

ST. LUKE, CHAP. XIX. V. 10.

“For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

This declaration of our Saviour, though applied to the individual case of Zaccheus, “a son of Abraham,” is equally applicable to the whole race of mankind. In it are involved the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, for it leads our thoughts back to the fall of man, and to all the consequences resulting from that event. Christ came into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost.” What is that which was lost? and by what means was it recovered? These are questions naturally arising from the text, and which I propose to answer briefly in this discourse.

“God hath made man upright.” Coming, from the hands of his Creator, pure, innocent, and undefiled, the first man was placed in the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it.” “In the image of God created he him,”—not in his corporeal image, for “God is a spirit,” and is “without body, parts, or passions;” but in the image of the divine mind, “approaching to the divine likeness, in understanding, freedom of choice, spirituality, immortality, and in righteousness, and true holiness,” for so we may understand from the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians—“And that we put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Thus situated, man was so far perfect, that he was liable indeed to sin, but as yet without sin. He was in possession of life immortal, and of the blessing of God. What then did he lose?—He lost his innocence, his purity of mind, and his immortality. And how did he lose them? We are told, in scripture, that God allowed him to “eat freely of the fruit of every tree of the garden of Eden,” except “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” In the sequel of the history, we have the lamentable tale of his disobedience, and all its dismal consequences. The arch enemy of mankind, who, “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” filled with envy at the happy state of man, beguiled him of his innocence, and induced him to transgress the only commandment to which a specific penalty had been affixed. No sooner had the wretched pair eaten of the forbidden fruit, than “the eyes of both of them were opened.” Overwhelmed with shame, confusion, and remorse, when “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” The sentence of death followed this transgression with fearful rapidity—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” But this sentence was not passed on the transgressors only, but on all their posterity also—for death came “by sin, and so death passed upon all men.” But not only the death of the body was the consequence of this transgression, but spiritual death, or the alienation of the soul