

in several closely allied senses. Sometimes it denotes the Gospel dispensation, or the method of divine spiritual administration under the Gospel. Sometimes, again, it denotes the dominion of grace in the soul of the individual believer. Sometimes, moreover, it denotes the general community of believers in which the dominion of grace is established, and which constitutes the church militant here below. In the text it may signify either the great assembly of the redeemed from the earth, comprising the church triumphant above; or the world of glory itself, in which the just made perfect, the members of the church triumphant, shall have their everlasting home. It matters comparatively little which of these meanings shall be adopted; we give the preference to the last.

In the kingdom of heaven, therefore, as thus understood, "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." And in the sequel of this discourse we shall advert to some of those views of heaven and of the dwellers there which the text, regarded as having relation thereto, is adapted most obviously to suggest. It teaches us to think of heaven as a *distinct place, having a certain positive locality*—as a *place of saintly society*—and as a *place of rest and joy*.

We are accordingly to conceive of heaven,

1st. As a *distinct place, having a certain positive locality*. It is presented to our contemplation as the residence of the Father of the Faithful and his illustrious descendants, Isaac and Jacob; and of those who, having been distinguished by like precious faith, shall ultimately be associated with them in that lofty habitation.

We are sometimes told that heaven is to be considered as a *state*, rather than as a place referrible to any particular locality. And, undoubtedly, if heaven be taken

symbolically—if it be taken as, essentially, a *symbol of the perfection of holy blessedness*—it is independent of place, and may anywhere be realized. In like manner, of *hell*, assuming it as a symbol—a symbol of the *hopeless and utter misery which is the wages of sin*—it may be affirmed that it is a *state* rather than a *place*; and, instead of being confined to any specific locality, may anywhere be experienced in all its unmitigated horrors. Hence the fearful words which our great poet has put into the mouth of the rebel-angel, the arch-enemy of God and man—

"Me miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep,
Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven!"

It can answer no good purpose, however, to aim at being more abstract or more spiritual in our conceptions than the Word of God. It is a spurious refining which would attempt thus to improve on its sacred teaching. And no student of Scripture requires to be informed, that, according to the uniform tenor of its representations, while heaven may certainly be contemplated as a state, it is also to be regarded as a place, and as having a proper locality no less than the world in which we now dwell.

But in what region of the vast universe it may be found—whether among those bright orbs, which shining unchangeably on from age to age, shed their calm effulgence upon us from afar, or in some realm of the boundless immensity immeasurably more distant still—this is a matter with respect to which we have been left in utter ignorance. Whatever may be the fact in this particular, we are to conceive of that heavenly world as one of inexpressible glory. Such, assuredly, the world must be where God peculiarly has his august abode—the world which he has chosen as