



“Memor et Fidelis.”

VOL. I.]

MONTREAL, MAY 1, 1857.

[No. 12.]

The Blessings Procured by the Ascension of Christ.

A Sermon, Preached at Champlain N. Y., Feb. 17 1857, at the interment of Col. Robert Hoyle, of Lacolle C. E., by the Rev. Canon Townsend, M. A., Rector of St. George and St. Thomas.

John XIV 2, 3. "In my Father's house are many Mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

There is nothing capable of exercising so strong an influence on the human mind, in sustaining it under the difficulties and trials of life, and consoling it under sorrows, as the hope of future happiness, which the gospel brings to the sincere believer.

If destitute of this hope, Christians would of all men be most miserable, for they fully apprehend the awfulness of the penalty due to sin in the eternal world; and the vanities of the present life have become disgusting to them, since they proved them to be evanescent and worthless.

But the possession of such a hope, if based on the word of God's unfulfilling promise renders them incomparably more happy, even under the most afflictive circumstances, than the possession of all the world's honours and riches could make them.

The disciples of Jesus loved their master with sincere and strong affection, and when He told of his intention to leave them that He might return to the bosom of his Father, their hearts sank within them; their fond but erroneous expectations of his temporal kingdom and sovereignty were disappointed, and they became disconsolate.

It was on this occasion that our compassionate Saviour opened to the hearts of his sorrowing children the rich and living springs of divine comfort. He told them where He was going—to his Father's house. He explained to them in what manner He was going—in a way that they could not follow Him now, but that they should follow Him afterwards. He unfolded to them the purpose for which He was going—that He might prepare a place for them. He gave them assurance that his parting from them now was not a final separation, "a little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." He thus raised their drooping spirits with the promise, that He would come again and receive them to himself, and recompense them fully for all they might do or suffer for his sake. These were the sources of that lively hope with which He comforted their despondency, the springs of that effectual consolation which He poured into their hearts.

As the Almighty has not deemed it expedient to

give us in this world, a very full and definite description of heaven—that future world of spiritual existence beyond its general outline, as a region of purity, peace, and endless joy, we may profitably devote our attention now to the consideration of the brief description which our Lord here gives us of it.

"In my Father's house are many mansions." From all that is revealed of that heavenly world wherein dwelleth righteousness, we are induced to believe it to be a place of perfect holiness and felicity, where beings of a high and holy nature dwell in an atmosphere of truth and purity, where the false and the corrupt cannot come, and where pain, sorrow, and death cannot enter, and we are led to view it as a kingdom of great magnificence and beauty, unrivalled by any scene of splendour on earth, and far exceeding the boldest conceptions of human thought.

To aid our feeble efforts at so sublime a contemplation, let us look for a moment at the brief glimpse of the New Jerusalem, which was allowed to St. John in his vision of the apocalypse. "Its walls were of Jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. And the twelve foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was Jasper, and the others Sapphire, Chalcedony, Emerald, Sardonyx, Sardins, Chrysolite, Beryl, Topaz, Chrysopterus, Jacinth, and Amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every gate was of pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

This description was doubtless intended to elevate our thoughts, and enlarge our conceptions of the great, beautiful, and happy things, which God has in store for the faithful and obedient, that our hearts may be drawn upward to seek the favor and righteousness of a being whose habitation is so glorious. Yet however grand a description this truly is of God's holy city above, a truly spiritual mind which has subdued its sinful propensities, and its taste and love for earthly things, will perhaps see an equal beauty in the few descriptive words of our Saviour in the text—"In my Father's house are many mansions."

Although the whole universe is God's dwelling, and his presence fills immensity, yet that portion of his vast domain, where He assembles around Him the multitudes of holy and intelligent beings of his creation, is called by way of eminence "my Father's house." And of this we could still form but a very imperfect conception without some object on earth, with which to compare it; and He here seems to have reference to the Temple at Jerusalem, that being the most magnificent edi-

fice known to the world. And it may be said that God dwelt there in an especial manner as that was the focal point of worship for the Jewish nation, and there more than elsewhere, was He specially revealed to man; there, the cloud of his glory, the visible embodiment of the divine Majesty, rested upon and filled the house that had been built to his name, and consecrated to his service.

In the human habitations scattered over our globe, each individual house is in itself a separate mansion. But in God's vast house above designed for his great family, "there are many mansions" amply sufficient for the accommodation of all.—We know that in the Jewish temple, besides the Holy of Holies, there were other spacious apartments, and courts, and ranges of chambers, for the Priests, for the Levites, and for every other necessary purpose in that magnificent edifice;—but whether the heavenly mansions are to be the receptacles of distinct classes of the glorified, the Saviour hath not declared, it is sufficient for us to know that He who hath gone to prepare them for us will order all things just and well, and that in those mansions God will dwell with his people, and display to them the most absorbing views of his glory, which will fill their souls with extatic delight. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." In those mansions of blessedness, his redeemed ones will be permitted to behold Him face to face—to see Him as He is, and to know even as also they are known.

These were the consolations which the Saviour mingled with the announcement of his approaching departure from the earth, to comfort the hearts of his mourning disciples; they had forsaken all and followed Him, in his humble fortunes, sympathized in his manifold sorrows, for they loved Him for the godlike perfections of his character, and they had respect unto the recompense of the reward which He had promised them. For this reward of their sacrifices and fidelity, He now teaches them to look not to this world, but to heaven. He gives them assurance of the accommodations which are made for them in his spiritual kingdom above, for the certainty of which He appeals to his well known truthfulness which had never deceived them.—"If it were not so, I would have told you." He then proceeds to acquaint them with the reason why it was necessary for Him to leave them and go to the Father, and the end to be accomplished by his ascension to heaven, viz: to prepare a place for them in the mansions of the blessed, and to send them the Holy Ghost the comforter to be the perpetual