is what is denoted by his descendant Ehud. This signification of Benjamin is the reason that he is the last of the tribes mentioned as being sealed in their foreheads, in the Revelation, where, as explained in the New Church Writings, he signifies the life of truth resulting from the doctrine of good and truth that will prevail in the New Church: he also there signifies the conjunction of those who are in the ultimate heaven with the Lord, which evidently must arise from their being in a life according to such doctrine.

We see then, my brethren, of what indispensable moment it is to cherish in the mind, not merely the knowledges of truth, an acquaintance with the doctrines of the Church, but a fixed determination, living by an inward communication with the Lord, to bring such knowledges into life and activity. Without this, we shall be disposed to rest in mere doctrine alone, and shall hold the highest truths in all the harsh, unhallowed spirit of the open advocate of the doctrine of faith alone. When we hear that pure spiritual love must be exalted to the dominion within us, that a heavenly Joseph, who represents the spiritual principle in general, which is pure truth united with good and manifesting itself in the affections of charity, must take the lead within us, we shall be disposed to resist, and even to extinguish this heavenly principle altogether: nor can our knowledges of truth be conjoined with this, their proper internal, until a Benjamin is established as a medium to unite them;—until there exists a firm determination of our truths to life. This is a state which must take place early in the regenerate life, as it belongs to the process by which man is regenerated as to the first or spiritual-natural degree. The effects of it will, however, be experienced through all the states that will succeed: for when a Benjamin is thus found to unite the internal with the external in the natural degree, an Ehud may afterwards be raised up further to extend this union, to liberate us from Moabitish domination, and to prepare the natural man for still further improvement under the influence of the genuine celestial.

With respect to the manner in which the operations are carried on in the interiors of the mind, to effect the removal thence of the corrupt principle represented by Eglon and the establishment of the heaven-derived determination to good conduct, represented by

Ehud in its place, information is afforded in the remainder of our present text. To elucidate this fully, would require several discourses, which would be inconsistent with the plan at present proposed: we will, therefore, only explain some of the leading particulars in a very brief manner. And as, when brevity is an object, they admit more easily of an explanation of a general nature as referring to the divine judgments really incurred by those who are spiritually Moabites, it is in this point of view that we will consider them. It will be easy for every one to make the application to individual states, by remembering, that in this view, both Moabites and Israelites represent certain principles abiding in the mind of the regenerating subject, whereas in the general application, the Moabites represent those persons who are confirmed in the kind of adulteration of good which has been before described, and the Israelites represent those who are the true members of the church; and in this case Ehud will represent the Lord Himself as to that principle in the Divine nature, from which the faithful are rescued, and the evil of this quality are separated from heaven and left to sink into the infernal dungeons, which are the native seats of the motives and ends of life which they have made their own.

It appears then that judgment comes upon the wicked of this description at the time of their receiving a present from the Israelites; by which is denoted their arrogant persuasion that their pretended good is the real good of the church, and that all the truths of the Word ought to be so explained as to confirm that it is so. For the Moabites to exact a present or tribute from the Israelites, is to apply the holy things of the church to confirm their ruling principle; and when this is done by the wicked, as it always is when they are confirmed in their evil state, in spirit, at least, if not in outward form, its effect is, entirely to close heaven against them, and to render them liable to the destruction which awaits all who are not protected by the reception of some degree of spiritual life through heaven from the Lord. By Ehud, who slew the king of Moab, being said to be a man left-handed, or as it is given literally in the margin, “shut of his right hand,” that is, having no use of his right hand, is described the appearance to those who are in evil, as if the Lord as to His Divine Truth had no power to hurt them—the right hand always denoting power. By Ehud’s dagger with two edges, is meant the divine truth proceeding from the Lord to execute judgment upon those who are in evils and falsities,—the two edges are expressly men-

tioned, to denote that the divine truth of the Word is equally opposed to both. By its being concealed under his raiment, is denoted, that divine truth in the letter of the Word does not appear to be of such a quality, since the evil can falsify it to serve their own purposes, when nevertheless it is: indeed it is in consequence of their falsifying the Word, that it becomes a sharp sword, cutting them off from all communication with the heavenly kingdom. By his bringing the present to Eglon, is meant, as before, the assumption by the wicked of supremacy over the things of the church, and their making them seem to favour their loves; and Eglon is here said to be a very fat man, to denote the deep degree of adulteration of all genuine good which is in this state incurred. By Ehud's sending away the people that were with him, is signified the Lord's care, when judgment is performed, that they who are really in truths should not be hurt, and the cutting off of communication between them and the evil to secure this object. By Ehud's returning, and coming to the king of Moab in a summer parlour which he had for himself alone, is expressed the deep exploration of the interior state of the evil at the time of judgment, when all their exteriors, in which they appeared outwardly like upright members of the church, are stripped away, and their inmost hidden quality, which is altogether wicked and profane, is detected by the piercing light of divine truth. By Ehud's then putting forth his left hand, is meant the judgment then performed as from truth alone, which, separated from its good, of which the wicked are not receptive, condemns all to hell: that nevertheless this proceeds from divine good in the Lord, is meant by his taking his dagger from his right thigh: and by his thrusting it into his [Eglon's] belly, is described the entrance of truth in this separated state, which deprives the wicked of the appearance of spiritual life which they had before assumed, and leaves them no refuge but in the abodes of death eternal.

Here then, my brethren, we see how awful is the state of those who so submit themselves to the bondage of the king of Moab as to become of the same character themselves: but we see also, that if, on discovering in our own selfish nature the tendencies to such a state, we strive to resist them, and with this view look to the Lord and live according to his commandments, he will remove from us the infernal powers by whose agency such evils are excited, and will, by the same power of his Divine Truth quickened within us, restore us to genuine liberty, and light, and life.

SERMON VII.

Judges iv. 12—16.

“ And they shewed Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, was gone up to Mount Tabor. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword, before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles. And all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.

It is a remarkable circumstance attending the relations of the oppressions and deliverances of the Israelites, recorded in this book called that of the Judges, that every distinct narrative seems to surpass that which preceded it in the singularity of the occurrences which are detailed, and in the interest which it is consequently adapted to excite, even in the mind of the superficial reader. In our last discourse we considered the history of the deliverance of the sons of Jacob from the tyranny of the Moabites, by the bold and desperate act of Ehud, a man left-handed: in the narrative at present before us we have the account of a still more extraordinary effort for escaping from the yoke of an enemy, begun by the heaven-inspired heroism of one female champion, and completed by the subtlety and boldness of another. This is followed by the still more wonderful history of Gideon, who after being encouraged by some most extraordinary signs, to undertake the seemingly impossible task of rescuing his country from the domination of the Midianites, at length accomplished it with an army of only three hundred men, selected by the most singular of tests. Nor is the story of Jephthah and his celebrated rash vow less extraordinary: whilst this again is surpassed by the unparalleled occurrences which dis-

tinguished the life and death of Samson; whose adventures, (if such a word may be used in reference to such subjects,) which, when considered apart from the divine instruction which they contain, are more amusing perhaps than any work of mere fiction, possess, as we all, no doubt recollect, so strong a charm for youthful minds, and so greatly tend to win them to the perusal of the Scriptures. Now, Divine Mercy has provided that the historical books of Scripture should possess this entertaining character, partly with this express design; that at an age when didactic precepts would not be understood, and to minds which would be little disposed to read a merely didactic work, the Bible should be made inviting. For little as some may be disposed to believe it, the mere reading of the Bible, even when the spiritual instruction contained in it is not at all perceived, has a beneficial effect on the human mind, when done in simplicity and with some sense of its holiness. For within the letter are contained interior senses adapted to the apprehension of the angels of all the heavens, which, when the literal sense is read on earth, are perceived by the angels who communicate with the interiors of the human mind: and though, on account of their being in an interior or higher degree of life than that in which man is so long as he lives in the world, what they perceive, or their thoughts of exalted wisdom, cannot be communicated to the reader, yet the heavenly affections which, on such occasions are excited in them, do in some measure affect him or move his feelings. He thus unconsciously holds communication with heaven, and through heaven with the Lord, and is connected with the Lord and His kingdom by invisible bonds, which insensibly tend to withdraw him from a connection with the kingdom of darkness. Thus, also, states are prepared in the interiors of the mind, which at a future period may be brought to light, and tend essentially to advance his regeneration. How important then it is, since Infinite Goodness has thus accommodated itself to human infirmity, that we should not suffer it to be in vain; that parents and tutors should lead children to take pleasure in reading the Holy Word in simplicity, and that adult persons should regularly follow the same practice, endeavouring, however, to read it with some degree of understanding.

However, though it is certain that the reading of the Holy Word with simplicity, is productive of spiritual advantages, the extent of which is in proportion to the holy reverence with which it is regarded, it is equally certain that it would not have this effect were it not for the stores of divine wisdom which are in-

included within its letter. Were it an amusing history and nothing more, the reading of it could be productive of no advantages whatsoever. Angels take no interest in mere historical relations, however gratifying they may be to the natural imagination; nor could the perusal of such compositions be effective of any consociation between the heavenly world and the mind of man. To be the Word of God, and thus to have the power of affecting the inhabitants of his immediate kingdom, lessons of eternal wisdom must be contained within, destitute of which the reading of the exploits of Gideon and Samson would conduce no more to man's eternal benefit, than if the whole were a romance.

When, also, its spiritual contents are perceived or known, all the difficulties arising from the questionable morality of some of the distinguished parties in the narration, are removed; and we see how the whole can be the Word of God, notwithstanding the deeds of an Ehud and a Jael; deeds which, though perhaps allowable according to the law of nations that prevailed in those distant ages, partake too much of treachery and deceit to be themselves agreeable to the divine will, or to have been performed by persons who were themselves interior subjects of a spiritual dispensation. The slaughter of Eglon by Ehud, which we considered in our last discourse, though effected under fair pretences, and thus by treachery, was indeed no more than would have been done and gloried in by the most illustrious heroes of Greece and Rome, amongst whom tyrannicide, by whatever means accomplished, was deemed a meritorious act; although the brighter light of the Christian dispensation shews us decidedly, that evil is not to be done that good may come; but it may be doubted whether any national opinions or customs ever existed that would justify the cruel act of Jael, whose tribe were at peace, as is expressly stated, with the Canaanitish prince, but who yet, with words of encouragement and assurances of safety, inveigled Sisera to his ruin; which, also, she completed by an act from which most persons, and especially females, would recoil with horror. Yet for the perpetration of this, in itself, dreadful deed, we find it said of her, in the song of Deborah and Barak in the next chapter, evidently uttered under inspiration, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent." How plainly do these things prove that the Jewish was not a real church, possessing inward principles of heavenly life and grace, but only the representative of a church, the most distinguished characters of which only by their actions represented things of a spiritual

nature, but might often be themselves far remote from any participation of spiritual feelings. Admit this, (and really to a mind at all open to conviction, it is not difficult to *prove* it) and every objection which the infidel can raise against the divine origin of the Scriptures on this score, is immediately surmounted. We also see how greatly they err who propose the exploits of the Jewish worthies, in their outward form, as things for the imitation of Christians: a principle which at various periods has been adopted by fanatics, who have perpetrated the greatest outrages under its sanction. And we see further, how, in the darkest night of human degeneracy, when man was incapable of any direct perception of heavenly things, and wholly immersed in the carnal part of his nature, Divine Goodness, by selecting a nation which was more entirely of this character than any other, to *represent* those things which they were incapable of interiorly perceiving, brought divine things, as it were, into the most extreme and lowest natural form, and by causing His Word to be written at this time, and to treat in its literal sense of the transactions of this people, gave to divine things a fixity of which they otherwise would not have been susceptible among men,—conjoined, as it were, even nature in its extreme circumference with Himself,—and thus provided the means of extending divine aids to the most external of mankind, and for raising all from their state of degeneracy, and bringing them back to Himself and heaven.

We have shewn in former discourses upon the oppressions and deliverances of the Israelites recorded in this book of Judges, that with respect to the member of the Church individually, these occurrences represent the opening of new recesses in the human heart;—the discovery of further defilements in our perverted nature;—the temptations hereby induced;—and the blessings resulting from the opening and communication of new heavenly graces, new affections of love and perceptions of wisdom, in the internal man from the Lord, opposite to the evil tendencies which are thus brought to light, and which by these means are finally cast out and deprived of all influence on the mind and life for the future. Considered in this sense, we have seen that the Israelites denote the heavenly graces which have been inseminated into the mind from the Lord, and the nations which oppressed them the various evil lusts and false persuasions which belong to the natural man. But when viewed under a more general aspect, the Israelites represent the members of the church themselves, and the other nations, all others, usually such as profess to be members of the church, who are interiorly evil.

In the present case it will be necessary to take a general view of the whole transaction.

The chapter begins with saying, And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead; by which we are to understand, that after man has attained the state represented by the deliverance of the Israelites from the Moabites by Ehud, and has for a time been in the perception of the heavenly grace which Ehud represents, which is the constant effort and determination of the mind to bring into act the truths which the man has learned from the Word; though this state continues with him, stored up in his interiors, and will always be effectual in preventing the evil represented by the Moabites from again obtaining an ascendancy in his breast, yet he afterwards has discoveries made to him of further corruptions in his nature, which require a different heavenly grace to oppose them. This is what is meant by the children of Israel again doing evil, and by this taking place after Ehud was dead, On account of this transgression it is said, that “the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles: Then the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron: and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.”

In a former discourse, in which we considered what was meant by the six nations, which it is said, were left to prove Israel—the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, we offered some observations on the signification of the Canaanites in particular; when we observed that they signify evil in general, and specifically such as arises from a belief in false doctrines grounded in evil loves. It appears then, that they signify evil brought into act, in consequence of false persuasions embraced from evil inclinations being confirmed in the mind; and of this general class of evils, Jabin, who does not appear to have been a king of all the land of Canaan, but of a tribe of people of the Canaanitish race inhabiting the northern part of the country, must signify some particular modification. This is indeed, still but a very general explanation of the subject, but it may suffice to give us such an idea of it as may afford a general insight into the meaning of the history. This also may be observed, that the evil hereby denoted must be one of a more debased nature, and more deeply opposed to the genuine good of the church, than those represented by the former enslavers of Israel—the Syrians and the Moabites; because these nations

had their proper habitations *without* the limits of the land of Canaan—whereas the Canaanites were the natives of the country itself, and of course must signify evils more directly opposed to the genuine good of the church, than the others can. Now evils are more directly opposed to the genuine good of the church, the more they ally themselves with false persuasions that enlist the literal truths of the Word in their service, by taking them out of their proper connexion, turning them from their genuine meaning, and so making them seem to support doctrines which tend to confirm man in his natural corruptions: for evil and falsehood necessarily become much more malignant, when they assume the pretence and appearance of being the genuine dictates of Religion, and when they are so covered over by an outward appearance of religion as to disguise their deformity, and render them more capable of seducing the unwary, and even the well disposed. That evil of a malignant nature has this tendency, we may learn from the history of the Lord's temptation by the devil, who, when endeavouring to ensnare the infirm humanity by the excitement of the love of self in its deepest ground, when it makes the holy things of the church its instruments, which is what is meant by the devil's placing Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple, said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their arms they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"—a passage of the Holy Word which the tempter thus applies to persuade the Lord's Humanity that it was allowable for it to appropriate the evil suggested to it. And no doubt many, in states of deep temptation, have had passages of Scripture brought to their minds by the tempting spirits, and so applied as to seem to excuse or justify them in yielding to the temptation.

Now deep persuasions of direful false sentiments, arranged into doctrines and so confirmed by the letter of the Word as to appear irrefutable, are what are meant by the nine hundred chariots of iron which Sisera is said to have had at his command. By the chariots being said to be of iron, we are not to understand that they were made altogether of that material, but that they were armed with projecting iron instruments for cutting down the ranks of the enemy when driven furiously against them:—a mode of attack of an almost irresistible kind in a plain county, before the introduction of fire arms. Chariots are often mentioned in the Holy Word, and by them are not, in a spiritual sense, meant mere chariots, but doctrinal tenets; and when, as is often the case, chariots to be used in battle are understood, they denote doctrinal tenets so ar-

ranged, and supported by ingenious reasonings, as to be adapted to overthrow the sentiments of those of a different belief. Iron, also, always denotes that kind of truth, or of the appearance of truth, which is adapted to make a strong impression on the natural man, such as is the truth of the Holy Word in its natural or literal sense, and the reasonings which an ingenious disputant can produce from the light of nature and the apparent evidence of the senses. Now it requires a high state of illumination, the proper consequence of the reception of sacred things in an interior ground, to be able to detect the fallacies which may be couched in a false doctrine thus glossed over and supported; which is the reason why it is said in the first chapter of this book, that "Judah drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, *because they had chariots of iron;*" by which is signified the purification of the interiors of the mind, which are nearer to the spiritual part of it, whilst evils with their attendant falsities still remained in its deeper recesses, which, being farther removed from the internal, required a stronger influence from thence for their extirpation than the state was yet capable of affording, and because evils of this nature, being further remote from the light of heaven, can defend themselves more by fallacious appearances, and by the application and perversion of the literal sense of the Word to their purpose.

It is evident then that the victory over Sisera with his nine hundred chariots of iron, must imply a state in the regenerate life, in which there is a much stronger influx of goodness and truth from the interiors, than is obtained at the first establishment of man in the church as to the spiritual degree; and of course that the seeming lapses of the Israelites represent in reality, in the purely spiritual sense, so many further advancements. The number nine hundred, also, represents the false persuasions and doctrinal tenets denoted by the chariots, as linked in the greatest strength and seeming coherence; for the number nine signifies conjunction, and relates in particular to what is true, or, contrariwise, to what is false; and when it is multiplied by a hundred its meaning is still further exalted: so that nine hundred must imply the strongest concatenation of such false sentiments. It seems to be on account of this signification of the chariots of Sisera, that the tribes selected to oppose them, as we learn in verse 6, were only those of Naphtali and Zebulun: for the tribe of Zebulun denotes the conjunction of goodness and truth, and the effort thereto in the regenerating

mind, and Naphtali signifies temptation, and a willingness in the mind to endure whatever is necessary for its final purification. The battle is described, in our text, as taking place at Mount Tabor, where no doubt the hilliness of the ground rendered Sisera's formidable array of chariots of little use. It is first said that Barak, the Israelitish general, was gone *up* to Mount Tabor; and afterwards that he went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men after him; by which we learn that the true way of rising superior to the false suggestions that may be presented in spiritual conflicts, is, by ascending into the interiors of the mind, or in other words, keeping the thoughts elevated towards heaven, when, being above the sphere to which the fallacies of the senses can reach, their falsehood is clearly perceived; and then an influence can thence flow into the lower region of the mind—Barak with his army will come down from Mount Tabor, and the influence of the evils and falsities which before disturbed us shall be driven away, never to annoy us any more.

Here, then, we have a lesson of general instruction, which we may in all cases apply to our real advantage, and with which therefore we will conclude our present discourse. It is only by ascending into a more elevated region of the mind, that we can rise above the influence of the suggestions of a false and pernicious nature, which our spiritual foes are always ready to present, and to clothe under such specious appearances as make them seem even worthy of entertainment. To avoid being overwhelmed on such occasions, it is necessary to elevate the mind, by looking to the Lord, and retiring inward beyond the reach of the activities of the carnal part of our nature. But a man cannot be always kept in this retired state, nor is it designed that he should be. To *go out*, or descend into outward things for the sake of use, since it is by our external man that the designs of the internal are brought into effect, is as necessary as to *come in*, or to engage in interior meditation and seek for strength in the inward man by divine communion. It is necessary therefore to clear the lower regions of the mind from whatever thoughts and affections of an uncongenial nature may therein have usurped an influence. If then we can muster ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun,—a fulness of willingness to undergo whatever trials are requisite for our purification, and of desire that the union of goodness and truth may be effected in our minds,—we may descend therewith from the mountain of internal affection, to the plain of corresponding practice, extirpating in the

way every thing that would oppose the full operation, in freedom and liberty, of internal ends and motives, till from first to last, every principle of the internal and external man is united in the life that true religion inspires, and we possess the land without annoyance, are fully confirmed in a spiritual state, and prepared to enjoy it in the heavenly Canaan for evermore.

SERMON VIII.

Judges v. 6, 7, 8.

“In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. (The inhabitants of) the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I, Deborah, arose, that I arose, a mother in Israel. They chose new gods: then was war in the gates. Was there a shield or a spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?”

THESE words form part of the song, as it is called, of Deborah and Barak; in which they first describe, as in the words just read, the deplorable oppression under which the children of Israel laboured, when they were tyrannized over by their Canaanitish enemies. Afterwards the song proceeds to express their exultation in the deliverance which had been afforded them from the Lord, by inspiring Deborah and Barak to undertake the Israelitish cause, and by rousing the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali to supply the forces requisite to oppose the cruel foe; when, after his defeat, the last stroke to crown the victory was given by Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, who slew the fugitive chief of the Canaanitish army.

The principal circumstances of the history to which this divine song relates, and which are detailed in the preceding chapter, were briefly considered in our last. Jabin, a Canaanitish prince, whose forces were led by Sisera, who appears to have been a very formidable commander, and who had in his army nine hundred chariots of iron, (or chariots armed with iron weapons for breaking through and cutting down the ranks of the opposing forces,) reduced the Israelites to a state of subjection, in which he held them for the continued space of twenty years. The nature of the calamities under which the Israelites laboured, may be gathered from what is said respecting them in the chapter of our text, which contains, as remarked, the song of Deborah and Barak on account of their victory. It would appear from thence, that the whole of the nation was not so subdued by Jabin and Sisera, as that their authority was every where acknowledged, but as if the Canaanites were in possession of all the open country, which they laid waste,

and kept the Israelites closely shut up in the fortified cities: for Deborah says, in our text, “The highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways: the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I, Deborah, arose, that I arose, a mother in Israel. They chose new gods; then was war in the gates. Was there a shield or a spear seen among forty thousand in Israel.” Here, by its being said that the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways, is evidently meant, in the literal sense, that the enemy overran the country, so as to make the communication between distant places very difficult: the villages ceasing, denotes the desolation resulting from the enemy’s being master of the open country; and by war being in the gates, is implied, that the Israelites were so closely shut in by the Canaanites in the fortified towns, that they could not shew themselves beyond their gates without danger of slaughter or captivity. That this was their condition is confirmed by what the inspired song proceeds to say of the consequences of the defeat of the Canaanites; on which subject the prophetess adds, “(They that are delivered) from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, (even) the righteous acts (towards the inhabitants) of the villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.” Here, the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, refers, literally, to the straitness of the seige as being so great, that they could not go to the wells without being exposed to the missile weapons of the enemy: but in consequence of the divine interposition for their deliverance, called “the righteous acts of the Lord,” it is declared that “they shall go down to the gates,” or no longer be compelled to remain shut up within the walls of the cities.

I mention these particulars as greatly tending to illustrate the nature of the state which the oppression of the Israelites by Jabin and Sisera denotes, when understood in the spiritual sense, wherein is described a state of the mind of man in the course of his regeneration. In this sense, these particulars most plainly describe a state, in which, though there are heavenly graces of love and wisdom, goodness and truth, implanted in the internal man from the Lord, there is such a pouring of evil and falsity into the external man, that the graces of the internal cannot come forth, nor even renew their vigour by the perception and appropriation of divine truths drawn from the Holy Word. “The highways” being “unoccupied,” or deserted, denotes, in the spiritual sense, the absence of those clear views of truth which lead the mind onward from state

to state in the heavenward journey: the travellers walking through by-ways, or, as it is literally given in the margin, through crooked ways, implies, that they who are desirous of instruction can obtain nothing to satisfy the desire but false notions, whose tendency is not to lead man to heaven, instead of true; and by which, if heaven is reached at all, it is only after numerous wanderings and perplexities: the ceasing of the villages, denotes the desolation of the external man; cities, which are the chief places in a country, denoting what is respectively internal, and villages, which are places that lie without, denoting what is respectively external: war being in the gates, implies that the infernal influx reached even to the rational man, or to the medium by which there is communication between the internal and the external. There being neither shield nor spear seen among forty thousand in Israel, denotes that the temptation became so appalling that there appeared no means of safety, forty, of which forty thousand is a multiple, being a number which always has reference to states of temptation, and it being generally the case that temptations are continued till despair of deliverance comes on—till neither shield nor spear—truths applied either to shelter us from the power of false suggestions or to detect and expose their fallacy,—seem to remain in the mind: By its being said that there was the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, is meant, that no perceptions of truth could be obtained by studying the Word, without being distracted or perverted by the influx of false doctrinal sentiments: to draw water is to imbibe truths from the Holy Word; archers are they who combat from doctrine—here from false doctrines against the truth; and their noise is the din and perplexity of confused reasonings proceeding from this source.

Thus it is easy to see, that these particulars represent the state of the mind when under the influence of severe temptations; when all the heavenly things which have been received within the soul, and which in other states have been attended with vivid perceptions of their presence, and with a delightful sense of their reality, are so closely shut up in the interiors, that a doubt may be entertained respecting their existence, whilst nothing is manifestly perceived but thoughts infused from the tempting influence, accompanied even with scandals injected against divine things, and suggestions to take refuge in despair, and to seek in the delights of the natural man with all his evil affections, for that rest which, it is suggested, it is in vain to hope for by a perseverance in the once fair promising pursuit of heavenly ac-

quisitions and eternal realities. All the open country—all the external of the mind,—is occupied by the Canaanites, even to the destruction of the villages and interception of the highways—to the seeming extirpation of whatever the external had received from a heavenly origin. Sisera,—or some leading false persuasion which would justify, and recommend the adoption, as allowed by religion, of the evil represented by the Canaanites, is supported by nine hundred chariots of iron,—or such a well-ordered array of false doctrinals, made to appear as true by reasonings from the natural man, and by seeming confirmations from the letter of the Word, that resistance seems hopeless, and it appears to the suffering soul as if he must submit to infernal domination, and relinquish all hope of the heavenly mansions.

But which way does the interior will of the party himself incline? Does he feel pleased with the suggestions and inclinations of an evil kind which arise in his natural man? Does he hail the Canaanites as friends and brothers, and wish to be persuaded that it is right to receive them as such—to appropriate without reserve the contaminations which they bring with them, and thus, as is expressed, to choose new gods? No doubt there is something in his heart which inclines this way, or he would never be infested with them at all. “Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead.” The love of spiritual things in his mind is still defiled by a selfish mixture; and, though not willing to relinquish the mercies of which he has been made a partaker, he would gladly mix a little of his own with them, and turn to the indulgence of some of his natural corruptions, if it could be done without forfeiting all his higher hopes. This it is that makes temptations unavoidable; and they are permitted, in order to make us see and feel the utter uncombinableness of good and evil, truth and false persuasion, and to render us willing to give up whatever our natural man is disposed to cling to, when we find it incompatible with the enjoyment of things which have now become dearer to us still. If we have no such higher attachments, the infusion of evil inclinations and false conceptions into our minds will occasion no temptation, because this only arises where there is something of an opposite kind to make resistance. Such things would then appear to us simply in the light of allurements, which it is a great mistake to consider, as is commonly done, as temptations. It is an abuse of language, and a corruption of the original meaning of the word, when we call an allurements a temptation, or speak of a person as being tempted when he is only enticed. The word

temptation properly means much the same as we express by the word *trial*, which we always use to denote something which is accompanied with pain; which is not the case in mere allurements. If then there is in the mind a principle of spiritual life from the Lord, which consists in a love for Him and the things of His kingdom, there will be an internal will that turns away from the suggestions of the Canaanites, and that is anguished when their suggestions seem to be pressed with such force as to appear difficult to be resisted. The Canaanites therefore, in this case, may come to the gate, but they will not be able to enter the city. Their presence in the external gives to the mind real pain; because however agreeable to the natural man alone might be the principles which they represent, to the internal affections, which in this case are the ruling ones, they are altogether contrary, whence their presence deprives the internal man of all its sense of freedom and delight. Thus when, as is declared, there is war in the gate;—when the suggestions and influences from the evil world come to the very entrance into the man himself, and threaten to take possession of his interiors, his very life appears to be at stake; indeed, that principle of life by which he must live in heaven, is at stake; and the sensations attending this, will be as distressing as those which accompany the approaching loss of natural life to natural men, when they feel the very agonies of death upon them. “Then,” as the Psalmist says, “they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distresses.” We have noticed in a former discourse, that on every occasion on which a divine interposition for the delivery of the Israelites is recorded in this book, it is introduced by the remark, that the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: and this, we have also seen, implies an inmost looking to the Lord, with an entire willingness to make every surrender that may be necessary, to permit his Divine Mercy and Truth to enter our minds with such power as to remove entirely the sphere of infernal influence, to eject the evils in ourselves which yielded it a basis, and to establish so thoroughly within us an opposite good, as to secure us against the preponderance of that particular evil for evermore.

We noticed in our last, the chief circumstances of the preliminary part of this history,—as the nine hundred chariots of iron,—the reason why Naphthali and Zebulun were the tribes selected for the conflict; the instruction implied in its being related that Barak with his forces first marched *up* to Mount Tabor, and afterwards that he went down from Mount Tabor to attack the enemy. But

we have not yet noticed why Deborah, a prophetess, was the chief director of the operations of the Israelites, so that Barak, the general of the army, received from her encouragement and instructions.

It is remarkable respecting this deliverance of the Israelites from the Canaanites, that it was commenced by one woman, and finished by another.—No doubt it is hereby intended to instruct us, that to be rescued from the power of the evil propensities and false persuasions represented by these Canaanites, a great preponderance of that principle by which the female sex is distinguished, and of which, therefore, they are representative when mentioned in the Holy Word, is necessary: and this is the principle of affection or love. Great disputes have been raised in the world upon the question, Whether there is any natural inferiority in mental power, on the part of females, as compared with men. The male part of the species are in general too apt, it must be allowed, to conclude that there is: but the female part have not wanted champions, both of their own sex and of ours, to contend for the rights of woman, and to maintain her full equality with man. But both parties have in general greatly erred in their sentiments, because both have taken, as the criterion of excellence, a standard on which it does not in reality depend. It is remarkable that in the present day, when *faith alone* is regarded in the articles of all Protestant churches, as the prime essential of salvation, even persons who do not readily admit this sentiment in religion, are yet generally inclined to allow it in philosophy, and to exalt the faculty of *intellect alone* as the supreme excellence of human nature. But as charity or love is a principle not less necessary than faith, to abide in the mind that is the seat of real religion, so must there be a faculty in the mind peculiarly appropriated to its residence; therefore, whilst our benign Creator has furnished us with the faculty of understanding to be the abode of our faith, and of all the perceptions of truth, he has also given us the faculty of will to be the abode of our charity, and of all the affections of goodness. Mental superiority therefore does not depend upon the clearness and strength of the intellectual powers alone:—to form a perfect character, ardour and purity of affection are at least equally necessary.

Now as the human mind in general is constituted of will and intellect, of love and intelligence,—each faculty and principle being perfectly distinct from the other, and yet adapted to supply to the other what it would be extremely defective, yea, what it would be

absolutely nothing, without,—so that the two are capable of, and designed for, the most perfect union:—so in like manner is the human species in general constituted of male and female human beings, designed for union of mind with each other, and to be, when so united, what the will and understanding are in one individual; and thus to render each more perfect by the union, inso-much that from two minds one may be formed, with its life and all its powers greatly exalted. For in such a union, all the life and respective perfections of each are communicated to the other; just as, among angelic societies, by the wonderful communion that takes place in heaven, all the perfections and enjoyments of each angel are imparted to all the others, so that each becomes a centre in which unite the perfections of the whole. This is a circumstance to which is owing the boundless extent of angelic felicity: and it arises out of that mutual love in which angels are principled; the essence of which consists in being willing to give, without any thought of a return, all that is its own to others; which disposition Divine Goodness rewards, (so to speak,) by returning into it all the blessedness which it is willing to bestow. A similar, and even more intimate communication of their respective excellences undoubtedly takes place, wherever there is a perfect union of male and female minds: there is also a tendency towards it impressed on all male and female minds by creation; and therefore they are each endowed with the faculties which are requisite to enable each most effectually to heighten the perfections of the other.

Much as men of science in general may be disposed to think of the exertions of the intellect, it is a certain truth, that had they not *will*, with affection of some kind or other, to animate the intellect, it would be unable to conceive a single thought: it would be incapable of any exertion whatever, which would be the same thing as if it did not exist. The case is similar with respect to the will and its affections: if it had no understanding to think of what it inclines to, and to devise means for bringing it into manifestation, it would have no consciousness of existence, and thus would be in a state similar to that of having no existence at all. It is the will, then, that gives to the understanding all its activity: but it is the understanding that gives to the will its consciousness of existence. Thus the understanding, though not the most important faculty of the two, is that which most readily attracts attention, and of the presence of which, on a slight degree of reflection, a man is most sensible: and this is the reason why so many have considered the understanding as the distinguishing faculty of human

nature, and have estimated the superiority of one man over another, and of one part of the species compared with the other, by this as the sole criterion. The truth, however, is, that will, as well as understanding, is necessary, to constitute a man at all: that love or affection, as well as intelligence, go to the composition of every human being. Neither man nor woman could exist as such, if they did not enjoy both.

But here comes the discrimination. It is certain that the two sexes do not enjoy both these faculties and principles in exactly the same relative proportions: if they did, their minds would be constituted exactly alike, and not suited for that intimate union which arises from the reciprocal communication of distinct but harmonious excellences: and as varieties of form arise wholly from varieties of mind, the distinction in this respect would cease also, and the world would be peopled (were that practicable) either entirely by men or entirely by women. It is well for human happiness that this is not the case, and that men and women have each marked peculiarities to distinguish them from each other. The predominant characteristic of the male is derived from the intellect, which in him is more active than the will: although, if he had not will also he could not be a man: and the predominating characteristic of the female is affection, which is the property of the will; although if she had not intellect also she could not be a woman. The aggregate amount of capacity for what is truly noble and excellent, resulting from the union of these two faculties, may be assumed to be in general equal in both; but the proportion of the ingredients which go to compose that capacity will always be different; and thus the capacity itself will be exhibited under different forms. There no doubt are instances of men who have a softness, and an affectionate character in their constitution, beyond what may be observable in some women; and there are instances of women who have a brightness and power of intellect superior to many men: thus there are instances of men who approach to the character of women, and of women who approach to the character of men: but it may be remarked, that all have an intuitive perception that the order of the sexes requires a decided distinction: each sex finds itself displeased when what it feels to be its province is too palpably invaded by the other; hence the repugnance which all men feel to the masculine character in a woman, and which all women feel to the feminine character in a man. But how near soever the minds of the sexes may appear, in some instances, to approach to identity, still there can be no doubt, that, by those

who should have discernment enough to observe the distinctions, the male will always be found to be something different from the female, and the female intellect to be something different from the male.

Now what conclusion should be drawn from the undeniable fact, that in the male and female will and understanding such distinctions always exist? Plainly this: that they originate in Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, in order that the two parts of the human race may be to each other mutual helps, each capable of admiring what the other possesses, instead of proud rivals, each jealous of being outshone by the other in the quality in which they considered their chief merit to consist.

Let not man then assume superiority over the woman because her distinguishing excellence is not the same as his; because, though of equal value, it is less obtrusive, and less capable of contending for pre-eminence: nor let woman assert her just equality upon false grounds, by assuming that it consists in the same faculty as the man's. In proportion as genuine truth enlightens the human mind, it will come to be more clearly seen, that the sexes are indeed equal, but that their respective excellences are distinct. As this is seen they will live together in more perfect harmony: and the weaker of the two, as to bodily strength, and the consequent power of asserting their prerogatives, will be restored to their due station. Of this they are uniformly deprived, among the various nations of the earth, in proportion to the remoteness of the nation from the light of Divine Truth, and from a reception of those heavenly principles, which constitute the Lord's church among mankind.

Now it would appear that this great deliverance of the Israelites by the instrumentality of females, took place, because it represented the arrival of that state in the regenerate life when good takes the priority, and man no longer acts from a principle of truth less influenced by love, as is the case in the incipient stages. It is true that, in its specific sense, these conflicts refer to the state which is experienced after man has attained the spiritual state, which he could not have attained without allowing to good the pre-eminence; but there can be no doubt that something of the same kind must be experienced in all the three great stages of the regenerative process.

That some very marked state—some very important attainment, must be represented by the deliverance now under consideration, may be evident, from its being celebrated in a divine song, sung by Deborah and Barak after their victory; for only two or three

instances of the kind occur in the whole of the Divine Word. It appears then, that this refers to a state, in which good of a celestial order takes the lead in the mind of the regenerating subject; therefore, Deborah, a prophetess, who, as a prophetess, represents the perceptions of truth resulting from such good, which she denotes as a female, was the first mover in the work.

In conclusion, then, let us learn from the remarkable circumstance, continually to aspire to the attainment of a state, in which goodness, in its genuine character of kindness and love, shall assume the superiority in our minds;—in which goodness and truth shall be perfectly united, and the latter shall chiefly be valued because it leads to the former, and directs us how to bring into operation its benevolent behests. To this end, how obvious it is that we must acquire a state of humility, and cease from assuming any superiority for mere acquisitions of science or intelligence. This is pointed at by Deborah, when, in the preceding chapter she says to Barak, who represents the intellectual principle in this state, "Notwithstanding, the journey which thou takest shall not be for *thine* honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of *a woman*." Let us be willing that this shall be spiritually the case: let us relinquish all desire to be distinguished for mere intellectual acquirements, and, whatever we may possess of these, cease to pretend to honour on account of them, that we may become subjects of the honour which cometh from God only, and which depends upon the degree in which we receive, and exercise, affections of charity. Thus will our external man be conjoined to the internal, and we shall (according to the signification of the name of Barak) attain the *blessing* of the marriage which the king made for his son, and which results from the union in the soul of truth with goodness, or of faith with charity.

SERMON IX.

Judges vi. 16—22.

“But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the host unto Harosheth of the gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left. Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin, the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. Then Jael, Heber’s wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it to the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.”

In my work on *The Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures*, I have recited this passage as one of those which is used by Deists and Infidels as incompatible with the belief, that the book in which it is contained can really be of Divine origin, and have any right to the title of the Word of God; whereas, when any just notion is possessed of what the Word of God must necessarily be, it is rather one of the passages which prove it to be such. Certainly, if we are to believe that all the persons whose actions are recorded in the Scriptures with expressions of approval, are to be concluded to be holy characters, and their actions to be such as truly receive the divine approbation, there would be no small difficulty in regarding as divine, the book which thus records the deeds of such a heroine as Jael. To invite the discomfited captain of the Canaanitish army

into her tent, in the confidence of the peace which existed between her tribe and king Jabin his master,—to assure him that there was nothing to fear,—to perform for him the rites of hospitality, by giving him refreshment and covering him with a mantle to hide him while he slept; and then, as soon as, believing himself safe from his pursuers and from every danger, he yielded to slumber, to drive a great nail or tent-pin through his temples with a mallet:—here was a combination of treachery and cruelty, of which assuredly, few women, and not many men, in any age, have been capable, and which, in most times and countries, would be rewarded, not with exalted praise, but with deep execration. One would suppose that Barak himself, when invited to behold his massacred enemy, could hardly feel any other emotions than horror and disgust; and that Deborah, who, though a woman, filled the office of judge in Israel, and instigated Barak to the expedition against Sisera, would feel all that was feminine in her nature revolt at such a deed, and would view its perpetration as a disgrace to her sex. But it is certain that her feelings were not of this kind: in her song on the occasion, which fills the whole of the following chapter, she speaks of the deed with the extreme of exultation, and of its performer with the highest encomiums. “Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent!” Such are the praises bestowed upon the actress in the tragedy: the reasons are given in the honourable mention, which follows, of her act. “He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman’s hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.” Afterwards a taunting description is given of the great and blighted expectations of his mother, agonized at the delayed return of her murdered son: “The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?” And the whole concludes with the devout ejaculation, “So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”

I have shewn repeatedly and largely on former occasions, that the Jewish, though called a representative church, was never truly a real church, but was nothing more than the representative of a church, designed to fill up the interval between the utter decline of the ancient church, or that founded with Noah and his posterity, and the arrival of the fulness of time, in which it was possible, and requisite, that the Lord should be born into the world, to provide the means for maintaining a true church in the world for evermore; and thus for opening, through all ages, the effectual way of salvation for all the human race. This is what Paul means in his Epistle to the Galatians, when he says, that the Law, meaning the Jewish dispensation, was a school-master to bring us to Christ; and that it was appointed because of transgressions; where, by a school-master, he does not mean an instructor, but a governor of children, whose office is to rule and keep them in order till they come of age: thus the Law was given while the human race, after the extinction of those generations who had been members of the true churches named after Adam and Noah, was in a state of nonage, and incapable of being governed by any thing better, till they could be brought to such a state of maturity as again to have a true Church established among them, first as the Primitive Christian Church, and afterwards, and permanently, as the New Jerusalem. The Law was thus the Pædagogus,—the Master of Children, as that word, being the word used in the original, literally implies,—conducting the human race onward, after the consummation of the Ancient Church, till the coming of the Lord into the world,—filling up the interval, in which, otherwise, no resemblance, even, of a true Church, could have been preserved, to perform for the whole human race, considered as one great human being, the functions which the heart and lungs discharge in the individual man, thus preserving the race in existence by keeping open its communication with heaven, which, if once totally cut off for a single moment, all must perish. Thus did the Law bring us,—that is the human race generally,—to Christ,—keeping open that communication with heaven, without which, direct or indirect, none could be sustained in life,—till the states of mankind, and the arrangements of Divine Order, could permit that he should come into the world. This communication was kept open in and through the Jewish Church, by the Divinely appointed ordinances of their worship, quite independently of the character of the persons by whom it was performed. Thereby, and by all the particulars of their history recorded in the Word of God, the

Israelites and Jews represented the spiritual things and states belonging or relating to the true spiritual Church, without being members of such a Church themselves. At the same time, the means were thus provided that the Word of God should be written, and should be brought into a more ultimate form, and thus into greater fulness, by thus having real historical facts, not merely allegorical or parabolical relations, as its basis. This was the real design of the calling of the Israelites: in this, and in no other sense, were they the elect people of God: for such a purpose, the more external the character of the people, the better qualified were they to fulfil their mission: they merely represented, and were driven by miracles and punishments, on the one hand, and by the allurements of the promise of worldly rewards on the other, accurately to represent the spiritual things and states belonging to the true spiritual Church, and thus, as a nation, to constitute the representative of a Church, as long as, in the counsels of the Divine Wisdom, such an economy was needful. Of course, such of them as discharged their duties with sincerity and willing obedience, according to the form of Divine Truth with which they were made acquainted, acquired a capacity for, and were made partakers of, eternal salvation. But it is evident that the sincerity and willing obedience of the parties, were by no means indispensable to their maintaining the representation for which they were selected. Nothing was required for this but the performance of the external representative acts themselves; and a wicked man was quite as capable of sustaining even the most holy representation as a good man; since acts which are in themselves even of a wicked nature, and the commission of which would be very criminal in any but the most external, carnal-minded, unenlightened of the human race, may nevertheless sometimes bear a most holy representation, and correspond to things of a most internal and sacred nature.

Such then is the character of the dreadful action of Jael recorded in our text, and commented upon in the truly divine song of Deborah, on the occasion;—a song, which is one of the most obviously divine, and divinely sublime effusions, in the whole Word of God. Who can suppose that an ignorant woman, such as, though she filled the office of judge in Israel, it is evident that every woman, and man too, in the whole nation, in that dark period of its history, most certainly was, could, from her own unassisted intellect, have expressed her feelings in such a burst of the most elevated poetry as this song undeniably is? How natural is

the conclusion, that she was possessed at the time by a divine afflatus,—that the angel of the Lord, full of the divine sphere, absolutely spoke through her, taking indeed the natural words and images as they lay in her mind, but arranging them in heavenly order, so as to become the properly corresponding expression of truly divine and heavenly sentiments and subjects! In the Divine Mind, from which the words were in this manner spoken, there assuredly was no reference to the person Jael, or to her deed, themselves, but to certain divine and spiritual principles and operations which in her and her exploit found a properly corresponding and truly representative expression; and which found that expression, whatever was the state of mind of Jael in committing the act, or the moral quality of the act as committed by her; both which circumstances, in regard to the representation designed, were of no account whatever. In any Christian, doubtless, such an act would be most direfully criminal; judged by Christian principles, it must be condemned as most atrociously wicked: but in a person of so barbarous a tribe as, at this time, the race of wandering shepherds was to which Jael belonged, it might not be so utterly inexcusable, as, judged by principles of pure divine truth, it most certainly is. She,—the individual woman,—has received her award, in the other life, at the hands of the Omniscient Judge, according to the state of her mind at the time, and her means of possessing any just knowledge of religious and moral duty; or rather, according to her internal state as formed through the whole course of her life, of which this tremendous action is the only one which has made her name known to posterity; and we have no means whatever of knowing, what her state in the other life, in consequence, is. The blessing pronounced upon her in Deborah's song, is by no means intended to assure us that she is among the blessed in heaven. The history of her act is related, and the particulars of it commented upon in Deborah's inspired poetry, purely in reference to what is represented by it, and to the representative character which Jael bore in performing it. And this is the same, whatever might be the real character of herself as an individual; whether, a penitent for all her sins, she is now a saint in heaven, or, dying in them, she is amongst the lost in hell.

Leaving then Jael, as a private individual, I propose, in another discourse, to inquire into the spiritual representation, and consequent signification, of some of the particulars recorded of her. At present, I will only advert to what is signified by her nation and family.

We are expressly informed, that she was the wife of Heber the Kenite. The Kenites were a tribe of the nation of the Midianites: and the Midianites were derived from the same stock as the Israelites themselves, being descended from Midian, who was one of the sons of Abraham by his second wife Keturah. All the sons of Abraham not descended from his first wife Sarah, seem to have formed part of that numerous people known under the general name of Arabs, amongst whom the false prophet Mahommed was born, and who, under the first caliphs and other Mussulman conquerors, have formerly made so great a figure in the world. In the latter portion of the history of Midian or the Midianites, as related in Scripture, and when they acted as enemies of the Israelites, they bear a bad signification; but in their earlier times it was otherwise; and they then represent, we are informed, those who are grounded in the truths of simple good; which definition appears to mean, persons of simple but well-disposed minds, who hold the truths of the church in a manner agreeable to their simple state of mind; which preserves them from being injured by false doctrines, when these become generally prevalent. Thus, it was to the land of Midian that Moses fled when Pharaoh sought his life; and he married a daughter of Jethro, a priest, as is related, of Midian. It was, also, to Midianitish merchants that Joseph was sold by his brethren, who, if they had not found this way of disposing of him, would have killed him. Jethro likewise came to see Moses when at the head of the people in the wilderness, when he acknowledged and worshiped Jehovah, and was the author of a most important measure, which Moses adopted, for the government of the people. At a later period, either the same person, but who is then called Hobab, or his son of that name (for it is not certain which is meant), came to Moses, and was prevailed upon to stay with them, under the promise, that whatever goodness the Lord should shew to the Israelites, they would shew to him. Accordingly we find that his descendants, under the name of Kenites, always dwelt among the children of Israel. Jonadab and the Rechabites, mentioned with such high commendation by Jeremiah, were of this family. Now we find that Heber the husband of Jael was descended from this Hobab, the brother-in-law, or father-in-law, of Moses; for we read in the chapter of our text, "Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh." From all which it is indubitable, that the Kenites, and especially that portion of

them who dwelt among the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and were descended from the father-in-law of Moses, who was a Midianite according to its best signification, must be representative of some principle of goodness or truth, connected with, and exercising an important influence upon, the states of the church. Jethro was the author to Moses of an important rule for his government of the people: and Hobab, whether the son of Jethro or himself under another name, was induced by Moses to attach himself to the Israelites, upon the consideration, urged to him by Moses, that he would be to them in the wilderness "instead of eyes." The eyes, we know, always signify the understanding: if Hobab, then, was to be to the Israelites instead of eyes, it is evident that he must represent some principle from the Lord that guides the traveller to Canaan when his own understanding fails him, or can be of no use,—a principle of providential guidance, which conducts him in safety, in situations and states, in which, otherwise, he might be totally lost. What can this be, but something of goodness and truth from the Lord, which flows into him by an internal way, above the region of his own consciousness, and operates for his protection and safety, without his having any distinct perception of what is taking place. This harmonizes with what, we are informed, is the signification of Jethro as father-in-law to Moses; for as Moses represents the Divine Law, and thus the Divine Truth, his wife's father must represent Divine Good—that Inmost Good from which the good that is conjoined with the Divine Truth, of which Moses is the representative, is derived. It was on account of this high representation of Jethro, that he was enabled to give such salutary counsel to Moses in relation to his judging the people; and when it is stated on the occasion, that he saw how Moses proceeded in that work, and said that it was not good, he represents also the Lord's Divine Providence, which takes cognizance of all things, and operates to bring into order whatever is not so. From this ascertained signification of Jethro, then, we may be certain that something of the same general nature must be signified by his descendants; and thus that Jael, as being one of them, must be representative of a principle of Divine Good from the Lord, and of his Divine Providence, operating for the removal of evil, and of evil-doers, when their state is fully made up, so as to prevent them from any longer infesting the good; and this without any consciousness of those who suffer the divine judgment as to how it is effected, signified by Sisera's being asleep when he was killed; or any activity for the purpose on the part of those who

are delivered; signified by the blow being struck by a hand which was not of the nation of the Israelites.

These, brethren, are the observations, which it has occurred to me to make, at present, on the extraordinary narrative of the slaying of Sisera by Jael. If what I have imperfectly offered be understood, it will be seen that such narratives afford no argument against the divinity of the Holy Book in which they are recorded, but tend to establish its divinity by throwing light upon its true nature, and upon the nature also of the Israelitish dispensation; as well as upon the true character of that people, the reason why they were taken for a time to be the representative of a Church, and to afford means by which the Word, in all fulness, might be given from the Lord. And the slaying of Sisera by Jael, whatever the moral character of the act as performed by her, was certainly a most obviously providential interference for the complete deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel oppressors: and when we see that while it literally was such, it also represents the Lord's providential influence, operating from his Divine Good, for the deliverance of his people, or the protection and salvation of the true members of his Church, we may draw no small encouragement from it for ourselves. If we are truly members of his Church, we may be assured that the Lord's goodness and providence will be put forth for our protection and deliverance, whenever our states require it; and what by our own arm we are unable to accomplish, will be effectually accomplished by the arm of the Lord; that is, by the hand of his instruments, who are led, by the imperceptible influences of his providence, to the execution of his purposes, all which, whatever form the acts so brought about may take, are purposes of Mercy.

SERMON X.

Judges iv. 16—22. (Sermon ii.)

“But Barak pursued after the chariots and after the host unto Harosheth of the gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left. Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin, the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No. Then Jael, Heber’s wife, took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it to the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.

In our previous discourse upon this extraordinary narrative, when we connected it with the exulting and laudatory comments upon it which follow in the song of Deborah and Barak recited in the next chapter, we chiefly confined ourselves to the endeavour to shew, how such narratives, terrible and even highly criminal as are the deeds related in them, yet by no means tend to invalidate, but rather to establish, the divine character of the book in which they are found, as being truly denominated the Word of God. But to this end, some just knowledge must be possessed as to what the nature of the Word of God properly is, and the true design of the calling of the people of Israel; which was, among other reasons, in order that the Word of God, such as we have it, might be written among them. If, as we have seen, that people never constituted a real church, but only the representative of a church, and thus a substitute for a real church, during a period when no internal church could be raised up, and when the fulness of time had not arrived for the Lord’s coming into the world to found the Christian

church; and if they were made to represent the things and states relating to the church by the forms of their worship and by the circumstances of their history, for the instruction, when recorded in the Word of God, of the members of the church in all future ages, without being, themselves, interiorly grounded in the things which they thus represented: when, I say, these and other particulars relating to the Israelites, mentioned in our last, are known and understood; then it will be seen that no objection against the divinity of the Sacred Volume can be raised, from the circumstance, that some of the persons whose actions are related in it were far from being, in their individual character, holy or good men, and that some of their actions were, in themselves, of a criminal or flagitious nature. The approbation, whether expressed or implied, is not truly bestowed upon the individual person or deed, but upon the thing which was thus represented. The individual himself might be a good man or a bad one, and his actions, as performed by him, might be morally right or morally wrong; and yet they might represent things of a most holy nature, or, when not absolutely holy, yet states of the church, and of its individual members in the course of their regenerative progress. These alone are the things which appear in the spiritual sense of the Word, for the sake of including and conveying which, mainly, the letter is composed; and thus, though the Holy Word exists, in its spiritual sense, in heaven, yet, existing there *only* in its spiritual sense, nothing is there known about the persons and their actions mentioned in the letter. Thought about these, never enters the minds of the angels; consequently, it is impossible for them to be scandalized at finding wicked men or wicked deeds spoken of with seeming approbation in the Word of God: and it would be the same with its readers on earth, were they acquainted with the spiritual sense of the Word, and attended chiefly to this in its perusal. So, also, the mention of such things in the Holy Word would be incapable of giving offence to any, if they knew and believed that it is for the sake of the spiritual sense alone, in such instances, that the letter is so constructed, even though they might not be sufficiently instructed and enlightened to see what the spiritual sense is.

What a happiness, brethren, ought we to esteem it, that, whether our information and intelligence in regard to the spiritual sense of the Holy Word be more or less, in the knowledge which we all possess that it contains such a sense, we are delivered from all occasions for entertaining doubts of its divine inspiration, and

can never be shaken in our conviction of its essentially divine origin, by reading in it of such acts as that of Jael, with the applause bestowed upon them! We only conclude from such circumstances, that the narrative does, and must, contain a spiritual sense; and whether we are enabled to discern any part of that spiritual sense or not, the conviction that there is one, enables us to appropriate with more confiding certainty the instruction openly given in those passages, of which there are many, in which genuine truth is extant in the literal sense itself, and the valuable lessons conveyed on the surface of the pleasing, pathetic, and affecting narratives which in many parts occur. Happy shall we be if we appropriate all that we can understand of the Scriptures, whether obvious in their letter or only to be seen in their spiritual sense, which tends to the establishment of our minds in true doctrine and instructs us how to conduct our life; and then, whether enabled to see much of their spiritual sense or little, they will perform for us their grand office, as justly stated by the Apostle, of making wise unto salvation.

However, at present we are to try, by such divine aids as are mercifully afforded us, if we can obtain some glimpse of the spiritual sense of the divine narrative before us, and of the encomiums bestowed on it in the obviously Divine song of Deborah and Barak.

We made some approaches towards this in our former discourse, in what we were enabled to ascertain, tending to throw light on the representation sustained by Jael, the actress in the tragedy, from the circumstance of her being of the family of the Kenites, and descended from Jethro the father-in-law of Moses. Jethro, we have seen, was the author to Moses of a most important measure for the judging of the people, soon after they came out of Egypt; and at a later period, himself or his son, under the name of Hobab, was induced to remain with them by Moses, because, as Moses said to him on the occasion, he would be to them in the wilderness instead of eyes. This evidently implies, something from the Lord that guides man in his pilgrimage, and when beset with trials and difficulties, where his own understanding is insufficient, —something that protects him, and leads him on in safety. And as the family were not Israelites, but dwelt among the Israelites, in consequence of the connexion of their ancestor with Moses, yet always inhabiting their own tents, not residing in cities with the Israelites, but remaining, though in the midst of them, a distinct but friendly people; they, and by consequence Jael as one of them,

seem to represent something that enters the mind by an immediate influx from the Lord, and operates for man's preservation and safety, without his having much or perhaps any consciousness of its operation. It appears also to be something which operates and is present with those who do not belong to the church as well as with those who do, doing them good, so far as they are duly receptive of it, but, when they pervert and profane it, becoming the occasion of their destruction. This, I think, may be concluded from its being said, that there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite, whose wife Jael was; and we know that there was always peace between them and the Israelites, in whose land they dwelt as friends,—not, like Jabin and Sisera and their Canaanites, as foes.

Sisera, we have seen on a former occasion, as Captain of the army of Jabin a Canaanitish prince, who had held Israel in bondage, and subjected them to cruel oppression for the space of twenty years, represents a ruling and primary false principle grounded in that species of evil of the external man which is always represented by the Canaanites in Scripture. It is a principle which leads man to confide in his own strength, and, while guilty of the greatest evils, and seeking to subjugate and destroy, and make subservient to his purposes, all the genuine principles of truth and goodness constituent of the Church, represented by the Israelites, to flatter himself that the divine goodness and providence are on his side. This is implied by Sisera's seeking refuge in the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, and by Jael's putting on an appearance as if she favoured him according to all his wishes. It would appear, too, that those who are grounded in such a false persuasion as Sisera represents, make no scruple to employ guile to accomplish their wicked ends. This, indeed, is not explicitly stated in regard to Sisera, but it is involved in the guile practised towards him by Jael, who herein acted according to the law of retaliation, which was in force under the representative dispensations, and which, though prohibited by the Gospel to be made the rule of the conduct of individuals towards others, is the eternal rule of retribution according to which all are dealt with in the other world. To represent this, Jael was led to act with guile towards Sisera, because those characters who are grounded in such a false doctrine or persuasion as Sisera, as the Captain of Jabin's host, represents, from such evil in the heart as is represented by him as being a Canaanite, habitually practise guile and deceit to accomplish their designs. This also is in part represented by Sisera's being hidden

by being covered with a mantle, and by his instructing Jael to watch against any man who should come to seek him, and to send him away by a lie. Whatever might be Jael's individual state in acting as she did, her actions, without infringing on her freedom as to that state, were certainly so overruled as to take the form they did, to represent the operation of the law of retaliation in regard to such as are represented by Sisera at their final judgment in the other life. All that Jael did, took the form it did, expressly for this purpose: to represent how the divine law of order called the law of retaliation eventually takes effect in regard to such as are represented by Sisera, and that, being recorded in the Word of God, it might serve for the warning of men, and the instruction on the subject of angels, for ever.

These observations may perhaps suffice to shew, how it was that it is recorded that there was peace between Jabin and the house of Heber the Kenite, and how Jael was led to act with such treachery. But we will notice a few more of the circumstances.

Sisera, as soon as he was covered with a mantle and thought himself safe, said to Jael, "Give me I pray thee a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." This was, doubtless, a very natural request for a man to make, who had been in a great battle and had run a great way to save his life when he saw his army defeated: but it no doubt is recorded as representing something important and characteristic in the state of such persons as Sisera represents. Its signification appears to be much the same as of what is related of the rich man in hell, when he begged that Lazarus might be sent to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue, tormented in the flame: which, we are informed, expresses the desire of those in hell (who are not dismissed thither till all truth has been taken away from them and they are left in mere falsities,) to obtain truth for the purpose of falsifying it, the lust of doing which is meant by the flame in which he was tormented. The same lust is signified by the thirst with which Sisera was tormented; and the water which he desired to drink equally means, truth that such as he represents might pervert and falsify. The request of the rich man was refused, because on him judgment had been already passed: but the desire of Sisera was gratified, and in a superior manner to what he had asked, because his judgment was not yet performed. Jael "opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink." Milk denotes truth of a higher order than water, or even than wine;—truth in fact of a celestial kind, or such as springs from and expresses the sentiments of, the most angelic love. Such a

truth, for example, is this: "That the Lord casts none into hell, but that his mercy and love are such as to desire to raise all to heaven." How would such as Sisera represents, treat this glorious truth? They would pervert and falsify it most awfully, by inferring from it, that, live as they may, they are sure of salvation. In fact, whatever truths respecting the Lord's divine love such characters are acquainted with, they are sure to pervert in their own favour. If, as is the case with so many, they believe wrath to be a more powerful divine passion than love, and conclude that while the great bulk of the human race are objects of the wrath of God, only a very small number shall ever know his love, they are sure to monopolize all the love to themselves. How few soever are they that shall be saved, themselves are infallibly of the number. Such falsification of the truths relating to the Lord's divine love, is signified by Sisera's drinking the bottle of milk. Jael's giving it to him represents that the Lord's divine love is really universal, is free to the acceptance of all, and that the truths it teaches would save even such as are here denoted, would they receive them without perversion, in a vital and practical manner: but Sisera's drinking it represents confirmation in such perversions through deliberately appropriated evil of life.

Sisera now says to Jael, "Stand in the door of the tent; and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No." This represents the desire and effort of those represented by Sisera, and the tendency of the false persuasion which he denotes in the sense abstracted from persons, to pervert even the good that comes immediately from the Lord, represented by Jael, to wring from it a false pretence calculated to screen from punishment the persons in question, and to conceal the nature of the false persuasion which forms the ruling principle of their understanding as derived from an evil will. A man, in the Word of God, in a good sense, signifies the principle of intelligence, and in a bad sense, as here, self-derived intelligence. To require then Jael to say that there was no man there, is so to pervert all good or charity, as to make it excuse the most destructive false persuasions originating in evil, by affirming that there is nothing in such persuasions of self-derived intelligence; which would be the same as to say that they are harmless and good. If those who desire this fail to accomplish it in others, the very desire when confirmed, effects it in themselves. Whatever spiritual injury they thus desire to do to others, is sure to rebound upon themselves. In this way is executed on them

the law of retaliation. Every truth they ever possessed is falsified, and every good adulterated; till at length the measure of their state is filled up, and they are divested of every principle of goodness and truth altogether. They are immersed entirely in a merely natural state, represented by the deep sleep into which Sisera fell as soon as he had given this lesson of falsehood to Jael; and they regard themselves as in the full security which a person's spontaneously betaking himself to sleep also represents. In a moment, they sink in total spiritual death. Jael, Heber's wife—the principle of good which they wished to pervert, and which they *had* perverted as to themselves, “took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground; for he was asleep and weary. So he died.” A nail is the symbol of penetrating truth in ultimates, bringing convictions that cannot be resisted: a hammer in the hand is an emblem of great power: the temples, as inclosing that part of the brain which contains the intellectual powers, or the faculty of understanding in general, denote that faculty itself: to be fastened to the ground, is to be bound to the lowest corporeal plane and things, so as to be utterly incapable of any elevation of thought above them. To die is to perish as to all spiritual life. Thus the import of the whole is, the influx of Divine Truth with power, in consequence of the effort of the parties represented by Sisera to pervert the good represented by Jael, Heber's wife, into the intellectual faculty in which all truth has been falsified and perverted; the effect of which is, the total destruction of the intellectual faculty as to the capacity of seeing any truth, the binding of it down to what is most grossly corporeal, and the utter privation in the party, of all spiritual life for ever. It is to be observed, that it is not the good itself which Jael represents which causes this catastrophe, as might be supposed from her being the performer of the literal action; for the good of the Lord's mercy and providence always tends to protection and salvation, and never to ruin and destruction: but it is the effort on the part of the wicked to make even this good subservient to their evil designs, and thus direfully to pervert it, which causes the total separation from heaven, and irrevocable binding to hell, which then immediately ensues.

Now as Jael signifies a principle of good immediately from the Lord, by the effort to pervert which, the destruction of the wicked is effected, and by which the protection and salvation of the good are secured, we may easily see why Jael is extolled so highly,—

why it is said, “Blessed shall Jael the wife of Heber be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.” This is only an emphatic declaration, that nothing of man's salvation is from himself, but all of it from good immediately from the Lord; to whom, therefore, all the merit is due.

Something like this, I have no doubt, is the import, in the spiritual sense, of this divine narrative. Nothing here appears of any harsh or vindictive nature, or of any thing guileful and treacherous. The Lord is willing to save all; but, as to them who would monopolize salvation to themselves without regard to the true divine means of obtaining it; who cherish false principles of faith grounded in the love of evil; who falsify divine truths to make them appear to favour their evils, and even endeavour to pervert the good of the Lord's love and mercy: evident it is that such must, in the other life, be divested of all the goodness and truth which they have falsified and perverted, and left to the living death of their own evils and falsities. The effect of this also is, the deliverance of the good whom they have infested with temptations, and endeavoured to destroy. This is the law of divine order in regard to both these classes of persons; and this is what is meant by the awful imprecation and solemn prayer with which the song of Deborah and Barak, after speaking of the death of Sisera, concludes: “So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.” This is not to be understood as a *wish* for the destruction even of the Lord's enemies, which means the enemies of all that is good and true; but it is a declaration of what *must* be the consequence of being of the number of such enemies, and never consenting to relinquish the enmity. What can be the result of being an enemy of all that is good and true—that is, of all that the Lord loves, and is, but the being divested of every thing good and true ourselves, and thus separated from all communion and conjunction with the Lord, and consequently, and of necessity, from all peace and happiness? Painful as is the thought, that there are many of our fellow-creatures of whom this is the fate, yet reason plainly sees, that, with all who persevere in such a course to the end of life, or of their day of probation, as our life in this world truly is, it is utterly impossible that it should be otherwise. The declaration then, that such will, and must, assuredly be the fact, is all that is meant by the seeming imprecation, “So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.” The most ardent desire of the Lord is, that they would cease to be enemies, and so permit him to save them: but if they

obstinately refuse, what can be done but to leave them to what they prefer? But if this, though obviously, in such case, unavoidable, is painful to contemplate, how delightful is the solemn prayer or benediction which is presented as the alternative: "Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might!" This is the declaration of a law of divine order in respect to such characters; and equally so, of the pure benevolence of the Divine Nature. To those who love Him, the Love of the Lord can, and does, go forth in its native form, and is seen such as it is in its own intrinsic nature. He inmostly desires, that all they who love him shall be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. The sun is the grandest image and emblem in nature of the Lord himself and his divine love. With what might, as is here expressed, does the sun go forth? Who, or what, shall stop him in his career? So glorious and certain is the blessed course of those, who truly love the Lord,—the sun's divine prototype. How ardent and pure should that love of the Lord be, which can claim the sun as its appropriate representation in nature! Yet as the sun rises gradually, and its light appears before it is seen itself, and, after it has risen, its full heat is not perceived till it approaches the meridian; so is it with him who is here spoken of as loving the Lord: his progress is gradual, although, where his love is genuine, it is sure. The love of the Lord, we know, is the love of what the Lord is; and none can love what he is, without desiring, and striving, to become conformed to his will, and, as an imperfect image, assimilated to his nature; which can only be accomplished in proportion as man keeps his commandments, in which his will is declared, and from which his nature may be inferred. Let us, brethren, strive to do this; and then we shall assuredly realize the blessing, "Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Nothing shall prevent them from reaching the goal; rising to a station in his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XI.

Judges vi. 1—5.

"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian, seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come to Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents; and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it."

In the discourses which we have already delivered on the remarkable histories in this book of Judges, we have made such general observations as seemed requisite to prepare the mind for the profitable contemplation of their interior contents. We have dwelt at some length upon the necessity of allowing such singular things as are recorded, to be representative of things of a spiritual nature, in order to see how the volume that contains them can be in reality the Word of God; and have noticed the strong arguments which thence arise in favour of the Holy Word's containing a spiritual sense included within the letter. We also have offered such suggestions as presented themselves to meet the thoughts which may arise in the mind, when it learns that all the immense variety of things mentioned and treated of in the Holy Word, relate to distinct states to be experienced by the man who suffers all the divine purposes respecting him to take effect, and who does not stop short at any intermediate station in his spiritual course, but submits to the whole of the process requisite to bring him to the highest state of perfection open to a finite being. This highest state is indeed so glorious a one, that it is not commonly supposed to be open to the attainment of man, but is erroneously conceived to be confined to a class of pure spiritual intelligences, who

were created angels at once, and never underwent a period of trial and probation as men on earth. This, however, is a notion altogether erroneous, founded on one of those Jewish fables to which Paul warns his disciple Titus not to give heed,—on one of those traditions of theirs by which, as the Lord declares, they made the law or Word of God of none effect: and it is a notion that is so utterly destitute of any substantial support, and almost of the appearance of it, from the Sacred Scriptures, that one may wonder how it ever obtained such general credence among Christians. It is on purpose that angels may exist that man was created. The human race is designed to be the seminary for heaven; since the formation of heaven, peopled with angelic inhabitants, is the end Divine Love and Wisdom had in view in the creation of the universe; and if this could have been created immediately, man would never have been formed and placed in this world of nature at all, where, even in his most perfect state, he was liable to fall into vice and consequent misery. But Infinite Wisdom and Divine Omnipotence never act but in conformity to the most perfect order, and this requires that there should be different degrees of life and existence; that those which are interior should have one that is exterior as the means of giving them permanence; and that the formation of the human mind should take place while it dwells in a natural frame, in order that its acquirements may have a termination to give them a fixed existence. Divine Order also requires that all multiplication, and in fact all positive creation, should take place in this ultimate sphere: and thus man was formed an inhabitant of the world of nature, that he might thereby freely choose that order of life which might fit him for transplantation to a higher and more interior residence; since, unless those acquirements are appropriated in a state of freedom, they cannot be possessed at all; and such free appropriation is only possible in the natural state of existence. If, then, this be so: if heaven is to derive all its inhabitants from earth: if the Lord's angels spoken of by the Psalmist, who are called, for their life of wisdom, spirits; His ministers, called, for their ardent love, flames of fire;—even the angels who excel in strength, were once men on earth, partakers, to the full extent, of human frailty: we may cease to think it strange that so many particulars are mentioned in the Holy Word which describe different steps in the great process by which this exaltation of state is to be attained. When we reflect on the idea we commonly entertain of angels, which we may be sure does not rise higher, but is more probably much lower, than the

reality; and when we compare this with the weakness and infirmity which we know, by experience as well as observation, adheres to man in this mortal state; the wonder will be, not that such a variety of trials and purifications should be requisite to his passing from the one condition to the other, but that it should ever be possible for him to do so at all. But what a subject of superlative joy and gratitude should it be to him, that such an exaltation of his nature is presented before him, and that he is invited and empowered to attain it! How ought we to be animated by so elevated a prospect! The apostle exhorts us to “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race which is set before us: looking,” he especially says, “unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.” In the latter part of these words, the Apostle speaks of the means by which the Lord advanced to the glorification of his Humanity, till this was exalted to complete divine omnipotence, which is what is always meant when mention is made in Scripture of the right hand of God. This was effected by His fulfilling the whole of the Word, that is, by passing through every state described in the Word, appropriating, as to His human nature, every good and every truth which it contains, and thus becoming as to his external man, what He was from eternity as to His internal, the Word Itself,—which is what is meant when it is said that “the Word was made flesh.” As then He repeatedly commands us in the gospel to follow Him, and the Apostle means the same in the words just quoted, where he exhorts us to take Him for our pattern; no doubt we also, in our measure and degree, are to fulfil the Holy Word, passing through the states therein described, and making the goodness and truth it enforces, the rule and guide, and finally the spontaneous dictate of our renewed minds. The Lord, being divine goodness and truth themselves as to His internal man, became, by fulfilling the Word, divine goodness and truth themselves as to His external man, thus essentially God as to both: and of course the temptations which He underwent in the process, must have been such as finite minds can have no idea of. Man is only a form recipient of goodness and truth from the Lord as to his internal man, and he has only to become such a form as to his external man also: of course his trials will be commensurate with his limited capacities; and he never need fear the failure of the divine promise—as thy day is, so shall thy strength be. In reality, the Lord does and sustains all for man:

he has only to look steadily to Him, never resting under any intercepting cloud till it is removed—and to attend faithfully to the Lord's requirements, to become one of those sons of God, to "bring whom to glory," the same Apostle declares, "the Captain of their salvation was made perfect through sufferings."

Our present text describes an affliction of the Israelites, from an enemy that one would hardly expect to have again become so powerful, after a great overthrow that they had experienced in the time of Moses. When Balak the King of Moab had failed to arrest the march of the Israelites by the enchantments of Balaam, whom he had hired for the purpose, but whose desire to curse was turned into a blessing by the controuling power of the Lord, the Moabites endeavoured to effect their object by subtlety, and to ensnare the children of Israel into criminal practices and idolatrous worship, in which they so far succeeded as to occasion a plague in the camp, attended with the destruction of twenty-four thousand men. On this occasion they were assisted by the Midianites: for which reason Moses was commanded to send an expedition of twelve thousand men against the latter. This small army of Israelites seems to have come upon the Midianites by surprise, for, without any loss, they destroyed five of their princes, with a great multitude of people, and took an immense booty,—so great indeed, that one would conclude the whole nation must have been cut off, as the terms of the account which is given in the 31st of Numbers, would seem to imply. However, we find they had so recovered themselves, in the two hundred years which intervened between the date of that transaction and of that recorded in the text, as to have become more formidable than ever, and to be able to do, by open force, what they then only attempted by craft and fair appearances. And no doubt the reason of this is, because, there being a difference *in degree*, between the state represented by the Israelites *after* they obtained possession of the promised land, and that which they denoted *before*, the enemies whom they had to encounter, though frequently the same nations as before, and thus representing the same evil lusts and false persuasions as previously, express the manifestation of them in a deeper ground, which of course implies a more full development of their pernicious tendency.

Owing to the human mind at the present day being so little exercised in noting the differences of the various species of affections, whether good or evil, and of perceptions and notions, whether true or false, it is certainly rather difficult to obtain so distinct an idea of the things denoted by the different nations with whom the

Israelites had to contend, as to prevent our efforts at explaining them from appearing like reiterations of the same thing. No doubt the time will come, as the church advances to maturity, when the perceptions of her members, on these and all other subjects, will be incomparably clearer: they who shall then attempt to explain such matters will be enabled to set them in a much clearer light than can be done at present; and they will also be assisted by a much more ready comprehension in their auditors. However, there is enough recorded in Scripture respecting the Midianites,—and even in our present text,—to help us, I trust, to form a satisfactory notion of what is represented *by them*.

The circumstance we have already noticed, respecting their former alliance with the Moabites, will alone afford us considerable assistance. The Moabites we have treated of on more than one occasion, and their signification is so extremely distinct from that of any other of the nations with whom the Israelites had to deal, that I trust we have been enabled to form a tolerably clear idea of it. We have seen that they denote such as are in a certain kind of good, consisting merely in natural amiableness of temper, uninfluenced by spiritual considerations;—thus a good that originates in hereditary constitution, is consequently of the natural man alone, and is not a birth from the spiritual man, nor such as owns any connexion with the truths of the church. Thus they who are in such good as this, though it will appear very pleasing for a time, yet if they do not receive genuine good within it by regulating all their affections by the divine commandments, and thus watching against evils in themselves and rejecting them, are easily seduced into evil, when it addresses their inclinations in an alluring form. Now the Midianites represent those who in some respects are of a similar character, denoting, when mentioned in a good sense, as sometimes occurs, persons of simple but well-disposed minds, who hold the truths of the church in a manner agreeable to their simple state of mind, which prevents them, when false doctrines are prevalent, from being injured by them. Thus, as noticed in a previous discourse, it was to the land of Midian that Moses fled when Pharaoh sought his life: and so it was to Midianitish merchants that Joseph was sold by his brethren, who thus gave vent to their hostility which otherwise would not have been satisfied without taking his life: and thus the Midianites were the means of the preservation of Joseph as well as of Moses: by both which circumstances is represented the preservation of that in which the church essentially consists, at the time when, in the body of its professed members, the church is in desola-

tion. But when the Midianites appear in enmity to the Israelites, they represent a principle of the same general character as before, but turned in an opposite direction ;—thus they denote such as are of simple superficial dispositions, but who, instead of holding the truth in a simple manner, have no concern about divine truth at all ; in which case, like the Moabites, they are easily seduced into evil indulgences, when they readily imbibe false persuasions to justify them. In this case the Midianites represent such persons as are peculiarly devoted to pleasurable indulgences, and may be considered as representing, abstractedly, external enjoyment, with all its frivolities of idle thoughts and trifling notions magnified into things of supreme importance.

¶ We took occasion to observe, when treating of the Moabites, that there is reason to conclude that there are great numbers of those who are spiritually Moabites in the professing church, and in the world, at the present day : and most assuredly the same observation may be made in respect to the Midianites also. No doubt there are many in the professing church at this day who are Midianites in a good sense,—persons of a plain, well-disposed character, whose simplicity of mind prevents them from imbibing, so as to be injured by them, the false notions which have supplanted the genuine truth of the Word in the creeds of professed Christians, and among whom, in consequence, the spiritual Moses and Joseph,—the Divine Law or Truth and the spiritual principle of the church, so far find an asylum as to be preserved alive. But if there are spiritual Midianites, in their best character, in the professing church of this day, most assuredly there are spiritual Midianites in abundance in their bad signification also. Was there ever a time in which frivolity in every form, a constant immersion in superficial pursuits, and the eager pursuit of paltry enjoyments, formed so leading a feature in the character of the age? What multitudes spend a great portion of their time in what is called, to gloss over the vanity of it, light reading, and consume nearly the whole of the remainder in a round of amusements ! So that they have a constant supply of tales of fiction to read, it matters not, with many, what is their moral tendency. Indeed, when the mind is much given up to this kind of reading, it avails little though valuable lessons be inculcated in the book : whatever they professedly inculcate, their effect upon such readers is invariably mischievous. Such persons live constantly surrounded with a sphere of phantasies. The perceptions of their own minds are as injuriously affected by this species of constantly strained

excitement, as they would be by the habit of taking intoxicating liquors : and, though coarsely, it was most truly said, by a man not much under the influence of religious principle, that the circulating library, whence constant supplies of such mental beverage are procured, is a moral dram-shop. These then, we may say, are the Midianites' studies : and the tendency of them certainly is, to give their votaries a distaste for the sober, common-place, unromantic duties of life, and to disqualify them, in a great degree, for filling with propriety their stations in it. So again, when one observes how many there are who seem absolutely to live upon public amusements, how can one forbear to recognize the character of the Midianite? Into how many companies may you enter, in which nothing is talked of but new plays, new actors or old ones in new characters, and the various other species of fashionable entertainment ! What multitudes are there whose supreme enjoyment is in playing at cards,—who do not know what to do with themselves till the card-tables are set out, who engage in the game as if it were the very business of their lives, and who find in it the whole of their delight,—if delight that can be called which frequently manifests itself, (because fortune cannot always be propitious) in ill-humour and vexation, either openly exhibited or ill concealed. Are there any among us, in whom the Midianitish character, under these or any other of its manifestations, displays its influence? The doctrines of the New Church, it is true, do not altogether prohibit any recreation which is not criminal in itself and does not go beyond the bounds of order and propriety : but most strictly do they prohibit all whenever they would rise out of their proper sphere, and demand entertainment as objects of anxious pursuit : and, most assuredly, the less every one accustoms himself to think of or wish for them, the better. Whenever amusements begin to be thought of with solicitude, and especially when, by thinking of or pursuing them our proper duties begin to be felt as irksome, the Midianite is beginning to assume the upper hand with us, and, unless promptly repressed, will either subdue us entirely, or make our return to a state of true order and real happiness a matter of difficulty, only to be accomplished by the path of repentance, attended with much bitterness and pain. Though the doctrines of the New Church do not proscribe amusements so far as they tend to preserve both mind and body in a more healthful state, and both better disposed and better able to discharge with effect their proper duties, they describe the state of those who

make pleasure their business, as deplorable, vile, and wretched indeed. But to proceed to the particulars of our text.

The consequence of such unworthy objects attaining any prevalence in the mind, is strongly described when it is said, that because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds. The Israelites represent the principles that constitute the church in the human mind; and these are said to dwell in dens and caves when they are in a state of obscurity—the dens of the mountains denoting a state of obscurity as to good, and the caves, or, as is sometimes said, the caves of the fields, denoting a state of obscurity with respect to truth: And great indeed is the obscurity in which a man is plunged, as to the things that properly constitute the church, when external pursuits and their gross delights occupy any considerable share of his attention! But it is necessary here to bear in mind the difference between being in a state of temptation in consequence of the infusion of such things from an infernal source, and the being in the things themselves: in the former case we belong to those who, notwithstanding their lapses and infirmities, are still Israelites; but in the latter we are really Midianites ourselves. We are instructed in the doctrines of the New Church on the subject of temptations, that in them evil and false sentiments are indeed present in the mind, being infused from the tempting powers in such abundance as to make it appear as if they could not be resisted: deluges of false suggestions of different kinds, sometimes tending to the direct denial of the most important truths, and sometimes consisting merely of a continual turning of the thoughts to idle and unprofitable things, are unceasingly poured into the mind, while tendencies to evil at the same time solicit the will, accompanied by a feeling of the delight which they who are in such evil find in its indulgence: these however are at the same time felt as most hateful and undelightful to the real will of the mind, this being so renewed as to have delights of a very different nature. Of course, where there is inwardly an opposite will, what is thus suggested by the infernal influence, is not adopted or reduced into practice: and it is the determined inward resistance to this, in which the Lord supports the mind, that constitutes it a temptation. Such then, when applied to the case of individual regeneration, is what is denoted by the oppression which the children of Israel suffered from the Midianites, and indeed by all the other afflictions recorded of them.

The Midianites, it is to be observed, were a migratory people, having no fixed habitations, and whose riches consisted in their cattle, as is evident from the description of the spoil that the Israelites took from them in the conflict before noticed, in the time of Moses: they were in fact a tribe of the people who are now called wandering Arabs, who have retained their manners to the present day. Their mode of ill treating the Israelites, referred to in our text, does not appear to have consisted in holding them regularly in subjection, dwelling in their country as its constant masters, but in making occasional inroads, seizing their cattle, and applying the produce of the land as pasture for their own herds. For it is said in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th verses, that “when Israel had sown, the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass: for they came up with their cattle, and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered the land to destroy it.” So that it appears, that after they had seized every thing, and fed off the growing crops with their cattle, till the land could support them no longer, they retreated, according to their usual migratory habits, to their own country; that then the Israelites, hoping that they would not return, again sowed the fields and endeavoured to repair the damage, in the expectation, no doubt, that their enemies would leave them some respite to enjoy the fruit of their labour; but that the Midianites and their companions returned again the next season, and made the same devastation as before.

In these particulars we have a description of the desolation to which all things of the church are reduced in the external man, so long as a regard to external delights is so far indulged, or is permitted to intrude itself, as to occupy in that part of our constitution a pre-eminent station. The seed sown by the Israelites is the knowledge and understanding of divine truth, and of the good to which it leads, inseminated in our natural part by an influx from the spiritual, in consequence of which it is that things of a spiritual nature engage our attention, that the Holy Word and the doctrines of the church thence derived, are studied, and, by virtue of an influx from the internal, and primarily from the Lord, are understood, and in some measure appropriated: but in this state the prospect of fruit is cut off by the rising up from beneath of evil delights and false persuasions, which destroy what is thus insemin-

ated, and even apply it in favour of themselves. How similar is this history to the Lord's parable of the Sower, in which it is said that, sometimes because the wicked one catcheth away that which was sown in the heart, sometimes because tribulation or persecution occasion offence, and sometimes because the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, it becometh unfruitful!

The Midianites are said to be as grasshoppers, or, as the word ought to be translated, as locusts, for multitude; to which they are compared, because the state represented is similar to that of Egypt, when it was visited by the plague of locusts. Locusts are explained in the writings of the New Church to represent *falsities in the extremes*, by which phrase are meant false persuasions and thoughts of the lowest and most superficial description, such as arise from the fallacies of the senses, when separated from all interior light, so that their fallacy remains undetected. A plague of them, or an inundation such as is here spoken of, consists in the thoughts being kept by infernal influence perpetually occupied with frivolous things, which are then seen only in the lowest sensual light, and, if the mind has better things within, are felt to be extremely annoying, though they are poured in so fast that it finds it difficult to extricate itself from them. And if the Midianites, as has been observed, represent an exclusive regard to external things, we see with what propriety the state of the thoughts which such an attachment brings with it, is compared to an inundation of locusts.

The mode in which deliverance from this state is commenced, is described in the sequel of this chapter by the calling of Gideon, which we propose to take as the subject of our next discourse. What we have now been considering may teach us the danger of suffering a regard to external things—an attachment to natural pleasures, to obtain the preponderance in our minds. There is nothing in true religion of a gloomy nature, or that tends in any degree to restrict the enjoyments suitable to a rational being: on the contrary, it tends greatly to increase and exalt all rational enjoyments; as affections of a spiritual nature—affections of heavenly good and perceptions of divine truth, are attended with delights of their own of a far more exquisite kind than the slave of merely natural and corporeal affections and the gross sentiments which accompany them, can have an idea of; and the rational and natural pleasures which they permit, are, by their connexion with them, improved and made more truly pleasing: for true religion does not require the total renunciation even of natural pleasures,

but only their restriction within the limits of order. But let us be ever careful to attend to what order requires, which is, that spiritual things should be exalted to the highest place in our minds, and be made the governing ends and motives, and that natural objects, pursuits, and delights should be kept in strict subordination below them. Then will not the Israelites be shut up in dens and caves, whilst all that they sow is made the prey of the Midianites, but they shall eat in peace of the increase of the earth:—the acquisitions of the natural man, being from a heavenly origin and standing in heavenly order, will be subservient to and support the spiritual man in life and activity, and heavenly rest will be his portion.

SERMON XII.

Judges vi. 11—24.

“ *And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which (was) in Ophrah, that (pertained) unto Joash the Abiezrite. And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, O my lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where (be) all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said unto Him, Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto Him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me: depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And He said, I will tarry till thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto Him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes: and there arose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that He was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee: fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built an altar there*

unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.”

IN our last discourse we commenced the subject of the afflictions which the Israelites suffered in consequence of the inroads and tyranny of the Midianites: which we have seen describe, when understood in the spiritual sense and with reference to the regeneration of the individual candidate for life eternal, a state of temptation, the result of an excitement of the evil propensities of the natural man,—a state in which external things and merely natural enjoyments are presented as objects of pre-eminent importance, and the mind is deluged, by the agency of the tempting powers, with floods of trifling thoughts, tending to extinguish all regard to matters of a serious nature. In the passage we have now read, we are presented with an account of the manner in which the internal man is invigorated to extricate itself from this thralldom, by the opening therein of a new principle of spiritual life, and the filling of it with a divine power from the Lord, which, after certain preparatory stages, and the extension of the confidence in divine aid thus originating till it fills the whole mind, finally destroys the opposing influence, and restores the whole man to a state of peace, accompanied with that sense of delight and enjoyment in heavenly things of which he appeared to be deprived.

The passage we have read is of considerable length, but we have read the whole on account of the conversation which it details between the angel and Gideon, which opens a subject of great importance to our reflection: though we only propose to offer a particular explanation of the first of the verses we have selected.

It appears then in general, that the discourse here recorded between the angel of the Lord and Gideon, describes the perceptions which are experienced in the interiors of the mind preparatory to the termination of the temptation represented by the invasions of the Midianites: and the whole of it shews to us the manner in which the immense variety of perceptions and thoughts that we all of us experience, arises within us. Every person has at various times in his life, been in situations in which he has experienced a great number of conflicting thoughts passing through his mind: and this, whatever may be the subject that occasions him solicitude. It is impossible to be much interested about any event whatever, attended with any suspense and anxiety, without experiencing something of this nature. One thought will

arise that draws the mind one way, and another will present itself that sways it another. We cannot indeed weigh any thing maturely with a view to a prudent determination, but an operation of this sort must be felt. Now what can this be, but either the operation of distinct principles in the mind itself, or the action of distinct influences from without, or extraneously to what properly belongs to the man himself? These are poured into him from those spiritual associates of different classes with whom he is at all times surrounded, but some of whom are in a manner nearer to him at some times than at others. Their influence then becomes much stronger, and the thoughts which they suggest are much more vivid and attended with more lively feelings. The man, however, usually regards them as the spontaneous births of his own mind, and seldom suspects that any beings but himself have any share in producing them. Nevertheless the thoughts of different tendencies which thus at times agitate the mind, are so distinct from each other, and so strongly marked, that they appear to the man himself like conversations within him; although he usually believes both the distinct parties by which the thoughts are infused to be wholly himself. Hence it has even become customary to speak of particular thoughts, or trains of thought, that at times pass through the mind, as a species of discourse with oneself: and thus, when mentioning them to others, we often say, "I said to myself:" and when an opposite, or at least quite distinct train of thought has succeeded, we describe this also by saying, "But then I said to myself again." The truth is, that all this arises from there being in reality innumerable different principles in our minds; and also, from our being acted upon every moment by spiritual associates of different classes. For though there are innumerable distinct things in our own minds, yet as man in himself is not life, but merely a form receptive of life, nothing in his spiritual organization would ever be capable of the least consciousness of existence but for the continual action of life upon it flowing in from without—that is, in all cases, primarily from the Lord, the only Source of life, but mediately through heaven or through hell, by the agency of angels and spirits from thence. The life thus presented from different *mediate* sources, is actually received by the man, and by every the minutest principle that has a place within him, from the one medium or from the other, according to its respective affinity of nature. The man however always has a power to turn either towards the one or the other, and thus to give the preponderance to whichever side he pleases, by virtue of a constant influx of freedom into the very

inmost of his constitution, which he derives neither through heaven nor through hell, but immediately from the Lord alone. Seeing then that different currents of thought are in reality the action of different principles in the human mind, called into exercise by influences either from the heavenly or the infernal world; and that this is the case whether the alternations are of a nature opposite to each other, or they are mutually congenial, being only the distinct particulars of the same general principle;—for this reason, when they are described in the language of correspondence, or of the mutual relation between natural things and spiritual, in which the Word is written, they are exhibited as real conversations between real persons. One of the great excellences of this spiritual language is, that it is capable of distinguishing things the most minute, such as, in any other style of writing, could not be distinctly presented to the apprehension. This shews us the true manner in which all the conversations between various persons mentioned in the Holy Word, are to be understood. However real, considered as to their natural existence, the persons were who are mentioned in the Scriptures, the conversations recorded between them are meant to represent the various trains of perceptions and thoughts that take place, on the occasions spiritually denoted, in the minds of individuals of the human race, as they are introduced by the operation of distinct influences, either from the heavenly or the infernal world, on distinct principles in the human constitution.

Here then it may be observed, by the way, that when this law of the composition of the Sacred Scriptures is understood, we may be enabled to reconcile difficulties in the literal sense on important doctrinal points, which otherwise could not be easily explained. For instance: We know that man has innumerable distinct things in his constitution: We see that this is the case in the formation of our bodies; and all who have studied—indeed all who have paid the slightest attention to—the operations of their nobler part, the mind, are aware that this is still more compounded of parts innumerable. Yet we know, that as all the outward members make but one body, so all the inward feelings and perceptions make but one mind;—yea, even the mind and body together, distinct as they are in their natures, make but one man. But on account of the perfect distinctness of the several parts of the mind and the man, the suggestions arising from the activity of each are represented, we see, in the Holy Word, by conversations between absolutely separate persons. Now this is the reason why the perceptions in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, while engaged in

the work of glorifying His Humanity, are represented as conversations, carried on, on the one side, by prayer, and on the other by voices from heaven, and by commands declared by the Lord to have been received by Him from the Father; as when we find him saying, "Father, glorify thy name:" and, it is added, "There came a voice from heaven, saying, I both have glorified it, and will glorify it again." At other times we read of the Lord's addressing the Father, without any intimation being given of an answer received; and at others he speaks of the commands, or rather commissions, he has received from the Father, without any notice of an address on his part. These communications between the Lord and the Father, being so distinctly related, are supposed to imply that they are distinct persons. But the case is here exactly the same, as in the Scripture mode of representing the communication with each other of the distinct principles in the mind of one individual man. As the distinct principles that are in man, though represented by distinct persons in the Word, do not make him more persons than one, so neither do the distinct principles that are in the Lord, the most general of which are the Essential Divinity and the Divine Humanity, the one denominated the Father and the other the Son, make Him more persons than one. The appearance of their being so, arises from the style of correspondence and representation in which the Holy Word is written; according to which, we have seen, distinct principles are spoken of as distinct persons. Let us then (to vary the words of the Athanasian Creed) be careful, in our ideas of the meaning of the terms Father and Son, as applied to the Lord, neither to confound the principles nor to divide the person.

Here we have an important doctrinal application of the important fact, that the distinct principles in the human mind are represented in the Word by distinct persons: but from another branch of the same truth we may draw an important application of a practical nature. For if it be true that so many various things have a place in our spiritual organization; and if we are connected by them both with the heavenly and infernal kingdoms,—and indeed with all the societies of each;—and if, further, all the thoughts that ever pass through our minds proceed from the action upon us of spiritual associates belonging to some society of one or other of those kingdoms: then, if we were disposed faithfully and impartially to note our thoughts, reflecting upon those which we most readily recur to and dwell upon with most delight, it would not be difficult to ascertain what sort of spiritual society we prefer

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—whether emissaries from the heavenly or the infernal world have most influence over us. There may indeed be thoughts which come in their origin from the heavenly kingdom, that do not immediately refer to heavenly things: and there may be some that seem to have this reference which in reality come from the infernal kingdom, but both may be known by observing *the affection* with which they are united. If it is so certain that both worlds are so near to us, how careful should we be to reject every thought whose tendency would be to ally us with the evil one, and to cherish those which would connect us with the heavenly one. It is true that thoughts from hell may be injected before we are aware, and in states of temptation may be presented so constantly, as we have seen in our last discourse, as to threaten to take entire possession of the mind: but this need not fill us with too gloomy apprehensions as to our state, provided we are careful *not to make them our own* by giving them willing entertainment. "Not that which goeth into the mouth," saith the infallible Teacher, "defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man:" where, by "that which goeth into the mouth" are meant evil thoughts injected by infernal agency, but not appropriated by the affection and so made our own; and by that which cometh out of the mouth are meant evil thoughts proceeding from the heart or will. On the whole, if we were duly sensible that every thought that enters our minds comes either from heaven or from hell, we perhaps should not think it of so little consequence as too many are apt to do, to be on our guard how they are engaged. By continued practice, we form our minds to the reception either of good thoughts or of bad: we bind ourselves either to the kingdom of light or to the kingdom of darkness: and whichever of these kingdoms we have thought from, and with, while here, we shall think from, and in, in and to eternity.

With these general remarks on the conversations recorded in Scripture, we will proceed to some observations on the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Gideon, as recorded in the first verse of our text.

It is mentioned in the verses preceding, that "Israel cried unto the Lord," (the meaning of which phrase we have spoken of on former occasions,) and that then the Lord sent to them a prophet who, after reminding them of the Lord's operations in their behalf in delivering them from Egypt, states the cause of their present calamity to be, their not having obeyed the command which prohibited them to worship the gods of the Amorites. By this state-

ment is spiritually described, a perception communicated from the Lord through the doctrine of his Word, (signified by a prophet,) shewing the cause of all temptation and infestation from evils to reside in our own selfhood, and the looking thereto instead of to the Lord: since, although the evil and false suggestions which may arise in temptations, may not be actually appropriated by us, it is nevertheless certain, that if there were not something in our selfhood which inclined that way, there would be no ground in us on which the infernal influence could operate. Then, it is said, "there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak, which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." This denotes the manifestation of the Lord as to his Divine Proceeding Influence, or Divine Truth in which is the Divine Good, in the Word, and in the things that are from the Word stored up in the human mind; and the development of a principle of genuine truth from good in the interiors of the mind, to and in which this manifestation could take place. An oak is a tree frequently mentioned in the Scriptures; and as all trees in general signify either perceptions or knowledges of truth, according to the subject respecting which they are mentioned, so do particular trees signify some particular class of such perceptions or knowledge. An oak, for its great magnitude, its great hardness, and the tangled appearance of its crooked branches, denotes truth in its lowest and most external mode of existence, in which it is a general covering or clothing to things of an interior nature, (which perhaps is represented by the magnitude and cap-like form of the oak;)—is to them a strong basis for their support, which is expressed by its hardness;—and in which truth appears under a mazy and confused aspect, the fallacies of the senses which here mingle with it requiring continual unravelling; which is what is represented by its tangled appearance and the crookedness of its branches. Thus the oak is an apt emblem of the Word in the obscurer parts of its letter, a great portion of which consists of truth of this kind: and the angel of the Lord sitting under the oak, denotes the Lord Himself as to His Divine Truth in the inmost of the Word. Joash represents a principle of good from the Lord still existing in the interiors of the mind, and his son Gideon is a principle of truth proceeding from that origin. Some idea of the specific quality denoted by them may be formed, from the circumstance of their belonging to the tribe of Manasseh: for Manasseh, who was the eldest son of Joseph, denotes the will principle of the

spiritual man,—or the new will formed by regeneration in man's spiritual part by the Lord.

That Gideon had some such representation as we have stated, is evident from the employment in which the angel of the Lord found him engaged. He was threshing wheat: our translation says "by the winepress," but according to the original it is "in the winepress;"—an extraordinary expression that has very much perplexed translators and commentators. Some have rendered it "in a little threshing floor," supposing that the winepress is mentioned, not to denote that any winepress was actually concerned, but to intimate that the threshing floor was not larger than the space occupied by a winepress; others, as the English translators, conceiving this too far fetched, have put an unusual meaning on the preposition signifying *in*, and have translated it *by*. However, we need to take no pains to reconcile the literal expressions, or to ascertain in what manner or place Gideon, as a certain man, actually managed to thresh his wheat: the spiritual sense is clearly discoverable in the mode of the expression as it stands in the original; and, no doubt, that singular mode of expression was made use of, purposely to give the spiritual sense in fulness,—the obscurity which was thus thrown over the letter, being comparatively a thing of no consequence. To thresh wheat is to separate it from the husk preparatory to its being used for food: and a winepress is used to perform a similar operation in the preparation of wine, it being a machine for the separation of the juice of the grapes from the skins and refuse. Wheat, as the noblest species of corn and the chief article of human food, represents that which tends most substantially to nourish the spiritual man, which is good of a celestial order appropriated in his will: and wine, which is the most generous kind of drink, denotes that which tends most directly to invigorate the spiritual part, by enabling the mind to appropriate the good on which it must primarily subsist; which is truth of a spiritual order appropriated in his understanding: for as food alone, without drink, would not nourish the body, for want of a vehicle to convey it into the system, so neither will good without truth nourish the mind: yet all the nourishment resides in the food: by drink alone, though it readily enters the system, life cannot be supported.

Thus, then, by Gideon's threshing wheat in a winepress, and this in order to hide it from the Midianites, is denoted, that notwithstanding the prevalence of such things as are represented by the Midianites in the external man, there is, nevertheless, within, a

principle that is intent upon the appropriation of good, and upon the purification of it from the chaff of our own defilements: and that this is going on while there is nothing outwardly apparent but a state of jeopardy and trial arising from the presence of opposing principles in the external: for a winepress, on account of the force used in it, represents also, a state of severe temptation, by which the quality of the truth we have received is ascertained. Thus while nothing is discoverable to the outward observer, nor perhaps to the man himself, but affliction and desolation—though the good that is being effected is hid from the Midianites—there nevertheless is a principle inwardly which is intent upon exploring and appropriating good, and to which the angel of the Lord—an influence of his divine Spirit, can be manifested, and can excite it to an open development by the encouraging assurance—the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.

We see, then, from this slight view of this part of our subject, of what infinite importance it is that we should ever preserve in our internal man, a steady determination to the love and practice of goodness,—that we should ever cultivate in our hearts a sense of the pre-eminence of such affections as have the Lord and heaven for their objects, and which manifest themselves in harmlessness of demeanour and works of charity—that term being understood to mean the pure love of our neighbour. If this be attended to, all external clouds will ere long pass away:—sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. We have also seen how much improvement may be derived from a careful watching over our thoughts—how much our eternal state depends on our employing the freedom of will and choice, which we enjoy as a gift imparted to us from moment to moment from the Lord alone, to the purpose of making a right choice in those spiritual associations with the inhabitants of the eternal world, which, whether we know or reflect upon it or not, we are forming or strengthening every instant of our lives. Of what infinite moment must this be to us, when we must so soon become inhabitants of the eternal world ourselves! Of the certainty of this we are continually receiving warnings. At all periods of life, we are liable to be called away: let us be prepared for the call by forming our minds while here, to an association with the inhabitants of the heavenly world, by continually striving to cultivate heavenly affections in our internal man, by removing every outward obstruction, till our whole mind and life assumes the heavenly impress.

SERMON XIII.

Judges vi. 11—24. (Sermon ii.)

And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite. And his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry till thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes: And there arose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee: fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon

built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom : unto this day it is in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."

IN our last discourse, we took occasion, from the long dialogue which is recorded in this passage of Holy Writ, to offer some explanation of the general design of the numerous conversations which are detailed in the Scriptures, and to shew, that in their application to man in the progress of his regeneration, they denote, not dialogues between distinct individuals, but distinct trains of thought, passing in the mind of one individual, and injected into him by a spiritual agency, operating either from heaven or from hell, and from the various classes of the spiritual associates who are always near him. Having thus proposed such general observations as seemed necessary to prepare us for a right apprehension of the import of the narrative, we will now, as the particulars to be considered are numerous, and will take some time to unfold even with the utmost brevity, proceed without further preface to what lies before us.

We have seen that Gideon represents a principle of truth from good in the interiors of the mind, which is intent upon the acquisition and appropriation of good, even during those states of temptation in which the exteriors seem utterly carried away by the inundation of trifling thoughts of an evil nature, tending to the confirmation of merely external delights; and that the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Gideon represents an influx of divine truth from the Lord Himself through heaven, invigorating what is thus of Himself in the interiors of the mind, and preparing it to flow into the exteriors with such power, as to dissipate whatever is infused therewith from the kingdom of darkness, and restore the whole man to a state of heavenly peace and delight. The conversation then which is recorded between the angel and Gideon, no doubt expresses the perceptions which pass in the mind of the regenerating subject, preparatory to the conclusion of the temptation represented by the invasion of Israel by the Midianites.

The first thing stated is, that the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon: by which is described, the perception of light in the interiors of the mind, and of the re-opening of a communication with heaven, discovered by a sense of inward peace and elevation towards the Lord, after a long period of darkness and anxiety. For when a person, truly intent upon making sure his reception into that state of happiness, the consequence of an appropriation of a heavenly principle of life, which it is the desire of the Lord that all should attain, is not in a state of temptation, he feels an

inward peace and tranquillity of mind, the consequence, though this he does not know unless he has learned it from the doctrines of his church, of the nearness of angelic associates,—of the interiors of the mind being in fact so opened towards heaven, as to receive a communication, not indeed of the thoughts of the angels, but of somewhat of their heavenly affections which have inherent in them heavenly delight: he hence also has a ready access to the Lord in his devotions, with a sense of divine favour and acceptance, which gives a life and soul to all that he thinks, does, and is. But in states of temptation all this is intercepted, whence he cannot help coming into deep anxiety, with a sense of apprehension as to his spiritual security, a dread of being finally cut off from the heavenly kingdom, even extended to a despair of ever attaining it: for in this state his thoughts are kept continually on his own evils; and it seems to him as if he must fall into and be fixed in them for ever. This arises from the agency of the tempting spirits, who call forth such things from his memory, and from his hereditary propensities; and indeed not only excite what the man actually has possessed and appropriated, but infuse and charge upon him much more, which though altogether from them, appears to the tempted subject as if it was wholly from himself. In the present state of the world these states, probably, are not often experienced, yet we are assured in the New Church Writings, in which such subjects are laid open with a clearness never known before, that real temptations are attended with such feelings and perceptions as these, and that there is no other way by which the evils of man's nature, especially such as he has confirmed by actual life, can be removed from his mind: for the mind is a real spiritual substance and form, and whatever has been an object of the love gives a certain modification to that form, so that the removal of an evil is in fact the removal of something in the organization of the mind, and the correction of some deformity which had been occasioned by it: of course this cannot be effected by a mere thought or wish, but only by a painful course of discipline. This discipline therefore, must, at some period or other of our existence, be undergone, before we can enter the regions where no spiritual deformity can appear: if therefore it is not undergone in this life, it must after the death of the body, provided such a degree of the reception of divine things had in this life been attained, as to have given a preponderance in the interiors to good over evil: otherwise it never can be experienced at all, and thus the evils that have a place in the spiritual organization can never be removed at all,

but must sink the unhappy subject of them to the regions of final misery. That some who are destined for heaven do not enter it immediately on the death of the body, is evident from many passages of the Holy Word rightly understood: as from that where John says in the Revelation that he saw souls under the altar who said, "How long, Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth;" by which is spiritually described the desire of those who are in temptations from the infestation of evil spirits in the other life, wherein they are guarded by the Lord's divine love, to be delivered and taken up into heaven. I mention these things lest it should be supposed, since many experience little or nothing of real spiritual temptations in this life, and yet they are necessary to final purification, that therefore there is room to draw unfavourable conclusions respecting their eternal state. None, it is plainly seen, pass through the world without undergoing trials of an external or natural kind; and these, when made a right use of, no doubt tend, though indirectly, to improve the spiritual state: but spiritual temptations are trials in which the objects in suspense are not earthly but heavenly ones, being real conflicts in the mind between evil and good, false persuasion and truth, and being always attended with anxieties, not about temporal things merely, but about eternal salvation: though sometimes anxieties of both kinds are combined, which are the most severe temptations of all. And we may also be assured, that the more of the temptations necessary for our purification are undergone, and thus the more of the evils inherent in our nature or acquired by habit, are removed, in the present life, the higher and more blessed will be the state to which we shall be exalted in eternity.

In the case then before us, by the angel of the Lord's appearing to Gideon is meant the restoration of the communication with heaven and the Lord, towards the conclusion of a state of temptation; and by his saying, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," is meant, a perception in the mind, flowing in from this source, of the divine presence, and of the impartation of strength to the truths abiding with us from the Lord, sufficient to drive away all the clouds of temptation. But when a temptation has been continued so long, that it appears as if it never could have an end, the mind is not easily raised from its despondency, but a multitude of doubts is suggested as to the possibility of deliverance; which is denoted by the numerous doubting answers and requests made by Gideon. Thus he does not at first recognize

the being who spake with him to be an angel; by which is intimated that in the first breaking of light through the clouds, and the arising of the first encouraging thoughts, it is not immediately seen to be a real commencement of deliverance, but is distrusted as an illusion of deceitful hope: and the answer that he makes is that of despair;—of a man who on such a suggestion arising, regards what it points to as impossible; having been so entirely deprived of his spiritual comforts as to doubt whether those he had experienced in former times had in them any thing real, and had not all been mere tricks of the imagination: for he says, "O my lord, if the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us?"—words which imply a belief, from the severity of the temptation, that there was nothing of the Lord in the mind at all, that if there were really any thing good within, it would be impossible to seem to be so entirely deprived of it. He adds, "And where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt." These words express doubt whether former spiritual experiences had been real or not, from a supposition, that if we had really been delivered from the merely natural state represented by Egypt, we should not be liable to fall into the grievous condition which is now experienced. The miracles, or, as the word here used more properly means, the wonderful works, are the divine operations in our behalf by which we had been brought from a merely natural state, regardless altogether of spiritual things, and ignorant of them, to a state of reception and delight in them: and it is added, "which our fathers told us of," to denote that there were deliverances belonging to a former state, which indeed influence the present, but which, if real, seem now to have been of no use, as not serving to prevent our being now lost in a different manner: "for," he says, "now the Lord (whatever he may formerly have done for us) hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hand of the Midianites:—every thing of the Lord once received in our minds is now become extinct, the consequence of which is that we are wholly sunk into the power of merely external things with their fallacious delights. Words cannot express a more entire state of despair: and their being urged in answer to the angel's first salute, seems to intimate that the first effect of the near presence and powerful influx of the Lord in states of temptation, is, to make us feel all the horrors of our condition. It is true, indeed, that in all temptations the Lord is inmosty present, and more immediately so than at other times: otherwise we could not be kept in a determination of resisting, but

should indubitably yield, and there can be no doubt that the final sentiment of despair is the consequence of the Lord's drawing still nearer, so that the influx being stronger than our state is adequate to bear; occasions the sense of extreme humiliation and worthlessness which suggest the thought that there can be no hope for us. This however is one of the chief things which the temptation is permitted in order to produce—not the sense of despair, if this could be separated from the other, but the conviction that in and of ourselves we have nothing that is good, that in and of ourselves we are nothing but evil;—to feel as if the Lord had forsaken us, or cannot dwell with creatures so defiled; but that we are delivered into the hands of the Midianites,—are wholly abandoned to the possession of the evils of our nature. This state of self-abasement however is one which prepares us for a more direct reception of the Lord's mercies; which is implied by its being now said, that "the Lord looked upon him,"—*to look*, as having reference to the sight, denoting to communicate a clear perception. "And He said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" It does not readily appear what is here referred to by the demonstrative pronoun *this*—Go in *this* thy might: but if, as one would expect, it refers to what Gideon had just said, it beautifully illustrates the doctrine contained in the Lord's saying to the apostle, "My strength shall be made perfect in weakness:" for as soon as Gideon, or the spiritual man represented by him, is brought to the heartfelt acknowledgment of his own nothingness and vileness, the Lord says, "Go in this thy might." If, however, the saying, "this thy might," refers to the vigour with which he was threshing the wheat, the meaning will be, to apply this earnestness with which the mind is intent on appropriating good and rejecting its impurities in the internal man, to the rejection of every thing opposite thereto in the external: and as both these applications of the words are in agreement with genuine doctrine, I cannot say which is specifically intended.

But we find that this improved perception of the Lord's merciful designs has the effect of carrying Gideon's humility still further; for his answer is, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." As his former answer had more reference to a sense of man's being in himself nothing but evil, so this has more application to an acknowledgment of utter inability of and from himself to do any thing good. To be the least, when willingly

avowed, is to be in humility, and in what is near akin to it, and cannot exist without it, in innocence: for the being innocent, in the sense in which it is referred to in the Scriptures, does not mean the being free from any hereditary corruption, or the having never fallen into any transgression, for in these senses none are innocent, nor can they possibly be made so; but it refers to a state in which the mind is thoroughly sensible of its own weakness and unworthiness, and in which it depends entirely upon the Lord alone, as a child on its parents. It is no doubt on account of this signification of being the least of a family or tribe, that it is mentioned in other instances: thus Othniel, as noticed in a former discourse, is described as being the least of his family; And when Saul was told by Samuel that he should be king over Israel, he answered, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou so to me?" So David was the least and youngest of his father's house. These instances illustrate the Lord's words, "Except ye shall receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in nowise enter therein:" instructing us that innocence, consisting in humility and the renunciation of self, is the only soil in which Christian graces can be planted so as to be fruitful. And where self is thus put out of the way, room is made for the Lord to enter: wherefore "the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man:" which denotes a further clear perception that deliverance from the infesting influence is not, as was at first supposed, impossible, but a full conviction that by the Lord's aid so full a victory over it may be obtained, that the whole mass of infesting incitements and persuasions should be swept away together.

Still, however, all that has hitherto been affected by the perceptions thus communicated, has been the intellectual part of the mind: but though this is thus convinced of the practicability of the deliverance promised, so that hope begins to succeed to despair, yet the will is not yet so inflamed and animated to the work as to exalt this hope into confidence. For a long time previously there has been an inability to raise the affections to the Lord, and to feel any sense of worship being accepted: wherefore, until this can be experienced, although the understanding is convinced that by divine aid deliverance may be obtained, yet the mind does not feel fully assured that this conviction is really from the Lord, and is positively an earnest of the attainment of such deliverance. This

is intimated by Gideon's saying, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me,"—where the latter words properly mean, that it *is thou*, (that is, the Lord,) that talkest with the soul and impartest these perceptions: he adds, "Depart not hence, I pray thee, till I bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. And Gideon went, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out to Him under the oak, and presented it." All this denotes the preparing of the mind for the pure worship of the Lord, by raising to him the purest affections of innocence and charity of which it is capable, and the desire of experiencing conjunction of life with Him thereby. Then "the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth:" by which is implied, that the affections of innocence and the perceptions of truth connected therewith, must be entirely separated from self, and acknowledged to be from the Lord alone by the divine truth of His Word, which is meant by the rock:—And when Gideon had done so, "Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and there arose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes:" by which is meant, that when the offering of the best affections is thus made in sincerity, an influx of power flows into them from the Lord, signified by the putting forth of the staff, and they are vivified by the impartation of a pure flame of love from the Lord by the Word, denoted by the fire springing up out of the rock, and that thus our faint affections are really elevated to, accepted by, and have the effect of conjoining us with, the divine love of the Lord, signified by the offering being thus consumed. Then it is said that "the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight:" denoting the termination of the state, of the manifest nearness of the divine presence, and the return of the man into a state more of his own affection and thought, though now essentially changed and renewed: the consequence of which is, a sense of the nearness in which the divine presence had been felt, and of holy awe on account of it, attended with the extinction of the life of the previous state, and the reception of a new principle of life from the Lord. The sense of holy awe, and of the extinction of the life of the selfhood, which appears at the time as if a total extinction of all life would attend it, is implied by the exclamation of Gideon when he

thus perceived what a near manifestation he had had of the divine presence, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face:" and the revivification of the mind in consequence of the reception of a new principle of life from the Lord, is meant by the Lord's consoling answer, "Peace be unto thee: fear not: thou shalt not die." And that the state of improved love and inward peace thus acquired is stored up in the interiors, and is attended with blessed consequences to all eternity, is meant when it is added, "And Gideon built there an altar unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom, (that is, Jehovah's peace): unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites."

What blessed encouragement is here afforded us to persevere steadfastly through every stage of our spiritual progress, since even the most severe, which after all endure but for a moment, procure for us blessings that never have an end. What satisfaction it must afford us to have a well-grounded confidence that an altar to the Lord is really erected in the interiors of the mind—a principle that worships Him continually from pure love, and the name of which is Jehovah's peace,—that is, its quality is such that a state of inmost peace, the result of the union of goodness and truth, and of conjunction of life from the Lord is inherent in it; and that this shall abide to this day—that whatever state may ever after be present, still this shall be within. May we be faithful enough to become partakers of such mercies; to which end may we ever be intent on the purification of our heart and life, and submit in all things to the leadings of the Lord and the direction of His Word.

SERMON XIV.

Judges vi. 36—40.

“And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, (and) if the dew be on the fleece only, and (it be) dry on all the earth (beside), then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece: let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew upon all the ground.”

AMONG the numerous remarkable things which distinguish this history of Gideon, this is not the least, that he was so slow to believe the reality of the divine commission which was confided to him, as to require of the Lord repeated signs to remove his distrust; and that the Lord so far condescended to his infirmity, as to grant all the signs that he requested; and even more; for the last sign, which was that of the dream related by the Midianitish soldier, and overheard by him, seems to have been granted for his encouragement without his asking for it. No doubt this is designed to instruct us, that in so severe a state of temptation as is represented by the oppression of Israel by the Midianites, after a state of despair of ever experiencing a deliverance, has been induced, and for some time continued (which we have seen in a former discourse is plainly indicated by Gideon's language in his interview with the angel that first appeared to him,) it is only by degrees that the mind becomes re-assured. This, we may conclude, is permitted, in order to render the blessing more real and permanent, and to guard against the danger of man's becoming elated by too sudden a deliverance, and so forgetting the divine hand to whom wholly his deliverance is owing. We also see in these circumstances, even when only viewed in a superficial manner, a striking exemplification of the divine goodness of the Lord in bear-

ing with our imperfections, our distrust, our tardiness to prosecute, or rather to acquiesce in, his benevolent designs towards us,—of that long suffering and tender mercy which is content to lead gently the feeble, and does not readily turn away from their weakness or their frowardness. It is said of the Lord when in the world, that Himself bare our iniquities and carried our sorrows; and He does the same, though not exactly in the same sense, through all his dealings with us. To look at the case before us in a merely natural point of view, it might be thought that the evidence which Gideon had already had of the divine presence, and of the stability of the divine promises, had been so ample, that to desire more must have offended Him who had granted him already so much, and have been the most likely way to render his hopes ineffectual. He had already been favoured with a visit from an angel of the Lord, for which purpose the eyes of his spirit must have been opened, though this is not expressed more plainly than by saying, that the angel of the Lord appeared unto him; and this was in fact an appearance of the Lord himself, in the only way in which at that time it could be afforded, which was, by filling an angel so fully with the divine presence, that his own identity was for the time swallowed up by it, and he knew no other than that he was the Lord Himself; whence it is said in Gideon's interview with the angel, that the Lord looked on him, and twice, the Lord said unto him. Then also he desired a manifest proof that it was the Lord or his angel who conversed with him, which was granted by the wonderful manner in which his offering was consumed. Then he received divine instructions in the night, and was not only delivered from the danger he had incurred by executing them, but had his commission so fully acknowledged by his countrymen that he presently found himself at the head of a great army. But as the day of conflict approached, his confidence began to waver, and he desired the signs mentioned in our text: and they were granted. No doubt the reason was, because, though his trust in the Lord was not yet equal to the work before him, there was a principle of trust within and his fears were only superficial,—because his state was similar to that of the man in the gospel, who applied to the Lord for the cure of his deaf and dumb child, and who, on the Lord's saying to him, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth,” cried out with tears, “Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.” Thus it is that the Lord bears with our infirmities, and removes them as we permit him, when he sees that there is in the heart a real desire for the object in view,—a sincere

wish to be delivered from the power of our spiritual enemies, of all our corrupt inclinations and perverse propensities. Where he sees this within, He by the gentlest means and most tender compliances leads us to that state of confidence in Him which is essential to our deliverance from any spiritual thralldom. But where our want of confidence arises from an inwardly cherished love for that, whatever it is, from which we outwardly profess a wish, or offer a prayer, to be delivered; where, even in the cases where we ourselves think we are sincere, but when our seeming desire for the spiritual deliverance arises only from a perception in the intellect of the pernicious nature of all evil attachments, and of the superiority of such a state of love and life as divine truth dictates; but yet, notwithstanding this intellectual conviction, the will still inwardly clings to the deprecated evil; in this case the unbelief is radical, and we cannot hope for those helps to its removal, which, in our hearts, we do not really desire.

To proceed, however, more directly to the subject. And first, to connect the present subject of our meditations with the former, it will be necessary to notice the events that took place between the circumstances recorded in our last text, and in our present.

In the 25th and following verses it is recorded, that Gideon was directed by the Lord in the night, to throw down the altar of Baal that his father had, and to cut down the grove that was by it, and to offer his father's second bullock of seven years old as a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove. These circumstances denote that offering of the affections of the external man to the Lord signified by the bullock, which corresponds with the state of goodness previously received in the internal man, and which cannot take place till the love of evil, denoted by the altar of Baal, is dislodged from its inmost seat, so as no longer to form the chief object of attachment even to the external man. The manner in which Gideon executed the injunction is thus related: "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and (so) it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night:" by which is represented, in general, the state of obscurity in which the removal of evil from its inmost seat in the interior affections takes place, so that man scarcely knows when it is effected, owing to there still being contaminated principles in the lower regions of the mind which prevent him from knowing what is passing in the higher: so true is it, as the Lord declares, that the process of regeneration, as to its interior operations, is deeply hidden

from man, when he says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth:—so is every one that is born of the spirit." The narration proceeds, "And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing?" These words describe a state of elevation, and thence of illumination from whence the change in the state of the interiors becomes manifest to those principles of the mind, which, although originally from the Lord (for these people were Israelites), are yet so contaminated by self as to favour the evil which has been removed, and a consternation among them in consequence. "And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son that he may die, because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it." These words describe a perception in this part of the mind, that there is within a principle of genuine truth from good from the Lord, which is Gideon the son of Joash, which no longer suffers evil and its falsity to have the pre-eminence; but with a disposition as yet not to yield to this heavenly principle, but by not suffering it to descend into open manifestation, to destroy it: for it is a momentous truth that unless heavenly principles within are suffered to come into outward acts, they soon vanish from the mind; according to that important doctrine of the New Church, that charity and faith are mere perishable things, unless they are rendered fixed and permanent by being brought into suitable deeds and actions. "Joash however," said unto all that stood against him, "Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death while (it is yet) morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because (one) hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him (that is, Gideon,) Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar." These words imply a perception that evil, or the principle of evil, in itself is nothing, and has no power: it only becomes something and possesses power, as man gives it an existence in the forms of his own mind, the consequence of which is, his own destruction.

"Then," it is said, "all the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel;" which words express the state of devastation and tempt-

ation in which the external of the mind was still held, by the infusion of evil suggestions in great quantities, keeping the thoughts fixed on external and frivolous things, and rendering it incapable of delight or enjoyment in things of a heavenly nature. "But the spirit of the Lord," it proceeds, "came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer was gathered after him;" which words describe the entrance of a spirit of divine life into the principle of genuine truth from good in the internal man represented by Gideon, and an influx thence, signified by his blowing a trumpet, into such things as were nearest of kin to it, denoted by Abiezer, which was the name of the family to which Gideon belonged. Then "he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him:" this denotes that every thing belonging to the will of good, which also was of kindred to the principle represented by Gideon, he being of the tribe of Manasseh, also received the divine virtue, and stood prepared to resist the enslaving power. "And he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphthali; and they came up to meet them:" Asher denotes whatever has relation to the delight of spiritual affection, which is charity, Zebulun whatever is in the spiritual marriage, or the desire for the conjunction of goodness and truth, and Naphthali whatever is of a willingness to suffer the trials and temptations necessary for the attainment of regeneration.

Now it was when Gideon was surrounded by this powerful army, that he began to feel that anxiety about the event which is expressed by the signs he asked in the words of our text. "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said, behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor: and if the dew be upon the fleece only, and (it be) dry upon all the earth, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said."

This wish of Gideon seems to express a desire, to experience the divine influx in so special a manner, as to be assured that it is not merely the common operation of the Lord which is given at all times, but that it is a communication expressly designed to support the mind on this particular necessity and occasion: but as this sign desired and obtained by Gideon, though so remarkable, is nowhere treated of in the writings of the New Church, I shall only offer such general remarks upon it as may be suggested by the known signification of the several things that are mentioned.

Dew is often spoken of in Scripture, and is the appropriate emblem of an influx of divine truth from a celestial origin, of such a

nature as to bring with it a sense of inmost peace and tranquillity. It denotes an influx, in fact, of such a description, as to elevate the mind to the Lord, and enable it to repose in Him with full confidence. It is an influence of the softest and most gentle kind, removing all anxiety, lulling to rest all contending cares, and so watering the soul as it were in its inmost recesses, preparing it to become fruitful in all the graces of the regenerate life. Its sweet and tender nature may be seen by its application in that beautiful Psalm, where the inspired penman describes the blessings of mutual love by a few most striking corresponding images: "Behold," says he, "how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, (and as the dew) that descended on the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, (even) life for evermore." Here the happiness of mutual love is compared to the holy ointment with which Aaron was inaugurated into his office, because that was significative of the influx of divine love, flowing through the mind from its inmost to its outmost—from the head to the beard and the skirts of the garments; and it is compared to the dew of Hermon and of Zion, because this denotes an influx of divine truth answering to such love, and which is sweet, pacific, and diffusing through the mind a sense of indescribable serenity and blessedness.

Now the threshing floor, into which the fleece was to be put that was to receive the dew, denotes a state in which goods and truths are separated from falsities and evils, as the grain is from the chaff, thus it denotes also a state of trial and temptation, which was that of Gideon, or of the man of the church that he represents, on the present occasion: and to put a fleece, or the wool of a sheep, herein, is to preserve in this state a principle of good,—to have respect to good therein; for as lambs and sheep are representative of the principle of love and charity, so is their wool, being their outward covering, representative of the same in its outward manifestation—to which also it corresponds by its warmth and softness. This is the reason why, when the Lord appeared to John, in the Revelation, it is said that "his head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow," because his hair represented His divine truth or divine proceeding in its most extreme or ultimate manifestation, and this is denoted as to good by wool and as to truth by snow:—for what is called divine truth, as proceeding from the Lord's divine love, is not truth alone, but truth united to good.

To lay the fleece then to receive the heavenly dew, no doubt must mean, to receive the influx of divine truth in a ground of good: and when it is added that "it was so, for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water;" the meaning is, that in consequence, truths in abundance, in their more ultimate form, in which they are not merely perceived as imparting an inward peace and blessedness, but become plain objects of the thought, are imparted and received.

But what can be implied by the repetition of the sign, with a change in the manner of it? For it is added, "and Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece: let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew." Doubtless this change of the miracle was granted, to represent the two states which take place in the course of the regenerate life in general, and which must also occur in all its particular states, or in respect to every new acquisition that the regenerating subject makes: the first is, when truth with him has the preponderance, and he does good because truth requires him to do so, but not as yet from a decided affection for good itself: the second is, when the love of good itself is his ruling principle of action; in which case he no longer makes account of truths, except as means to advance his states, and promote the objects to which his love of good inclines him. The first of these states is represented by the dew being received in the fleece; which denotes that his will of good was as yet not properly such, but only an affection for truths, and receptive of them; but when the fleece remained dry, and the dew was on the ground around it, it denotes that change of state in which the ruling and inmost love is truly a will of good, and truths are arranged around and below it as its instruments for proceeding to its ends. Hence, when Gideon begins his request with saying to the Lord, Let not thine anger be hot against me, it does not, in the internal sense, mean that there was any thing in his request that could be displeasing to God, but a prayer for a further removal in himself of whatever is opposed to the divine will, in order that he may receive in greater fulness the Lord's love, and may come into that state in which good, and not truth, as before, has the pre-eminence. Therefore the request was granted: "And God did so that night; for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew upon all the ground."

In the signs then thus granted to Gideon, we see how beautiful a

lesson of spiritual wisdom is conveyed. It would be presumption in us at this day, and could do our spiritual state no good, to wish for external signs of the Lord's presence and protection: but we ought to desire to become the subjects of all that is included in the signs granted to Gideon, and to find the subject of their spiritual import fulfilled in our own experience. His desire, we have seen, implies, a wish in the spiritual man to obtain a perception, even in the temptation which is represented by the whole of this history, of the Lord's presence in the interiors of the mind, communicating a manifest sense of the heavenly gifts of which he is the Author. How happy must it be, whatever storms may be raging without, to experience the outpouring of a divine influence,—the dew of divine blessing, filling all within with the sense of tranquillity and happiness! To this end, however, in the midst of the threshing floor, the fleece must be spread: there must be a principle of good, of love, of desire, in the inmost of the otherwise agitated mind, aspiring to be replenished with the quickening influences of the Divine Truth and Goodness! And how must the blessedness of the state be exalted, when the tranquil dew of heavenly peace, after having first watered the holy affection thus prepared for receiving it, diffuses its influence even through the lower principles of the mind, and fills the whole man with a sense of the beatifying presence of Infinite Goodness; while the inmost affection of all is now elevated to the Divine Goodness itself, and is filled with a sense of pure good and love.

SERMON XV.

Judges vii. 2—7.

“ And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to; proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty-and-two thousand; and there remained ten thousand. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise, every one that boweth down on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down on their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.”

IN some discourses which I delivered a few years ago on the emancipation of the children of Israel when oppressed by the Midianites through the instrumentality of Gideon, who was divinely raised up for the purpose, I did not treat, except incidentally, and very slightly, when discoursing upon other parts of the narrative, of the very remarkable portion of it contained in the verses which I have now read. However, as the history contained in this chapter, of the rout of the Midianites by Gideon's band of only three hundred men, is one of the most singular of the narratives to be found in the historical books of the Holy Word; and as the account detailed in the verses I have now read, of the reason why Gideon's originally respectable army of thirty-two thousand,—a force which, to all human apprehension, was quite small enough to attack a host of one hun-

dred and thirty-five thousand men, which was the number of the Midianites,—was reduced to a little band of three hundred, and that by so extraordinary a test as the one prescribed for the purpose,—as this is the most singular portion of this, throughout, most wonderful narrative: I have thought it might be both acceptable and useful again to make it the subject of our meditation. The one or two notices which are taken of the passage in the writings of the New Church are extremely slight; yet perhaps they are sufficient to enable us to deduce a satisfactory and profitable explanation of the whole.

But before attempting any explanation of particulars, I cannot refrain from making an observation, which, I think, must strike every one on reading the passage. What I mean is, the utter impossibility, upon any rational principles, except such as admit the existence of a spiritual sense of the inspired record, of accounting for the extraordinary method by which the three hundred men, who, it was foreseen, would achieve the victory, were selected out of the ten thousand, of whom the force, which had already undergone a sifting which had reduced it to less than a third of its original amount, now consisted, and of which remaining ten thousand, no fewer than nine thousand seven hundred would, it appears, have been a useless incumbrance. If, for some spiritual reason which human ingenuity could never have suspected, Divine Wisdom deemed it better to attack one hundred and thirty-five thousand with three hundred—being one four hundred and fiftieth fraction of that number, or at an odds of 450 to one,—rather than with ten thousand, which would have been two twenty-sevenths of the enemy, or an odds of thirteen and a half to one,—still no one could deem, that the proper method of ascertaining who should be disbanded and who retained, could be, by trying in what manner they would drink water from a stream or lake,—whether by kneeling down to it, and sucking it up with their mouths, or taking it up in the hollow of their hands and lapping it like a dog with their tongue. No one, I say, it is obvious, could possibly see any reason for thus distinguishing between one portion of the men who constituted the Israelitish army and the remainder, except those who know that there does exist by creation, a regular correspondence, or mutual relation, between all natural things and actions and certain spiritual ones,—or that all natural things and actions have their properly corresponding spiritual antitypes, so that the former are representatives in nature of the latter; and that all the circumstances recorded in the Holy Word took place, and the book itself

is written, according to such correspondence. I do imagine that every one who thinks deeply must see and acknowledge, that such an otherwise unaccountable circumstance, as the selecting of the three hundred men out of the whole ten thousand by so unprecedented a test, is sufficient to evince, that some spiritual reason must have been at the bottom of the transaction—that some specific thing must have been represented by both modes of action, and thus that the narrative must contain a spiritual sense quite distinct from the sense of the letter. Let us then see if we may be enabled to discover what the spiritual sense of the whole narrative, contained in the six verses which I have read, truly is.

We have lately seen that the Midianites, when mentioned in a good sense, signify, persons of a simple and well-disposed character, who receive and apprehend the truths of the church in a simple and superficial manner, but without perversion. But when they are spoken of in a bad sense,—as when, in this portion of the sacred history, they are described as enslaving and tyrannizing over the Israelites, as the representatives of the Lord's spiritual church, they signify such persons and principles as are of an opposite nature,—an utter indifference to divine truths, and an attachment to falsities of the most superficial kind, the result of an immersion in pursuits and pleasures of a merely frivolous and useless description. Their oppression of the Israelites, consequently, represents temptations and desolations induced on the church, and on the member of the church, by the injection of such false and evil principles by infernal spirits of such a quality. What is signified by Gideon, and by the appearance to him of the angel of the Lord, and by the signs which were granted for his encouragement in the work to which he was called, of delivering his country, we have formerly treated of at large: at present we must confine ourselves to the portion of the divine narrative directly before us.

After Gideon, as related in the preceding chapter, had proclaimed his divine mission by casting down the altar of Baal, their profane worship of which false deity had brought on the Israelites the miseries under which they groaned, he blew a trumpet, which was first responded to by the family of Abiezer to which he belonged, then by all the tribe of Manasseh, to which the family of Abiezer belonged, and then by the neighbouring tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphthali; whose warriors gathered around him to the number of more than thirty thousand men. With this army, considerable in itself, but trifling in comparison of the immense host of the Midianites, he pitched by the well of Harod, having the

enemy opposite to him on the other side of the valley. The proportion of his forces to those of the enemy was as one to four and a quarter, so that every four Israelites would, on joining battle, have to engage, and, if they gained the victory, to defeat, seventeen Midianites. It is obvious, that unless assured of special divine aid, most men would deem it madness to fight against such odds. Yet “the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.” As just remarked, it seems improbable that any men would venture to attack so superior a force unless in the full confidence of divine assistance: yet men of an arrogant and boastful disposition, would be apt enough, on obtaining a victory under such circumstances, to forget the Divine Power to which they owed it, and claim all the merit of it as due to their own valour and military skill. In all spiritual conflicts, which these natural combats represent, such conduct would have most fatal consequences. A man who, though seeking and acknowledging divine aid at the time, should obtain the victory over any evil, or prevail in any temptation, but should afterwards ascribe it to his own strength or ability, and thus arrogate the merit of it to himself, would, by such conduct, fall into a worse evil than that which he had surmounted: the temptation would return upon him, he would no longer have strength to resist it, and the consequence of his fall would be, confirmation in evil after having attained confirmation in good, thus, a state of profanation. The care of the Lord's divine providence to guard man, in spiritual combats, from falling into such a delusion, is represented by the Lord's words to Gideon as just recited, and by the command which follows them. For the Lord proceeds to say, “Now therefore go to; proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return, and depart early from Mount Gilead.” “And,” the narrative continues, “there returned of the people twenty-and-two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.” They that are fearful and afraid, signify they that are without trust and real faith in the Lord; consequently, in the sense abstracted from person, such truths as man is acquainted with as yet only exist as knowledges in the memory, but are not united with their proper affection, and thus not operative in the life. In such truths, the Lord is not present, and therefore they are of no avail in temptation or spiritual conflict. This being the spiritual signification of those who are fearful and afraid, the number of them is said to be twenty-two thousand.

Twenty-two is twice eleven, and of the same signification; and eleven derives its meaning from its relation to the number twelve, just as ninety-nine does from its relation to the number a hundred. A hundred signifies what is full and complete, and consequently ninety-nine signifies what is not full and complete, but is deficient in what is chief and primary; as in the parable of the hundred sheep, of which one was gone astray. Ninety-nine, also, is a multiple of eleven, and must have the same general signification. Thus twelve—a number so often mentioned,—signifies all the principles of truth and goodness constituent of the church in man, considered in one aggregate complex. Eleven signifies the same in the general, but in an imperfect state,—thus, the principles of truth and goodness existing more in knowledge or speculation than in love and life. Twenty-two, as just mentioned, being twice eleven, has the same general signification; and its being twenty-two *thousand* makes no difference in the radical idea. Thus the number twenty-two thousand denotes, in the spiritual sense, the quality of those who are said to be fearful and afraid, as being such persons, or in the abstract sense such principles, as partake more of knowledge than of life, and, consequently, have not the Lord in them, and therefore are powerless and useless in temptation-conflicts. In these, nothing can prevail in which the Lord is not; and the Lord is not in any knowledges of truth, while they are not so loved as to be operative in the life. And yet, were the Lord, by other means, to give deliverance, persons whose character is chiefly formed by the possession of such inoperative truths, would be foremost in claiming the merit of the victory to themselves, and in concluding that they had obtained it by their own proper power.

However, in the case before us, the twenty-two thousand who were fearful and afraid, retired, on permission to do so being proclaimed, before the conflict. There still remained ten thousand,—ten thousand men who stood firm and fearless, although, by the defection of the twenty-two thousand, the odds against them were increased above threefold—from four and a quarter to one, to thirteen and a half to one; so that, in the expected battle, every two Israelites would have had to defeat twenty-seven of the enemy. Yet, it appears, they were willing to meet the foe, neither fearful nor afraid, but relying on their Divine Protector to give them a victory to which unassisted human prowess could not possibly aspire. In the spiritual sense, ten thousand is a number of good signification, denoting all, and what is perfect, in relation to truths. Under these circumstances, there could hardly be any reason to

expect, that if the whole of these were allowed to act against the Midianites, and were victorious, they would claim the merit of the conquest as due to their own skill and valour, and take the honour of it from the Lord. Literally and naturally, they were too few to set up such a pretence; for how could any men, if even the bravest that ever lived, combatting at the immense odds of two to twenty-seven, ascribe the victory, when gained, to anything but the relied on and realized assistance of the Divine Hand? And, spiritually, the correspondence of the number ten thousand is too good to be applicable to any truths not in union with goodness,—thus, to any but such as have in them the presence of the Lord, and power from him. Yet, for a reason which is not stated, though the number of the army was thus reduced by more than two-thirds, “the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many.” It seems that though the quality of the truths represented by the number ten thousand was in itself good and genuine, it was not altogether such as was suited to the present emergency: wherefore the Lord commanded, saying, “Bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee: and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.” “So,” the narrative continues, “he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise, every one that boweth down on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down on their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By these three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let all the other people go every man unto his own place.”

We have already remarked on the demonstration which this singular mode of testing the people, as to who were the proper men, and who were not, to be led against the Midianites, affords of the truth, that a spiritual sense is contained in the Word of God; since it is impossible to conceive any reason, other than the spiritual signification of the act, why the three hundred men who lapped the water with their tongue should be more fit instruments, though so few in number, for routing the Midianites, than the nine thousand seven hundred who stooped down upon their knees. This is to be found in the signification of the tongue, of a dog, of

water, of the number three hundred, and of the Midianites, whose resistless opponents these three hundred men were found in the sequel to be.

The tongue, in the Word of God, and in consequence of the correspondence that exists between natural things and spiritual, by virtue of its being the chief organ of speech and also of taste, signifies both the confession and perception of divine truths, and the affection of good. It signifies, because it corresponds to, the perception of divine truths, and confession of the Lord from them, by virtue of its being the chief instrument of speech, or in modulating the sounds which are made by the breath in passing through the larynx into articulate words; and it signifies, because it corresponds to, the affection of good, on account of its being the principal organ of taste; for the taste corresponds to, and thence signifies, such affection.

A dog represents, by correspondence, appetite and eager desire—in a bad sense, concupiscence. Every one may see, from all the actions and manners of the animal, that eagerness of appetite and desire, is the very life of a dog; it is modified in a great many ways, in the innumerable varieties of the species, yet it obviously constitutes the governing principle with them all. Waters, we have often shewn, signify truths, and to lap them with the tongue like a dog, signifies to appetite truths and seek them with eager desire. Thus, men who lap water out of their hand with their tongue like a dog, signify those who appetite truths, or who, from some natural affection, are eager to know truths. These then were the proper persons to be led against the Midianites, because the Midianites denote such persons as, far from having an eager desire to know truths from any natural affection, and being destitute of all spiritual affection, give themselves no concern at all about truths, care nothing for them,—their natural affections, and thence all their thoughts, being wholly engaged with frivolous pursuits and vain amusements. And the number three hundred, though not, when applied to a band of soldiers, a number of great amount, yet signifies all the truths, in complete fulness, of the quality in question: for it arises from three multiplied by a hundred; and the number three signifies what is full and complete, and has especial reference to truths; and the number a hundred signifies fulness and completeness in the greatest degree. Three hundred men, therefore, who lap water like a dog, signify truths made active in the mind, and in the lowest principles of the life, from an eager natural affection; and such, therefore, as are proper and sufficient

to dissipate that indifference to truths represented by the Midianites, and the engrossing attention to merely external, trifling, and useless things and pleasures in which such indifference has its origin.

These, brethren, certainly are arcana of so deep a nature, as not to be readily apprehended and are as difficult to be explained in a manner adequate to the apprehension of others. And perhaps some may think—all will think who are of the Midianitish character—who give themselves no concern about divine truths because their minds are always occupied with trifling things,—What is the use of knowing them? It is no small use, if the advantage we derive from it is only that, of possessing a conviction that there is a spiritual sense in the Word of God, and thus being enabled to think of it, even as to its, in the letter, most seemingly unaccountable parts, with the reverence due to its most holy and essentially divine nature. But we cannot have any just idea of any portion of the spiritual sense of the Word of God, without feeling sensible that however abstract and abstruse, to our external mode of viewing things, it may appear, all that it contains, while opening to the understanding the sublimest contemplations, has an equal tendency to purify the affections and produce goodness of life. When, in the case before us, we obtain some idea of the temptation represented by the invasion of Israel by the Midianites, and of the eternal ruin that must ensue if the principles represented by them are allowed finally to prevail; and when we see that nothing can liberate the mind from the fatal unconcern about divine truths and spiritual things in general, which is hereby signified, but such an ardent appetite for truths kindled and fostered in the mind in fulness and sufficiency, as is represented by the three hundred Israelites who lapped water with their tongue like a dog, how earnest should we be to have such a desire kindled in ourselves, separated from all that would impede its operation, and made efficient to the casting out of all supreme regard to low and worldly things, all disorderly occupation of the mind, and consuming of our time in idle pursuits and pleasures. Then, giving our supreme regard to the things of eternity, we may prevail over every evil and false tendency of our nature,—over all the snares of the world and the arts of our spiritual enemies; and, ascribing all to the power and mercy of the Lord, we shall obtain a safe and everlasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan above.

SERMON XVI.

Judges vii. 9—14.

“And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host: for I have delivered it into thy hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host, and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterwards shall thy hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream: and lo, a cake of barley-bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: (for) into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host.”

It is impossible to read the holy Word with any degree of apprehension of its interior contents, as brought to light for the edification of the New Church, called the New Jerusalem, and at the same time to recollect what are the views commonly entertained respecting the most important doctrines of religion, without being struck with the widely different nature of the view which thence arises on the subject of Christian regeneration. The doctrine of the present day on this subject, as understood by those who make most profession of experimental religion, is, that regeneration is the work of a moment; that at some period or other in the life of all who are saved,—sometimes even in childhood, and sometimes not till the bed of death,—a work of divine grace is miraculously wrought, by which the sinner is suddenly gifted with faith in the efficacy and merits of the Saviour's death, and is enabled to believe with full persuasion that He died for him; when it is supposed that all his sins are at once blotted out, that he is instantly regarded as holy in the sight of God, and that, should he die instantly, even though this might be at the gallows, his soul would

be at once received to eternal glory. This then is what is commonly understood to be regeneration. The church of England indeed,—that is, that part of its ministers and members who do not assume to themselves exclusively the name of evangelical,—seeing the inconsistency of this notion of regeneration, and yet not being able to form a better, get over the matter by affirming, that regeneration is nothing distinct from baptism, or if it is, that at any rate it is inseparable from baptism, and is conferred by it. Thus though the two views of the subject are as different from each other as possible, they still agree in this; that they both proceed upon the supposition that regeneration is an instantaneous work. It is indeed true, that to account for the vicissitudes of state which even they who have been regenerated according to their plan, afterwards experience, and for the want of the fruits of holiness too often apparent in them, some have invented another process, which they call sanctification, and hold to be quite distinct from regeneration; contending, that although man is regenerated at once, and is from that moment accounted holy in the sight of God, yet he will never become so really holy in this life, but that the old man will at times be very conspicuous: however they maintain that he begins to grow holy from that moment, and the process by which he becomes so, they term sanctification.

Now it may appear, as if these two processes together amounted to much the same as what we call in one word regeneration: and if they really did so, it would not be worth while to dispute for a word, and we might as well conform to the common phraseology, and allow sanctification to be a separate thing from regeneration. But two insurmountable impediments stand in the way. The first is, that the sanctification commonly talked of, really amounts to nothing, having only been introduced to render less perceptible the contrariety between their main doctrine of instantaneous justification and the Holy Word: for when it is contended that by the act of regeneration as understood by them, man is at once made holy in the sight of God, so completely, that though he may be suffering for the most atrocious crimes at the gibbet, he passes at once to eternal glory; it is evident that they can themselves regard their sanctification as of little value, if, where most wanted, it can so easily be dispensed with. A second obstacle to the adopting of this representation is, that nothing at all similar to the regeneration thus supposed is to be found in the real regeneration described in the doctrines of the New Church. For the false and instantaneous regeneration of which we have been speaking, is nothing

but a suddenly conceived persuasion that the Saviour died for us individually,—that the punishment of our sins, that is, the punishment due to us for the identical sins we have committed, was endured by him, and that his righteousness is imputed to us in exchange. Thus it is, that while the professing church retains the names of the great subjects which enter into the constitution of religion, she lays out of sight the things which those names imply, and, like the church of Sardis, while she retains a name to live, she is dead. Nothing whatever respecting such regeneration and such sanctification is to be found in the New Testament, either in the gospels or in the writings of the apostles; and certainly no sanction to such views can be drawn from the Old Testament. We read indeed of those who before were in ignorance, being converted to the knowledge and acknowledgment of the Lord; but never is this called regeneration or being born again. On the contrary, the progressive nature of real regeneration is plainly indicated by the Lord when He says, Ye that have *followed* Me in the regeneration; implying, what in general is wholly lost sight of, that He himself underwent a process answering to regeneration, and which consisted in effecting the glorification of his Humanity, and that the regeneration of man consists in his undergoing a process similar in kind though infinitely inferior in degree, by which he from natural becomes spiritual; and that both processes are effected by gradual and successive steps.

What we have now advanced must have been amply apparent from the discourses we have been for some time engaged in delivering from this book of Judges, if the views we have offered of the spiritual import of the various transactions recorded, be allowed to be founded in the truth. We see from hence most clearly, that regeneration consists of a great number of distinct operations, not one of which even can be performed in a moment: for we see, that if the conflicts of the Israelites with the nations that oppressed them be each of them considered, as is highly reasonable, as representing distinct temptations, every one of which must mark the opening and completion of a distinct stage in the regenerate life; then each of these again is subdivided into minuter divisions, and passes through distinct steps to its termination, and thus the whole process of regeneration is a series of orderly progression. So wonderful is the order observed in all the divine operations! As in natural things, in the production of vegetables or animals, nothing arrives at maturity in a moment; so must it be in that far more important and wonderful operation, the formation of a spiritual

man, as it may be called, within the natural; or the new formation of man as to his spiritual part, so that he may be qualified to live in the regions of eternal glory. How desirous ought we to be to co-operate with the Lord in this great work;—that is, to suffer him to accomplish it in us and for us; for this is all that our co-operation amounts to. Our co-operation consists in our desisting from evils in practice, and from cherishing them in our thoughts, to which end it is necessary that we should frequently explore the state of our affections, to discover on what they are set, and what actions we should do if restraints arising from external considerations were removed. But the inward seat of our evils lies deeper than we could explore, were it not that they develop themselves by their effects in that region of the mind that comes within our inspection: the work then of purifying this inward seat of them is within the reach of divine power alone: and this the Lord does do and will do, provided we do not maintain them in their empire by refusing to check them in their outward manifestations.

These inward operations, then, of which only some part is perceived by man in an obscure and general manner, are the subjects which are described in the portion of the Holy Word which we have for some time been contemplating. This history of Gideon is particularly remarkable for the extent of detail with which it is related, and for the numerous very singular things of which the historical circumstances consist; to notice all of which would require, not four or five, but many discourses. Thus in the verses preceding our text, is described how Gideon's army was reduced from more than thirty thousand to three hundred men, to guard against the danger of their assuming the merit of their expected victory over the Midianites to themselves: the three hundred men who were allowed to remain being selected because, on going to the water, they did not go down on their knees to drink, but lapped the water out of their hands with their tongues like a dog; by which was represented the eagerness of affection for truth, which is the proper opposite to that indifference to every thing of a spiritual nature, which characterizes the trifling principle represented by the Midianites. In some former discourses we have considered the two first of the signs by which Gideon was assured of the Lord's intention of delivering Israel by his instrumentality, and which consisted in the extraordinary mode in which his offering was consumed, and in the miracle of the wet and dry fleece. In our text another sign still is afforded him; apparently to re-assure his courage after he had seen his army reduced to less

than a hundredth part of the number which it consisted of at first, and when he was to attack with a band of three hundred men, a hostile army amounting one hundred and thirty-five thousand.

The general purport of the former signs which Gideon had obtained from the Lord, applied, according to their spiritual sense, to the states of mind in the regenerating subject during the state of temptation which is in general represented, was, as we have seen, to indicate the presence from the Lord of such states as to goodness and truth in the internal man, and thence in the external, as were adequate to enter into conflict with, and overcome, the evil lusts and false persuasions injected by the tempting powers into the external of the mind, represented by the Midianites and their associates. And the intention of the sign recorded in our text is, to discover what is the state of the evil influence, and to shew that having no longer the support it had in the man's own affections, it only requires to have directed upon it the sphere of divine power, resulting from the appropriation of celestial and spiritual things within, to be entirely eradicated, so as not to be able to lift up its head any more. The fact is, that the power of the evils and falsities which assault us in temptations is undermined, and in fact wholly destroyed, when that operation takes place which is represented by the throwing down of the altar of Baal, and the cutting down of the grove that was by it, and which we noticed in a former discourse: that is, when the evil that annoys us is removed from the supremacy which it exercised in the external man, so as no longer to be the chief object of regard,—the god of our idolatry. Intermediate steps are still requisite, as all the intervening particulars of this history evince, before the power thus obtained in the interiors can be brought into contact with the evils themselves in the exteriors: but the power of these is from that moment gone, and their final removal is rendered easy and certain.

In the case before us, every thing was prepared in the interiors, by such a purification of the principles from which man was to combat, that nothing mixed itself with them but what was of the Lord alone, for the certain removal of the whole of the tempting influence: wherefore we read, "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said to Gideon, Arise, get thee down unto the host, for I have delivered it into thy hand:" which words imply a perception communicated from the Lord, but in obscurity, denoted by its being at night, because, in the natural or external man, whose perceptions even when from the Lord, are called dreams and revelations by night, as being so much

less clear than the perceptions of the internal man, which are represented by discourse with angels of the Lord by day, or open vision. It is remarkable that Gideon is first commanded to *arise*, and then to *go down* to the enemy's army; to indicate that in all conflicts with evils and falsities man is first to elevate his mind to the Lord, signified by *arise*, and then from this elevation to go down, with the state so acquired, into the region of the mind possessed by the opposing influence, as by this means only he can come into contact with that influence without entering into it or being affected by it. This may be illustrated by a case that may easily be conceived. Suppose a number of dissolute persons to be assembled in riotous enjoyment, indulging in the excesses to which the lowest part of our nature is prone. Let another person be introduced among them who is in the love of the same evils, but who was not in them at that moment, being attentively engaged in business or in something that otherwise occupied his thoughts: such a person, though the moment before he were acting like a sober moral man, would no sooner enter into the scene we are supposing, than his latent love for the same indulgences would discover itself, and he would immediately enter into the spirit of the dissolute party and become one of them. Just so would it be with man if he were to be admitted into temptations without being previously sufficiently fortified with principles of goodness and truth from the Lord, incapable of being influenced by the evils and falsities with which he would be brought into contact: these on the contrary would enter into him, would excite the evils of his nature, and he would presently feel himself as one with them. But if he is furnished with heavenly principles within, and keeps these in communication with their divine Source, by doing what is implied in the command *Arise*, he may then *go down* to the region of the evil influence with perfect safety: just as a man of fixed principles of religion and virtue might go without danger of contamination into a scene of dissipation, reprove the mad votaries of vice, and assist, if necessary, in bringing them before the magistrate, to be dealt with according to law.

The divine injunction proceeds to say, "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host, and thou shalt hear what they say: and afterwards shall thy hands be strengthened to go down to the host." These words shew how a perception is communicated from a lower principle in the mind to a higher—that it is not by an influx from the lower into the higher, but by the higher descending with what is of itself into the lower,

so as to become conscious of what is there passing. This is the reason that Gideon is commanded to take with him Phurah his servant, in order that he might hear the Midianites' conversation; for servants always in the Word signify what is of the external man, which is or ought to be a servant to the internal; whence Gideon's servant Phurah denotes what is of the internal in the external, by which as a medium the internal can know what is the state of the external as to those things therein which are not of the internal. The state of the opposing influence is then described by its being said, that "the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude:" which words are much the same as are used when the oppression by the Midianites is first mentioned, and which we briefly considered in one of our former discourses. They denote the total possession of the exterior region of the mind by thoughts of a trifling and merely external nature, originating in the delights of the merely natural man. Thus the Midianites and their associates are compared to locusts, because locusts denote the false apperceptions of the extreme of the natural principle separated from every thing interior: and their camels, which denote the common scientific principle of such false apperceptions, are compared to the sand of the sea-shore, because this denotes the most external and superficial intellectual views that can be conceived, such as tend to no sort of use, but are barren as the sand of the sea.

"And when Gideon was come, behold there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream: and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash a man of Israel; for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all his host." These words denote the perception that is given to the evil, when the time of their influence draws to an end, and they are about to be cast into hell, that they can no longer be permitted to continue their infestations of the good, or to have any further communication with them. By a cake of barley bread, is signified a principle of truth grounded in goodness in the external man;—or the presence therein of a real heavenly grace in such a form as is adapted to the genius and character of the external man. For as there are various principles in the human mind, which are all in-

cluded in the two general divisions which, in the language of theology, first introduced by the apostle Paul, are called the inward and outward, or internal and external man; so are there divine graces communicated from the Lord adapted to replenish every faculty of man: or, in other words, the divine things of which he is the author appear under a different form according to the nature and quality of the faculty which receives them. Thus, for instance, what in the internal man is a pure love of goodness and truth, when it descends into the external man, especially into what has before been occupied by the evils of man's nature, becomes a strong zeal against all that is evil and false,—an ardent desire and determination to cast them out. And this appears to be what is specifically meant by the cake of barley bread in our text: wherefore in the interpretation of the dream by the soldier's comrade, the cake is said to be the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, an Israelite, which is clearly the power of a principle of truth grounded in good, flowing from the internal, wherefore it is called an Israelite combating against the evils and false sentiments of which the Midianites are representative. The operation of this principle is represented in the dream by its coming to a tent, and smiting it, so that the tent lay along, or was overthrown; which is a clear and beautiful representation of the deprivation of the evils which before infested the mind, of all seat and abode therein. The Midianitish tent is clearly *that* in the mind which is the receptacle and dwelling place of the infesting and enslaving influence: to overthrow this, then, is to reject from within all that affords to the evil its harbour and habitation; which, when really done, the man is safe,—not only delivered for the present, but, in consequence of the real change that has taken place within him, secured from ever being made the slave of that specific evil any more.

Again, then, we find in the circumstances of this history, matter of most beautiful as well as pleasing and animating instruction. They who are really intent upon their regeneration, shall, through divine aid, be completely delivered, though by successive steps, from the influence of every evil, be it what it may, which, by the corruption of human nature, has gained an abode in the heart. But to this end, they must co-operate with the will and efforts of the Almighty Deliverer. They must "arise;"—elevate towards him every thing which, by the instructions of his Word and the operations of his Holy Spirit, they have received from him: They must, then, in this state of conjunction with the Lord, go down to the enemy's camp: they must apply with all the energy which is

given them both to the exploration and the removal of the evils which would hold them for ever in bondage: And the consequence will be, that the evils they oppose, having no longer a root in the man's own affections, will become powerless;—the cake of barley bread—the sword of Gideon, will fall into the hostile camp, and smite the tent and overthrow it:—the seat and harbour which evil had in the mind, which was in the unregenerate affections, will be entirely taken away; and instead of continuing the slave of Midian, the man will be devoted to the service of the Lord, whose service is perfect freedom, for ever.

SERMON XVII.

Judges vii. 15—22.

“ And it was (so), when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshiped, and returned to the host of Israel, and said, Arise! for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies; and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be, that as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets on every side of all the camp, and say, (The sword) of the Lord, and of Gideon! So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch: and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hand to blow (withal): and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! And they stood every man in his place about the camp. And all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host. And the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.”

SUCH is the account of the extraordinary conclusion of the oppression of Israel by the Midianites and their delivery by Gideon, every step of which is marked by such wonderful particulars. When I say, the conclusion of the history, I mean as to the decisive blow by which the deliverance was effected: for another chapter is filled with the details of the manner in which Gideon followed up his victory, which he did with such vigour and prudence as rendered the victory complete indeed, not a man of the immense multitude of the hostile forces making his escape, and the consequences being so decisive, that, as is declared towards the end of

the next chapter, "Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more." The manner in which the rout of the Midianites was brought to pass, as related in the passage we have read, was equally extraordinary with the miraculous events which preceded and led to it; and the conclusion was worthy of the wonders by which it was brought about.

As we have made in our former discourses such general remarks as the occurrences of the history seemed naturally to give rise to, we will now without further preface offer a brief explanation of the principal circumstances related in the passage at present before us.

It begins with stating, that when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, he worshiped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise! for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. The dream which gave such confidence to Gideon and was that which he heard related by the Midianitish soldier, who dreamed that a cake of barley bread fell into the camp of the Midianites, and smote a tent, that it fell; which was interpreted by his comrade to be the conquering sword of Gideon. This, with the encouragement it gave to Gideon, represented the arrival of a state, in which the evil suggestions infused in states of temptation into the external of the mind, are perceived, both by the tempting spirits and the party they infect, to be without power, in consequence of their having no longer a connexion as before with man's interiors—being no longer allied with a corrupt affection cherished by the man himself; and when also they are unable to resist the force of a directly contrary principle of goodness and truth descending from within and expelling them from their usurped establishment in the mind. It is evident from the whole of the history, that this state is brought about by the divine operations of the Lord, received and submitted to by man; and when it is produced, and not before, the actual conflict takes place, which terminates in the removal of the infesting influence. A perception in the interiors of the mind that such a state had arrived, is denoted then by its being said, "when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and the interpretation thereof:" the acknowledgment that it is the Lord's divine power and operations by which it is produced, is meant by its being said thereon, "that he worshiped:" and an elevation of state in consequence throughout the whole of the mind, implying an acknowledgment that all its power is from the Lord, with a direction of all its powers, under this acknowledgment, with full confidence, to the removal of the infesting influence, and of every thing still remain-

ing that gives it a hold upon us, is conveyed in the words of Gideon to his forces, "Arise! for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."

We have observed, that the arrival of a state in which the tempting or infesting influence has lost its power, and thereby admits of being, with security, removed, is the result entirely of the divine operations of the Lord, and that, until its arrival, deliverance from the oppression of our spiritual enemies cannot be experienced: but though this is a certain fact, we should greatly pervert it if we were to draw from it any excuse for submitting or yielding to such oppression, or for being remiss in our efforts to obtain deliverance. There are many histories in the Word, beside this, which fully shew, that until a proper state is prepared, it is impossible to enter into the crisis of spiritual conflict, and that mischief results from bringing on this crisis without submitting to the preparatory states; but there is no passage which implies that it does not depend upon ourselves whether these preparatory states shall take place or not, and whether they shall be greatly protracted or not, in their succession. As before intimated, though much, and indeed the whole of our regeneration, is effected by the Lord alone, yet man's submission to, and reception of, those operations, is necessary to their taking effect. In temptations, the chief thing by which man can accelerate their happy termination, is by cultivating a disposition to search out in himself, and a willingness to part with, whatever it is that furnishes a base for the infernal influence to act upon: for Divine Omnipotence itself cannot remove any evil from man, till man becomes truly willing to let it go. In proportion then as man cultivates a sincere willingness to submit his will to the Lord's in all things, and to give up all undue attachments, whether it be to things absolutely evil, or which only are so when made the objects of too high a regard, so that the love of them holds a place which is only due to loves of a higher order;—so far as man does this the Lord advances all the requisite states of preparation, and hastens the production of the state of which we have been speaking. The infesting influences that deprive man of the manifest perception of delight in divine things, with the infernals that infect them, being deprived of their power, are then ready to yield and depart, as soon as the sphere of the heavenly affections and truths which have been inseminated, and which have been gaining strength within, is brought to act directly upon them. The manner in which this is done, is described in what we have now to consider.

Gideon then "divided the three hundred men into three companies; and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps (or torches) within the pitchers." We have seen in a former discourse, that the three hundred men to which Gideon's army was reduced, denote all such affections of goodness and perceptions of truth in the mind of man, as are wholly of the Lord, and which look to Him alone, undefiled by any contaminations from man's own selfhood—all his motives, in short, and principles of action, that are altogether uninfluenced by any interested and selfish ends. These three hundred men are now divided into three companies, to denote the distinct arrangement of all heavenly graces, whether belonging to the order of goodness or of truth, according to the three degrees into which the mind of man is divided; in the third or inmost of which are all things that refer to the ends proposed by him, and which are of the will; in the second or middle are all things that refer to the means contrived by him for bringing his ends into effects, and which belong to the understanding, and in the first or lowest are all things that refer to conclusions or determinations to action, and which stand perpetually ready to embody themselves in acts whenever opportunity presents itself, and these are of the will and understanding in conjunction. There can be nothing whatever in the mind but what has relation to one or other of these three orders of principles: they include the whole that a man can be or that he can mentally possess: and on this account the number three, when mentioned in the Word, always signifies what is full and complete. It is on account of this its signification, that the number three has in all ages been supposed by many to possess some hidden charm or virtue; as it really did possess under the Jewish dispensation, when representatives of divine appointment were attended with power. This was the reason that the men by whom Gideon was to rout the Midianites, were exactly three hundred, and why these were divided into three companies. Had by any accident the number been different, or the companies otherwise divided, the miraculous effect which ensued on their blowing their trumpets and breaking their pitchers would not have occurred: for it is a great mistake to suppose that even miracles are wrought, and *that* by the Lord himself, at random, and without the use of any means whatever: the means He uses are, the disposal of things according to correspondences, or according to the order in which the spiritual world flows into the natural. But to explain this fully would require a discourse to itself: I only here mention it as necessary to enable

us to discern the reason, why so many seemingly unimportant particulars were necessary to produce that panic in the Midianitish army, that set them upon destroying each other. Without some knowledge respecting the nature of the correspondence between spiritual things and natural,—or at least respecting the existence of such a correspondence, all that is related respecting the mode by which Gideon's army was reduced to a small number, which number was exactly three hundred,—the dream which Gideon heard—the mode in which he directed his little band to shew themselves to the Midianites,—must appear like idle mummery, and the sincerest believer in the Scriptures, who confines his acknowledgment of them to the literal sense alone, must think in his heart that the miraculous effect which ensued might have been as easily produced in a much more summary manner. So that nothing but the views brought to light in the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church, can satisfactorily clear up such passages as these even as to their literal sense; for no other views can furnish us with a reason why so many minute particulars were necessary to be observed, before the wall of Jericho, for instance, could be made miraculously to fall, and before the miraculous rout of the Midianites could take place.

I mention the case of the falling down of the wall of Jericho, because there was some similarity between the means employed to accomplish it, and the means resorted to by Gideon and his bands to confound the Midianites. The similarity consists in this, that there was in both instances a sounding of trumpets, and a shouting; though in the case of Jericho the trumpets were sounded only by the priests, and the shout uttered by the people was simply a shout without the use of words; whereas in the case before us all the people blew trumpets, and the shout which they uttered was the distinct cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." The sounding of trumpets was indeed directed to be used on all occasions, by one of the laws of Moses, in the conflicts between the Israelites and their enemies: the reason of course was, on account of the spiritual thing to which the sound of a trumpet corresponds, and which it therefore represents. It is, no doubt, from the same cause, that the trumpet has been appropriated to the use of war among all nations in all ages. It is true that the sound of it is extremely animating and exciting to the persons in whose behalf it is sounded, and has equally a tendency to appal and fill with dismay the ranks of the enemy; and these are the only causes commonly thought of for its use: it however is a certain fact that

it derives these properties from a spiritual cause; or because it corresponds to something which has a tendency to give encouragement to the subjects of the Lord's kingdom in their conflicts with their spiritual adversaries, and to fill the latter with dread, causing them to seek refuge from its terrible effects on them in the caverns of despair. What it corresponds to then is, the revelation from the Lord through heaven of divine Truth of a celestial order, or such as is closely united with divine Good, and the influx thereof with resistless power from the interiors into the exteriors. The sphere of this has such an effect on the evil, who have nothing answering thereto in themselves, that they are filled by it with anguish and despair,—have all the perceptions of their minds disturbed and thrown into confusion, the incoherence of their own perverted principles becoming manifest even to themselves, so that they immediately act like persons distracted, and are ready to flee any where to escape from its annoying presence.

But in the present case another and a more singular measure was adopted to increase the confusion of the enemy: the Israelites carried empty pitchers in which were concealed lamps or torches: and at the same time that they sounded the trumpets, they broke the pitchers and displayed the lights to the astonished and terrified foe. The reason of this was, because pitchers, being vessels designed for the holding of water, correspond to what the New Church writings call scientifics, by which term are not meant deep attainments in what the world calls science, but merely things that are known without being much understood. Thus this history of Gideon, regarded as to its literal sense alone, is a collection of scientifics; and so in fact is the whole of the literal sense of the Word. The knowledge of such things in the memory, is denoted in the Holy Word by pitchers and all vessels for containing liquids; and thus the literal sense of the Word itself is also figured by these emblems. An empty pitcher, then, is the Word as to its merest shell or husk; or its literal sense viewed by itself, without any reference to the genuine truths it contains as brought to light by genuine doctrine, or by an acquaintance with its spiritual sense. To the Word thus closed, they who are in evils and falsities, and even infernal spirits themselves, have no objection, as there is nothing herein of sufficient power to disturb them in their falsities and evils; on the contrary, they can make the Word in this state seem to favour their views, by dwelling on those parts of it which are written according to mere appearances, and straining those parts in which genuine truths are plainly expressed in the letter, so as to

make them seem to agree with the former, and thus falsifying the whole. There was nothing, then, in the mere empty pitchers capable of giving any alarm to the Midianites: to render the letter of the Word efficient for confounding those who are in evils and falsities, it must be seen in connection with its internal contents—thus the genuine truth it contains must be brought forth and manifested, and this must be shewn to be the genuine doctrine of the letter itself. This then was represented by Gideon and his companions breaking the pitchers and displaying the lights concealed within them. That to break signifies to remove the shell of the letter and discover the genuine meaning, is evident from the manner in which the interpreting of the Midianitish soldier's dream is expressed in the original, which our translators thought so important that they have given it in the margin; according to which we find, that it is said, “when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and the *breaking* thereof:”—a plain proof that, in the language of inspiration, to break a covering for the sake of disclosing what it covers, denotes to unfold the enigmatical and obscure form in which divine truth appears in the letter of the Word, and to discover the genuine truth and wisdom contained within. In the internal sense of the Word, and in the genuine doctrine of the church, which is framed indeed from the literal sense of the Word, but from the literal sense *understood*,—that is, seen in connexion with the internal sense, divine truth is seen in the light; and this, as being incapable of being perverted by the evil so as to confirm their false persuasions, is seen by them as something directly contrary to them, fills them with alarm, and throws them and all their tissues of false reasonings into inextricable confusion. This, then, is what is in general meant by the lamps or torches concealed in the pitchers, and by the breaking of the pitchers to display them to the enemy.

In this circumstance, then, we have an example of the fact insisted on in the doctrines of the New Jerusalem Church, that in the conflicts of temptation man must combat by and with the truths of the Holy Word; and the reason assigned is, because, after all, it is the Lord alone that fights and conquers for man in temptations, wherefore nothing is valid to oppose the infernal influence but that in which the Lord Himself is, and the Lord is present with man in the truths of His own Word known and acknowledged by man. In these, indeed, He Himself is in all His divine fulness; wherefore, when these are connected in man's mind with the Lord, by being sincerely acknowledged and loved,

and referred to the Lord their source, they possess a divine power within them which no infernal agency can long endure when brought into immediate contact with them. That combat in the concluding crisis of temptation is carried on on the part of man solely by truths from the Word, seen and acknowledged in their genuine import, is plain from the account of the Lord's temptation by the devil, in which every infernal suggestion was repelled by Him by being opposed by a passage of the Holy Word. But that to be effectual for this purpose the Word must be *understood*—that it must be the *light* of it, not the mere *empty pitcher*, is evident from the circumstance, that passages from the mere letter, perverted and misrepresented, were in a great measure the weapons with which the tempter carried on his assault: and the Lord's defence consisted in detecting the misapplication, and retorting the genuine sense, as conveyed in other passages, upon the would-be destroyer. This important doctrine, then, is conveyed in the circumstance, that the Israelites discomfited the Midianites by breaking their pitchers and displaying their lights within.

Another remarkable truth which the passage before us brings to light, is this; that after all it is not the Lord's divine truth that destroys the wicked, but their own evil lusts and false persuasions. All that the divine truth does when brought into immediate contact with those who are in such a state, is to discover that they are in evil lusts and false persuasions, and that therefore they cannot abide with those who are in goodness and truth; but what destroys them are these infernal principles themselves. This is expressed by its being said that on the blowing of the trumpets, the breaking of the pitchers, and the shouting by the Israelites; the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow throughout all the host; by which is specifically meant, that these doctrines and principles of life were such as destroy charity; which is the fellow or neighbour; and that whosoever is confirmed therein is in a state of spiritual death.

We see, then, brethren, from what has now been briefly and imperfectly offered, of what importance it is to be enabled to perceive the genuine light of divine truth within the outer covering of the letter of the Holy Word, and what power, for the successful prosecution of our spiritual warfare, is thus imparted to the candidate for a station in the heavenly Canaan. But it can only be exercised, and be made effectual, when Gideon possesses a band of three hundred men, of tried fidelity, who fully obey the Word of the Lord, and unhesitatingly do as he commands: that is, when a

principle of genuine truth grounded in goodness is opened in the mind, accompanied with such a collection of truths and graces as are of the Lord alone, undefiled by any mixture with the selfhood of man. Such a state we must strive to attain; and the only way to attain it is, by submitting all our affections, thoughts, and actions to the government of the Lord and his Holy Word; putting away from them everything, however naturally dear to us, which He prohibits, ever turning from self and self-reliance, and learning to follow and rely on the Lord. So will the principles of truth and goodness received in our souls from Him, be purified from all selfish mixture; and being thus connected with the Divine Source, the light of divine truth concealed within the shell of the Holy Word in such histories as that before us, will shine with such splendour, and be applied with such power, that all our spiritual enemies will flee before it, and we shall be established in the Lord's kingdom, completely freed from the enthralling and infesting influence, for evermore.

SERMON XVIII.

Judges xi. 30, 31.

“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, Then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.”

WE have been engaged in some previous discourses, in an endeavour to give some insight into the spiritual meaning of the remarkable histories contained in the book of Judges. We have touched on the conflicts attending the final establishment of the several tribes of Israel in their respective lots, with which the book commences, and on the miseries attendant upon their disobedience to the divine commands in not utterly expelling the idolatrous nations from the country, and in imitating their idolatrous practices; particularly on the oppressions they successively suffered from the Syrians or the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, from the Moabites, from the Canaanites of Hazor, and from the Midianites, and on their deliverances by the instrumentality of Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, and Gideon. We intended in like manner to have pursued our observations through the remainder of the history of Gideon, and then to have proceeded to that of his degenerate, illegitimate son, Abimelech; whence, slightly passing over the pacific judges, Tola and Jair, to have dwelt in a few discourses on that of Jephthah; and so, again passing over the undistinguished judges, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, to have concluded the series with a consideration of the principal circumstances in the wonderful history of Samson. Circumstances however render it necessary to contract our course, and hasten to a conclusion. I therefore proceed at once to the history of Jephthah, as the next most interesting part of the sacred narrative; and, I have selected the most interesting circumstance in his history, usually known by the name of Jephthah’s rash vow: on the literal import of which I now propose to offer some remarks, reserving its spiritual signification for another discourse.

There is no passage in the Holy Word which has been the subject of more controversy and discussion than this. Infidel writers,

assuming it to be a fact that Jephthah’s daughter was certainly offered as a burnt-sacrifice, have thought they have found a fair occasion for railing against the divine Volume in which this is narrated, and for denying the divine origin either of the Jewish or of the Christian religion, as containing, among the documents on which they rest, a story so revolting to humanity. And expositors of the Scriptures have themselves been greatly divided in opinion as to the question, whether Jephthah’s daughter was put to death or only devoted to a life of pious celibacy. Both of these classes of expositors have however shewn, I think quite satisfactorily, though abiding in the literal history alone, that there is here no room for the scoffs of the infidel, let the fact as to her being put to death or otherwise have been as it might. Although our chief object is to discover the spiritual instruction contained in the representative histories of the Holy Word; and though, likewise, after having examined the reasons urged by both classes of commentators for their respective opinions, I have found it difficult to arrive at a certain conclusion as to the real nature of the fact; yet on a question so celebrated it will no doubt be expected that I should offer some remarks.

It will first be necessary to detail the sequel of the history.

We find from the words which we have read as a text, that the vow of Jephthah was a conditional one: he said to the Lord, “If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.” The condition, it appears, was accepted; for he defeated the Ammonites with a very great slaughter, insomuch that “they were subdued before the children of Israel.” The narrative then proceeds, “And Jephthah came to Mizpeh, unto his house: and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which has proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing

be done unto me : let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months. And she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed." The relation concludes with saying, "And it was a custom in Israel, (that) the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year."

If it were desirable to imitate the style of preaching that prevails in many fashionable places of worship, which consists in describing in a florid strain, natural objects or events, and in endeavouring to move the natural feelings, by dwelling with affected pathos on all such circumstances as will admit of such an appeal, there were ample room for it in speaking upon this story. Looking simply at the particulars of the narrative, and laying aside the consideration of its being part of the Word of God, there certainly is in it much that is calculated to interest our sympathy. What must have been the feelings of the father, returning in all the pride of triumph, saluted every where with the acclamations of his fellow-citizens, who hail him as the deliverer of his country, when, hastening to enjoy his honours in the bosom of his family, and expecting to find the sweetest reward of his labours in the extatic congratulations of the objects of his tenderest affection, he is at once plunged from the pinnacle of happiness to the abyss of misery, by feeling himself suddenly bereaved of the dearest of those objects ; and this by his own rash act ! when the over eager desire of his beloved daughter to welcome her victorious sire, makes her the first to rush into his presence ; whereby she becomes the subject of that vow of sacrifice which he had inconsiderately uttered in a moment of great anxiety, little thinking who was to be its victim ! Well might he utter the despair-fraught words, "Alas, my daughter ! thou hast brought me very low ! thou art one of them that trouble me !" Low indeed is he brought, and troubled indeed must he be : when, instead of being at liberty to enjoy the caresses of his affectionate child, to which he had just before looked forward as the consummation of his felicity, he finds himself bound to requite her tenderness with a grave ! And a daughter so worthy of the fondest affection as she proves herself to be ;—so perfect a model of the purest patriotism, the most generous filial love ! For how does she receive the sentence of her doom which she hears so unexpectedly pro-

nounced ? Does she fall into feminine lamentations ? Does she remonstrate with her father on the injustice and cruelty of her fate ? Does she use any entreaties to turn him from his purpose ? Nothing of the kind. Her country is rescued from its oppressors, and her father is the honoured instrument by which the deliverance is effected. This is happiness enough for her. Having seen this, she is content to die ; proud, perhaps, of being the victim whose promised sacrifice may have contributed to the desired result. She said therefore, "My father ! if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth ; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon." Certainly neither Greece nor Rome, with all their Leonidæ and Decii, ever displayed an instance of sublimer self-devotion than this of Jephthah's daughter. Had it occurred among those boasting people, instead of the plain unvarnished tale of the sacred historian, we should have had it pressed on our admiration with all the pomp of eloquence. The greatest of orators and poets would have made it the theme of perpetual descant : and we should thus have learned from our school-boy days to speak of it with wonder. Nor would the steady resolution of Jephthah have passed unpraised. Indeed it cannot be doubted, had but he and his daughter been heathens, that the very men who now find in the transaction, nothing but a handle for vilifying the Scriptures, would then have extolled the whole as exhibiting the finest example of the most noble constancy, the most disinterested virtue. The mistaken views under which it could be thought that such a vow and such a fulfilment of it could be acceptable to the Divine Being, would have been spoken of as meriting our pity, not our contempt : and the immovable regard to principle, which in the father put in execution, and in the daughter cheerfully submitted to, so deplorable a catastrophe, would have been viewed as atoning for any error of judgment in forming that principle, and as exalting those who were capable of it to the highest rank among the worthies who have shed a lustre on the human race.

Such are some of the reflections which might naturally arise in our minds, on contemplating this history as to its literal sense alone : and certainly from this view of it alone, may be drawn a highly useful lesson for our instruction : for if a mistaken sense of duty could prompt these ancient Israelites to such a heart-rending mode of exhibiting their willingness to obey ; if, under erroneous

views of the nature of the Divine Being, they could persevere, in the discharge of an inconsiderate vow, to the completion of an act which must be as far from being agreeable to the Lord as to themselves:—how ought we, who know what his beneficent nature really is, and what kind of service he requires, to render to Him this our “reasonable service,” by striving daily to be more and more conformed to his will, which is the same thing as to become assimilated to his nature; and which we know, if it redounds to His glory, as the sole author of every thing good that can abide in us or proceed from us, redounds also to our own advantage, because it is the only means by which we can be qualified for the enjoyment of real happiness!

The remarks we have hitherto offered have gone chiefly upon the supposition, that Jephthah’s daughter was actually put to death: upon the other hypothesis, that she was only consecrated to the service of the tabernacle and a life of celibacy, they would require some modification; though even this would be a sufficiently heavy affliction to an Israelitish parent who had no other child; nor would it be much less so to a female of that nation; amongst whom to remain unmarried, or if married to remain without children, was considered as the greatest of calamities. We are now, however, to state the grounds for these two opinions.

Certainly if we look simply at the history as it stands, we shall find it difficult to suppose that the affair had any other termination than what the terms of the vow so plainly express: and though in the conclusion, the sacrifice of the young woman is not explicitly detailed, yet this seems included in the assertion, that “her father did unto her according to his vow which he had vowed.” This accordingly is the popular opinion on the subject, or of those who, without much study, draw their sentiments from our version of the Bible alone. But, as before intimated, the revilers of Revelation have eagerly laid hold of this pretence for their objections, contending that the God of Jews and Christians is thus represented as a God who is pleased with human sacrifices: and as reason clearly sees that these must be abhorrent to the nature of the true God, they infer that the true God and the God of Jews and Christians are not the same; of course, that those religions cannot be true. We shall see presently that even if we abide in the literal sense only, and give it the harshest interpretation, there still will be no room for this inference, which only argues ignorance on the part of those who make it: but it has helped to make commentators on the Scriptures very anxious to find room for understanding the

relation in a different manner. Indeed the Jews themselves have led the way in giving a different interpretation; and it is after some of their Rabbies that many Christian expositors have adopted the rendering given in the margin of the English Bible; where, in the vow itself, instead of the words “whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house, &c., shall surely be the Lord’s, *and* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering,” we find, “whatsoever cometh forth of my house—shall surely be the Lord’s, *or* I will offer it up for a burnt-offering;”—the disjunctive particle *or* being used instead of the copulative *and*: and the meaning of Jephthah is supposed to be, that whatever came out of his house, if a human being, should be consecrated to the Lord, and employed in some ministration in his tabernacle, and if a clean beast, should be sacrificed. Accordingly they conclude that the former was the fate of Jephthah’s daughter; in agreement with which view, for the word *lament*, in the last verse, they substitute *to talk with*, as our version also gives in the margin; so that instead of reading “the daughters of Israel went yearly *to lament* the daughter of Jephthah,” they would have “the daughters of Israel went yearly *to talk with* the daughter of Jephthah.” This latter alteration, I believe, (as far as I have been able to search into it,) the Hebrew original will very well admit. It is also certain, that the Hebrew particle which generally acts as the copulative conjunction, sometimes bears a disjunctive sense, and instead of meaning *and* must be translated *or*: but I certainly do think it has been fully proved, that Jephthah’s vow is not one of the passages which will properly admit of the latter signification, but that this is one of the cases in which, according to the universal rules of the language, the signification of *and* must be retained.

These are the chief critical points on which the advocates of the opinion that Jephthah’s daughter was not put to death, found their belief; but they also support it by arguments of considerable weight of a different nature. Thus, they observe, that nothing was more strictly prohibited by the laws of Moses than the offering of human sacrifices, either to false gods or to Jehovah, and that therefore such an abomination could never have been contemplated, much less practised by an Israelitish general who was especially assisted by Divine Providence to deliver his country: that had he nevertheless been ignorant enough to wish to do so, it was again commanded by the Levitical law that sacrifices should nowhere be offered but before the tabernacle, and by no person but the priests; and that certainly no priest could be found to offer such a sacrifice, especially at the tabernacle, where he was under the immediate in-

spection of the high priest, who also frequently officiated himself. And that females were employed about the tabernacle in works suited to their sex, is evident, it is urged, from the Midianitish female captives taken in war in the time of Moses, (Num. xxxi.) of whom, as of the rest of the spoil, a portion amounting to thirty-two in number, was set aside for an offering to the Lord: this also, it is stated, further appears from the last of Leviticus, where the law is given relating to the making of singular or personal vows, which mention both males and females. These are the chief considerations urged in favour of the opinion that Jephthah's daughter was not actually sacrificed: and certainly they carry so much appearance of probability, that we cannot be surprised if they were in general, and for a long time, deemed conclusive.

In support, however, of the popular notion, that this devoted female was really put to death, arguments not less strong have been urged by the most learned modern writers. We have already seen that the plain meaning of the literal account is much more consistent with this opinion than with the other. The writers alluded to found their chief argument on the fact, that it never entered into the head of any Israelite to look upon a state of single life, either in male or female, as more pleasing to the Lord than a state of marriage, and that, on the contrary, all their notions of the subject ran decidedly the other way; that *men* who were dedicated to the service of the Lord, or of the tabernacle, did not on that account remain single, is evident from the cases of Samson and Samuel, who were devoted in this way from their birth, and who both were married; whence it is inferred that the case would be the same with females who might be similarly devoted. That human sacrifices were strictly prohibited by the Levitical law, as also the slaying of any sacrifices by any but the priest, or any where but before the tabernacle, is indeed certain; but that many irregularities took place in all these respects is well known, and even that the Israelites often shewed a monstrous propensity to imitate the Canaanites in sacrificing their children; whence it is argued that Jephthah was more likely to adopt this course with his daughter, being a thing of which he had seen or heard of many examples, than to make her a nun, of which it is supposed he could have seen no example. It is further contended that he was just the sort of man likely, through ignorance, to fall into such errors; being, as is related at the beginning of the chapter, the son of a strange woman, and on that account driven in his youth by his relations out of the country, whence he resorted for subsistence in

a foreign land, to the desperate expedient of becoming the captain of a band of freebooters;—situations these which certainly were not likely to introduce him to a correct knowledge of the laws of Moses: and though there is no reason to suppose that he ever was an idolator, it is probable enough that he worshiped Jehovah much in the same way as the idolatrous people among whom he dwelt worshiped their deities. Besides the land of Gilead, of which Jephthah was a native, was at all times a country in which the greatest irregularities in the observance of the strict Mosaic law prevailed; it being a country situated on the other side of Jordan, at the greatest distance from the seat of the Tabernacle, the great centre of the Israelitish laws and worship. That Jephthah's knowledge of the Mosaic law was very scanty indeed, is certainly evident from his putting his vow in execution in any way whatever. If he conceived himself bound by it to put his daughter to death, he shewed himself ignorant of the laws which prescribe that only certain clean beasts and birds, and but a few kinds of them, should be offered in sacrifice, whilst, for this purpose, a human being was considered as of all things the most unclean, so to burn human bones upon an altar was a method resorted to as defiling it in such a manner, that it never could be used for a sacred purpose any more; and if he conceived himself bound by his vow, to devote his daughter to the service of the tabernacle, without being able to revoke it, as it is plain he did by his saying, "I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back;" he displayed equal ignorance; as there is an express statute in the last of Leviticus, empowering the person who might have made such a vow to redeem the devoted party for a sum of money.

All the circumstances, then, considered, many things might be regarded as pardonable in a man so uninformed as Jephthah, which, in a person who had better opportunities of information, would be utterly inexcusable.

But, as before intimated, even if it were certain, as it appears probable, that Jephthah did sacrifice his daughter, they who think this affords any ground of reproach against the divine origin of the Israelitish or Christian dispensations, only prove their own ignorance by the assertion. If indeed the laws of Moses gave any sanction to the practice of offering human sacrifices, and Jephthah only acted in conformity with the laws, then indeed the objection would be well-founded; but if, as already observed, the Levitical laws represented such sacrifices as in the highest degree offensive to God, and Jephthah, supposing he offered one, did it, not in obedi-

ence to those laws, but in ignorance and violation of them; then the whole case is reversed. It was to the false god Molech, principally, that children were sacrificed as burnt-offerings; on which subject we read in Lev. xviii., "Thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God." In ch. xx. the punishment of death is decreed against those who should do so: and the most awful denunciations against it are repeated over and over again:—thus, "Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in the land, that giveth of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary and to profane my holy name." And that they should not introduce such horrid rites into the worship of the Lord, because most hateful to him, is expressly commanded in Deuteronomy xii., "When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods." It is impossible for language to express more strongly the divine abhorrence of such practices: If then Jephthah fell into any thing of the kind, it is evident that he did it through ignorance; and no imputation can lie against the law itself for his unwitting breach of it.

On the whole then, it appears next to impossible to decide with certainty the much agitated question, whether Jephthah's daughter was put to death or not. I incline after all to think myself that she was not, because I think it possible that although the males specially dedicated to the service of the tabernacle were allowed to marry, this might not be the case with the females: at least I think this point not fully proved. But to go into all the minutæ of this question would be out of place in a sermon; and I have done so rather largely in a published work. [*The Plenary Inspiration.*]

Though I have now confined myself to the literal sense of this remarkable history, I trust the observations suggested are calculated to have their use, tending, as they have done, to vindicate the

Word of God from objections, and to evince that, whatever might have been the merits or demerits of Jephthah's behaviour, nothing that was wrong in it was imputable to a Divine origin, or to an alleged divine authority. But looking at the transaction as proceeding from a man little informed on divine subjects, and acting from notions universally prevalent in those times, we see much to admire, and much that, it is easy to believe, might be made the ultimate basis of truly divine instruction. At any rate, there is nothing but what is admirable in the conduct of the daughter. If patriotism is a virtue, (and the love of our country is ranked by the doctrines of the New Church, amongst the very highest forms of charity,) then, in this respect, both father and daughter exhibited virtue of the most sublime order; and, in the daughter, this was unalloyed by the slightest drawback. Such self-devotion, such disregard of every selfish feeling, is admirable in the highest degree, and worthy of being held forth as a most ennobling example: and whoever shall so far imitate it, as to be ready, on any suitable occasion, to make a corresponding sacrifice of self and of selfish inclinations for the good of others, is sure of a state of dignity in the kingdom of the Lord.

SERMON XIX.

Judges xi. 30, 31. (Sermon ii.)

“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, Then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.”

IN our former discourse upon these words, we confined ourselves entirely to their literal sense, offering first such reflections as might naturally present themselves, if we look at them as containing, in connexion with the context, a simple history of an extraordinary instance of self-denial on the part of Jephthah, and of self-devotion on the part of his daughter: and in the second place, giving a view of what has been offered on both sides in the discussion of the celebrated question, Whether Jephthah’s daughter was actually put to death, or whether she was consecrated to the Lord in some other way: and we finally shewed, that even upon the supposition of her being really sacrificed, they who infer from it an argument against the truth of the Scriptures and of Revealed Religion, prove by it nothing but their own ignorance; since nothing can be more decisive than the language in which the offering of human sacrifices, under any pretence whatever, is prohibited in the Mosaic law, as being the most hateful of abominations; whence, if it were even certain that Jephthah’s daughter was so sacrificed, the blame of it would lie, not on the laws of the Israelitish dispensation, but on the ignorance of Jephthah and his countrymen, of the remote part of the territory beyond Jordan which was the scene of the whole transaction.

In noticing the arguments that have been adduced in support of each side of the question respecting the reality of the sacrifice or otherwise, we found it necessary to observe, that after all the labours of the learned men who have investigated the subject, it did not appear possible to pronounce with any degree of certainty what was the case with respect to that historical fact. But although it appeared to me that they who are of opinion that Jephthah’s daughter was put to death, have the strongest side of the

argument; and though likewise it really seems difficult to imagine otherwise from the relation as it stands; I stated that I nevertheless inclined to think, for my own part, that her life was preserved. My reason for forming this opinion is this: that although it is very possible that Jephthah might not have a sufficient knowledge of the Mosaic law to be aware, that he was not bound by that law to perform his oath literally, when his daughter must, by adhering to the terms of his vow, be the victim, and might therefore, if left to himself, through mere ignorance, perform this dreadful immolation; yet as he allowed two months to intervene before he proceeded to put it in execution, and no doubt it must, during that time, be the subject of conversation all over the country, it seems hardly possible that this should not have afforded opportunity for his receiving better information. This indeed was time enough for the news to be carried as far as Shiloh, to the high priest himself; who, if he had heard of it, would doubtless have exerted himself to prevent its taking effect. I am aware that this may be replied to on the same ground that it has been argued, that Jephthah had not the opportunity, if he would, to send his daughter to the tabernacle to be there employed in some subordinate ministrations, because this was then at Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim, and there was at this time a war between Jephthah and the Ephraimites, as appears from the next chapter: but this is sufficiently answered by the well-known fact, that whatever dissensions and wars there at any time existed between the several tribes of Israel, they never impeded each other in their journies to perform the ceremonies of religion at the tabernacle or temple, where every male Israelite was required by the law to present himself three times in a year, on which occasions a truce took place and was religiously observed. It appears then that during the two months that were allowed to this generous young woman to prepare for her fate, her father must have learned, that her death was not only not required by his vow, but was in the highest degree illegal,—that he was not only at liberty, but that it was his duty, to redeem her at the price of thirty shekels; information which, we are sure, must have been in the highest degree agreeable to him, and must have effectually prevented the human sacrifice from taking place. But if so, why is not this stated? Why, it may be asked, is the history couched in such terms, as seem at least strongly to imply that the dreadful ceremony was performed, when a statement to the contrary would be so agreeable to the feelings of every one who reads it, and would have obviated the objections which are thence urged, with some

degree of plausibility at least, against its holy nature? The only satisfactory answer that can here be given is, Because the things treated of in the internal sense, for the sake of which alone the letter is written, could not have been expressed unless this appearance had been preserved.

But perhaps this answer may at first be thought to render the matter still more obscure. It may be asked again, If human sacrifices were in fact the greatest abominations that could be offered to insult the majesty of heaven, and strictly prohibited in the divine law on that account, how can it be necessary that an appearance of one having taken place should be suffered to occur in the letter of the Word?—especially when it is evident that it is not done to represent any thing profane and unholy, but the contrary? We answer, For the same reason as it was necessary for Abraham to believe that it was required of him by the Lord that he should sacrifice his only son, Isaac, through whom alone the promise of his becoming the father of many nations, was to be fulfilled to him, and to act under the influence of this belief so far as to “stretch forth his hand and take the knife to slay his son.” It is true that in the case of Abraham, an angel was then sent to stay his hand, and a ram caught in the thicket was substituted instead of Isaac: but it proceeded far enough to shew, that the offering up of a child, taken only in one point of view, has a holy signification, though taken in another it is the height of profaneness. The same may be concluded from the circumstance, that by the Levitical law, the first-born of every thing was considered as belonging to the Lord: hence, if it was a clean beast, it was to be offered in sacrifice; if an unclean beast a clean one was to be substituted for it.

One is apt at first sight to wonder how so horrible a superstition, so repugnant to some of the strongest feelings of human nature, as the sacrifice of human victims, and especially of children by their parents, could ever have been tolerated among mankind for a moment,—much less could have been so constantly and extensively practised, among various nations of antiquity, as history assures us was the fact. Even the Greeks, so celebrated for their literary attainments, were not untainted with it: we have all heard of the sacrifice of Iphigenia the daughter of Agamemnon, the chief of the princes who went to the siege of Troy, and the commander of the whole armament, as the only effectual expedient for procuring a fair wind to waft their navy thither. We are told that it was practised to an enormous extent among the original inhabitants of

this favoured island of Britain, it being customary in the worship of the Druids to construct great idols of wicker work, and to fill them with human victims, which were all consumed together. That similar customs were common among the original inhabitants of Canaan and the surrounding nations, especially in the worship of Molech the idol of the Ammonites, is evident from numerous passages of the Holy Scriptures; and as the war in which Jephthah uttered the vow in obedience to which he is supposed to have sacrificed his daughter, was against this nation of sacrificers of their children, there can be little doubt that it was on account of the necessity that every evil must be combated from an opposite good, and that the principle of the mind in which the evil resides, is only brought into order by the introduction into it of the good suited to its nature instead of the evil removed: wherefore as the Ammonites represent those who are in the evil and false principle that is represented by the sacrifice of children to Molech, they could only be overcome by the good and truth of the same general character, represented by an apparent sacrifice of a daughter to Jehovah. At present however we are only adverting to the commonness of the practice in ancient times of sacrificing children, and to the multitude of nations by whom it was practised; and certainly the land of Canaan and surrounding countries, seems to have been the great centre from whence this horrid worship was propagated to other countries. It is known that the Canaanites were the same people as were called by the Greeks, Phœnicians; and ancient authors fully corroborate the Scripture accounts of their devotedness to the sacrificing of their children. It is known also that the Carthaginians, long the rivals of Rome, were Phœnicians or Canaanites by descent; and their addictedness to the practice is also well known. An ancient historian, speaking of their conduct at a time of national calamity, says, “They considered the wrath of their god Saturn as one cause of their misfortunes. For instead of sacrificing to him, as formerly, the sons of their most distinguished citizens, they had for some time been in the practice of buying boys privately, whom they brought up, and then sent as offerings: and now, when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was found, that some of those sacrificed had been substitutes of this description;—that is, had not been sons of persons of distinction, but purchased slaves, represented as their children. When therefore they saw the enemy before their walls, they upbraided themselves in their hearts, for having in any measure departed from the religion of their fathers; and by way of

making atonement, they sacrificed two hundred boys for the state, taking care to select those of the first quality for the purpose. Beside these, there were given up for sacrifice three hundred impeached persons,—that is, persons accused of having shunned the sacrifice themselves, and of having allowed bought slaves to be substituted in their room. There was at Carthage a brazen image of Saturn, which let its open hands down to the ground, and threw the children that were laid upon them into a pit full of fire.” I have introduced this shocking recital, in order to shew, more fully even than appears in the Scripture history, to what an extent the practice of immolating their children prevailed among ancient nations. The sentiments which the contemplation of it is calculated to excite certainly are, compassion for the innocent victims, and disgust for the frightful superstition which could thus arm the hands of parents against their offspring, and overcome the strongest and best feelings of human nature; and though it is difficult not to extend our abhorrence of the practice to those who were so debased by it as to become the agents in these horrible tragedies; yet, whatever share of this feeling is justly due to the priests who introduced and enjoined it, perhaps the unhappy parents were more properly objects of pity; as it is evident that they did it in violation of those tender feelings of which they were not destitute, and in obedience to an overpowering sense of duty—a principle that is respectable even in its errors.

But what can be the reason, that a practice which had every principle of natural feeling and common sense in such direct opposition to it, could ever, in spite of these, obtain such an extensive influence? I apprehend, because as before intimated, regarded in one point of view only, it was seen to have a holy signification; whence it got into use to the disregard of the other point of view, which ought never to be forgotten, when any thought was entertained of proceeding to the act, and in which, when actually performed, it must be seen to be in the highest degree profane. Indeed it is certain, that many of the most detestable practices that have ever prevailed among mankind, were the perversions of something intrinsically good; agreeably to that old and very true maxim, “the corruptions of the best things become the worst.”

It is well known that the sacrifices directed in the Levitical law, and indeed many other of the customs introduced into that law, were not institutions given for the first time by Moses, but had long before been observed among the eastern nations; all that was done by Moses respecting them was, to limit the animals that

might be offered in sacrifice, to certain species, and to prescribe exactly the manner of offering them. Now whence could this previous introduction of sacrificial worship originate? whence, but because it was perceived by the people who first introduced it, whoever they were, that hereby might be represented the pure worship of the Lord, and that this representation of pure worship might at the same time be accompanied with pure worship in him who offered it, provided he was aware of what his offerings represented. For the people of those ancient times were well skilled in what we call the science of correspondences—that is, they knew the relation that subsists by creation between natural things and spiritual, which is such that all natural things derive their origin from certain spiritual things; for these, when exerting an influence in a sphere below that in which they are themselves, give birth to natural things which are representative of themselves, and which may indeed be considered as themselves embodied and made visible in a natural form. Thus there is between natural things and spiritual a certain constant and immutable relation, analogy, or correspondence; the natural thing answering to, and being a proper representative image of, the spiritual, as the reflection of a figure in a mirror answers to, and is an image of, the substantial object that produces it. All this was thoroughly understood in those ancient times: of course the people of those times well knew to what affections the various animals correspond: they knew that a lamb is a representative of love and innocence, a sheep of charity, an ox of good natural affections; and so on: and as they also knew that all genuine worship of the Lord essentially consists in an elevation to him of all the affections and perceptions of the heart and mind, they also knew that this might be represented by the offering of animals in sacrifice; the burning of which upon the Lord’s altar, was representative of the acceptance by him of the affections from and with which man approaches him in worship.

But while the men of those times continued in the clear and full perception of what was represented by the various animals and other objects in nature, they also knew that the only real part even of representative worship, was the offering to the Lord of the inward states of mind which the animals represented, and that in the sacrifice of the animals themselves there was nothing pleasing to the Lord, but rather the contrary, as it is attended with suffering, which, even when endured by, and inflicted on, an animal, is abhorrent to the will of Infinite goodness. Whilst then the men of those times

remained in their wisdom and in the undefiled worship of the Lord, they indeed talked of this worship as of sacrificing animals, because this gave them fuller ideas of the subject than they, owing to the peculiar genius of all who lived before the coming of the Lord, were capable of attaining by any other mediums. But they were content with thus offering to the Lord, as the prophet, says, the *calves of their lips*, that is, they offered to the Lord the affections represented by the calves and other animals used in sacrifices, in their prayers and praises, meant by the lips, without sacrificing the animals themselves. But when a generation of grosser minds afterwards arose,—of men who were more immersed in sensual and carnal things, and who thence had not such clear perceptions of what was meant by this kind of discourse and of purely spiritual worship, they began to think it necessary to put to death the animals themselves; just as a Roman Catholic, to strengthen his conception, when in worship, of the Lord Jesus Christ, thinks it necessary to have a crucifix before his eyes: and as they who did this retained some, though an obscure idea of the spiritual things represented, the use of actual sacrifices was permitted, as necessary to keep this alive. It was from this cause that sacrifices were permitted, and apparently enjoined, to the children of Israel. Properly speaking they were not enjoined them, but only the manner and occasions of offering them directed, since they were in the practice of using them long before: and the reason why they were permitted to continue them, under certain regulations, was, because, though the Israelites never knew any thing of the spiritual things represented by them, yet the sacrifices affected them with a sense of holiness, and kept them in some kind of worship, of which otherwise they would have been incapable; at least, if not allowed in this manner to worship Jehovah, they would have plunged into all the idolatries of their neighbours. But the ultimate reason was the same as that of the calling of the Israelites altogether: that under the descriptions of representative worship thus recorded in the Divine Word a future church might, without returning to the practice of such worship, learn, by a knowledge of the spiritual things represented, how to offer to the Lord a purely spiritual worship, to consist in the consecration to Him at all times of all the faculties of the heart and mind, and in the ascription thereof to Him, at stated times, in prayers and praises, in their public assemblies. It is for the same reason that a kind of bloodless sacrifice is continued among Christians in the bread and wine of

the Lord's supper; in which are represented, in one complex, all the varieties of good and truth in worship, that were denoted by all the varied symbols of the Levitical institutions.

From this view of the subject it may clearly be seen, that there may be forms of speaking and writing according to representatives and correspondences, which would be exceedingly criminal if reduced into acts. We find that even the slaughter of animals is something that, in itself, cannot enter with strict propriety, into the worship of the Lord, although to describe his genuine worship by images thence derived is highly useful and expressive. So it is, in a much stronger degree, when the subject of the sacrifice is considered to be a son or a daughter. If the animals allowed to be sacrificed were representative of certain principles in the mind of the offerer, dedicated by him to the Lord, his own children must be representative of principles in his mind still more closely connected with him, and which, to render his conjunction with the Lord complete, ought by no means to be withheld from Him. They must represent the proper affections of his own will, the proper perceptions of his own understanding, which, unless surrendered to the Lord, are the affections and perceptions of his own selfhood. It was on this account that Abraham, by whom is represented the celestial man, was tried as to his willingness to offer Isaac; and when he had complied, the reason assigned by the Lord for the blessing then pronounced upon him was, "Because thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." Thus it is evident, that in the language of correspondences, to speak of sacrificing children to the Lord, only means to devote to him the inmost affections of the heart. In this point of view, then, and when suffered to go no farther than to words, the sacrifice of children was clearly representative of something pre-eminently holy. The reason is, because, in this point of view, the children are not regarded as having any thing, not even life, of their own, but are viewed merely as the absolute property of the parents. Hence no doubt, among the ancient people, who used to speak of sacrifices without performing them, the sacrifice of children was often mentioned: and thence their ignorant and corrupt descendants proceeded to the commission of the act. But this must necessarily be in the highest degree profane. For though for the sake of representation, children may be considered as the absolute property of the parents, yet in reality they are also human beings themselves, having a life independent of their parents, and to deprive them of which is murder of the worst kind: hence the *act* of sacrificing children, instead of repre-

senting the hallowing of our inmost affections to the Lord, represents the direct contrary, and denotes the privation of spiritual life in the nearest affections of the heart, and a complete enslavement to infernal bondage.

We see from the whole, that although there is a strong reason to conclude that Jephthah's daughter was not actually put to death, yet it was necessary that the literal account of the transaction should be so constructed, as to seem to indicate that such was the fact, because otherwise the holy and most important spiritual things intended to be conveyed in the internal sense, could not adequately be represented. And from the view which we have been enabled to take of what those spiritual things are, we see how indispensable it is that we should ever be ready to sacrifice our spiritual offspring to the Lord; that is, to devote to Him the very inmost affections and thoughts of our hearts and minds,—the very inmost of our souls,—whatever is derived from our inmost life, and is most closely and intimately identified with ourselves. Though the outward act of sacrificing children is most barbarous and profane, because they, as well as ourselves, live by a life communicated to them from the Lord as their own, and thus are not absolutely the property of their parents; yet the spiritual sacrifice, which, when only spoken of in words and not actually performed, such a sacrifice represents, is, as thus explained, a duty which we must be willing to discharge, and which will, in some stage of our regenerative progress be required of us all. May we ever be ready to dedicate all that we either are or have to the Lord, our Creator and Redeemer: so shall we be saved from all our spiritual enemies, and be permanently established in his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XX.

Judges xi. 30, 31. (Sermon iii.)

“ And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, Then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering.”

THE circumstance here recorded being so much celebrated by all who have written on the history of the children of Israel, and having given rise to a question of which every one has heard, and in which all who have heard of it feel some interest; we have devoted two former discourses to a consideration of the literal facts, and of inquiries thence arising. In our first discourse we stated the arguments that have been advanced in favour of the supposition, that Jephthah's daughter was not actually put to death, and those by which this more pleasing view of the history has been replied to; when we found, that although it is impossible to determine the matter with certainty, the particulars of the narrative, regarded solely in their literal sense, and the arguments deduced from them, give most sanction to the supposition that she was actually sacrificed. I, however, stated my own opinion to be otherwise, for which, in our last discourse, I gave my reasons; remarking also, that the reason why the letter was so framed as to favour the contrary conclusion, was, because the spiritual sense required that there should be an appearance that such was the fact, on which account the narrative is so constructed as plainly to point to this inference, although it is not expressly affirmed. For certainly, the sole design with which the Word of God was written, was, not to convey information respecting natural things but spiritual: and though the Jews were selected to represent spiritual things by their worship and the actions of their government, and of certain leading individuals, whence the occurrences related are in general strictly true, yet there certainly are some instances in which the historical narrative, though including an account of the circumstances true in some respect, is yet so partially constructed, as not to exhibit the whole truth; at least not on a superficial inspection; the spiritual sense requiring the mention of certain things, and perhaps the

omission of certain others, without the knowledge of which the historical relation seems confused and obscure. And this seems likely to have been the case with this history of Jephthah and his daughter. But our last discourse was more particularly occupied with a view of the origin of sacrificial worship in general, and of human sacrifices in particular, which, though the highest abomination to the true God, were offered by many ancient nations to their idols.

It is, however, a matter of little consequence to us, beyond mere curiosity, whether Jephthah's daughter was preserved alive or not. We have before shewn, that the truth of Revealed Religion is by no means dependent upon this fact, even if determined in the negative; because in this case the act was not committed under the sanction of the divine law, but in violation of it. Still Christians in general have thought, that the honour of religion was much compromised by the transaction, because Jephthah was an instrument raised up for the delivery of Israel, and was a prosperous commander and judge; and because no intimation is given of the illegality of his vow, or of any divine disapprobation in consequence of it. But if the honour of religion depended on the faultlessness of conduct of the characters distinguished in the Jewish history, it would be very difficult to maintain it indeed; as there is scarcely one of them whose conduct might be taken for the imitation of the Christian. To the best of them, many things were permitted because of the hardness of their hearts, as the Lord himself declares, which in the beginning were not so, and which he prohibits to the member of a true church, and not of the mere type of a church, which was all that the Jewish was. Many of their chief persons, even those most highly extolled in their typical character, to which alone the commendations of them are meant to apply, were guilty of acts in themselves enormously wicked: and David himself, the most distinguished of them all, in the deliberate murder of Uriah, committed a crime of premeditated wickedness, to which the cruel but not malignant or intentional error of Jephthah, even if brought into perpetration, would be comparatively innocent: for what he did proceeded from ignorance and a mistaken sense of duty; whereas David knew from the beginning that he was breaking the most imperative of the divine commandments. With what difficulties then are they embarrassed, in defending their religion, who believe the Jews ever to have been, personally, the peculiar favourites of heaven, the members of a true internal church: from which embarrassments, as we have occasionally

shewn, the member of the New Jerusalem Church is exempt, who believes the Jews only to have been a representative church, or even a representation or type of a church; in which case sanctity of private character was by no means necessarily implied, even in the persons who sustained the most holy representations. To us then it matters not, beyond the interest the story is calculated to excite, whether Jephthah's daughter was actually sacrificed, any more than it does whether Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, was actually sacrificed, or whether, as some authors affirm, she was at the critical moment conveyed away by Diana, to be a priestess in her temple, and a white hind miraculously substituted in her place. To us it matters not whether Jephthah was the man of enlightened piety which he is represented by some writers, or the ignorant barbarian assumed by others. But we will proceed to close our remarks on the history of Jephthah by a short view, as far as we are enabled to discover it, of the spiritual import of some of the principal circumstances recorded: only adding further to our prefatory observations, that no light is thrown upon the fact in dispute in the writings of the herald of the New Church, in which there does not occur a single quotation from any part of the history, or the slightest reference to it.

Although without more illumination than the church is at present in possession of, it may be difficult to trace the reason why the various oppressions and deliverances of the Israelites occurred in the order in which they are recorded, and why the judges who were the instruments of effecting those deliverances, succeeded each other in the progression that we find; yet one thing is so remarkable in this respect, and agrees so exactly with the information the New Church possesses respecting the meaning of the twelve tribes of Israel, that we cannot but be struck with the coincidence, and discover in it an additional proof of the truth of our doctrines upon this subject. It is this: that the judge who delivered Israel on their first affliction, from their enemies after they were settled in the land, and indeed the first of the series of governors who are properly called judges, was Othniel of the tribe of Judah; and the last of them was Samson of the tribe of Dan. Now Judah, we are informed, represents the highest principle in the church, called the celestial, and Dan the lowest, called the sensual; whence it is evident that the whole series represent a progression in order, through all the states that enter into the constitution of the church, or of the man of the church, from the highest to the lowest. Another striking coincidence or two may

be mentioned: one is, that as the first judge was Othniel, of the tribe of Judah, so the second was Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin: the reason of which no doubt is, because Benjamin is the external of the same general principle that has Judah for its internal; which also is the reason, when an entirely different state was represented under the kings, the order of which was to begin from the external and thence proceed to the internal, Saul, the first king, was of the tribe of Benjamin, and David, the second, of the tribe of Judah: and from the same cause it was that when the twelve tribes were split into two kingdoms, Benjamin alone, of them all, remained with the tribe of Judah. Another coincidence is observable in the facts, that Jephthah was the next distinguished judge that came after Gideon, and that Gideon was of that part of the tribe of Manasseh that had their inheritance within Jordan, and Jephthah was of the other half of the tribe of Manasseh that had their lot beyond Jordan: for it is said that Jephthah was a Gileadite, and Gilead was a country beyond Jordan which fell to the inheritance of one of the half-tribes of Manasseh. From this circumstance it is evident, that Jephthah must denote the external of the same general principle, as that of which Gideon is the internal. This fact, that he represents a principle that belongs entirely to the external man, will account for the want of legitimacy which is recorded of his birth, and for the disorder and violence by which, in the early part of his life, he seems to have been distinguished.

We read at the end of the preceding chapter, "Then the children of Ammon were gathered together and encamped in Gilcad. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together and encamped in Mizpeh. And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead." Then begins the chapter of our text, taking up the history: "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour; and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the Land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him:"—that is, he became the captain of a band of roving freebooters, such as abound in that part of the world to this day. In this capacity he acquired such a reputation for military skill and courage, that the history proceeds to say, "And it came to pass in

process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel. And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob: and they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon." Jephthah, after remonstrating with them on their former expulsion of him from his father's house, consented to their request, on condition that, in case of success, he should be their captain and head; a solemn covenant to which effect was made before the Lord at Mizpeh. Jephthah then sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, remonstrating with him on his unjust invasion, and desiring him to depart peaceably; and receives for answer a message from the king claiming a right to the country. To this Jephthah replies by a second embassy, shewing at length the injustice of the claim; but without any effect. "Then," it is said, "the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon." Then he made the vow recorded in our text, attacked and defeated the Ammonites, and the other transactions took place which we noticed in our former discourses.

In all this history we find a remarkable contrast between the mode of proceeding to effect the expulsion of the Ammonites, and that which was observed to produce the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon; strongly exhibiting the difference in purity and in divine dependance, between goodness and truth of an interior kind, and such as are of an exterior kind. In the case of Gideon, the utmost caution was observed lest any thing of man should mix itself with the divine operations; in this of Jephthah, the whole seems to have been contrived almost by unassisted human prudence; except that the success appears to have been a consequence of the divine favour procured by Jephthah's vow. And his vow too was a conditional one, stipulating advantages for himself, or success in his enterprise, like that of Jacob when he said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; *then* shall the Lord be my God:" for such is interiorly the nature of all the worship of the merely natural man: he is content to serve the Lord, provided he is well rewarded for it; and he considers the happiness of heaven itself, when he elevates his mind so high, merely in the light of a reward, whence he does good not from the pure love of it, but from a

motive of mere obedience, because he sees that his own welfare cannot be otherwise secured. And this motive even, low as it is, is accepted in such states by the Lord; for it is, in fact, the highest motive from which man is able to act in the commencement of his regeneration; and even when his regeneration is completed, there will always remain a principle in his constitution, though it will no longer be the highest or governing one, which finds in this motive its proper incentive to action. But the purification of this degree of the mind and life, the result of a previous opening and purification of higher principles, is represented by the whole of this history of Jephthah.

Jephthah is first described as a mighty man of valour, to denote a principle of truth in the external man that is powerful in reasoning in behalf of spiritual things, and strong in overthrowing opposing false persuasions: but he is said to be the son of a harlot, to denote that this does not originate in a pure affection, and is not the product of a legitimate conjunction of goodness and truth within. For in the beginning of his regeneration man makes himself acquainted with truths, and feels a delight in reasoning from and for them, under the influence, in a great degree, of merely natural affections, such as curiosity, the mere love of knowledge, without a supreme regard to use, and not from the genuine affection from which truth ought to be felt as delightful, which is, a love of the good to which it leads. While he is in this state, he is not a real member of the church, nor intitled to any inheritance therein; which is denoted by his brethren denying Jephthah a portion in his father's house. While in this state also he is in reality a spiritual robber; because he does not, in his heart, whatever he may do from doctrine, ascribe all his attainments to the Lord, but regards them as the proper acquisitions of his own understanding: so that he is in reality much under the influence of self-intelligence. Nevertheless, it appears that even so imperfect a principle as this, is capable of successfully resisting that principle of falsity grounded in evil, of which the children of Ammon are representative in the Holy Word: and the children of Ammon were the descendants of the brother of Moab, and therefore, denote a false principle, or a species of falsified truth, answering to the species of evil, or of adulterated good, of which the Moabites are the types. And as the Ammonites were descended from an illegitimate connexion of the most profane description, it seems that Jephthah, as the offspring of a disorderly connexion of a milder nature, and such as was tolerated by the laws of Moses, was, on

that very account, and because of the representation thence resulting, the proper person to deliver the Israelites from their slavery to the children of Ammon. It is evident that he represents a principle of truth in the external man, not orderly in itself, but capable of being restored to order, and becoming a real principle of the church. This appears to be represented by Jephthah's remonstrating with the heads of his tribe, on their not having admitted him to an inheritance in his father's house together with his legitimately descended brethren, and stipulating that, if he succeeded in delivering his and their country, they should acknowledge him as their captain. His two embassies to the king of Ammon, in which he demonstrated the injustice of his invasion, and peaceably required the restitution of the country, evidently describe the manner in which truth clearly and calmly demonstrates the justice of its claims; and the zeal with which, on receiving a refusal to listen to such claims on the part of the king of Ammon, he collected the forces of the country and hastened to the combat, under an influence which, it is said, he experienced because the spirit of the Lord came upon him, expresses the way in which truth grounded in goodness is prepared, by an inflowing of power from above, to repel the assaults of falsity grounded in evil. That Jephthah, in his present course, represents a principle of truth grounded in goodness, is evident from the justice of the cause for which he was acting. But in order that the result may be successful, the state must be purified, and all that is disorderly be removed. We have noticed that Jephthah represents a principle of truth in the external man in which there is much of self. This must be totally done away; and its entire removal, and the devotion of all that the man has, apparently of his own, to the Lord, is, as we have seen in our last discourse, what is signified by Jephthah's vow, and by the victim of it, whether personally sacrificed or not, being his own daughter.

From this slight sketch of the general purport of the whole history viewed in its spiritual sense, we see that no degree of the knowledge of divine truth, and no power of reasoning in favour of divine things, or of refuting the principles and arguments of evil and falsity, can give any one a title to an inheritance in the Lord's church and kingdom, so long as his love and knowledge of truth are connected with, and grounded in, anything that savours of self and self-seeking,—so long as the affections from which such attainments are cultivated, is of a spurious nature, and is not connected with a love for the good to which all genuine truth is

designed to lead. Nevertheless, the power of reasoning against, and demonstrating the fallacy of, the principles and arguments by which evil and falsity defend themselves, and by which they sometimes appear to prevail against truth and goodness, is a most valuable thing, and, when properly exercised, of great importance in the spiritual warfare. But it will not be conducive to our own establishment in the Lord's Church, nor bring us to a station in his heavenly kingdom, till we are brought to ascribe all the merit of it to the Lord, and to make a full surrender to him of every good or excellence which we deemed most particularly our own. But when we are enabled to resolve that whatever cometh out of our house shall be the Lord's, and to carry the determination into effect, even though we find it involves a sacrifice immensely more painful than what we at first contemplated, the work will be accomplished, and we shall be secure of a station of bliss and honour in the Lord's kingdom for ever.

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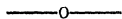
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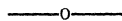
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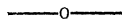
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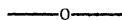
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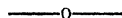
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