

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE INFANT AND THE AGED.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 19TH, 1862, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed."—Isaiah lxxv. 20.

THESE words are a part of a paragraph of Holy Scripture taken by a great many men that advocate an earthly millennium; but it so happens that our text, being a part of that paragraph, is fatal to every one of their theories. I will mention three theories held by men. The first is, that the period will arrive when the longevity of human life will extend to a thousand years; and that is the period here referred to, taking the thousand years in the 20th of Revelation thus literally. But then, unhappily for this theory, it here states that "the child shall die an hundred years old," that is only a tenth part of the thousand. So that this one Scripture lets all the water out of the lock; down goes their ship to the bottom, and there they are fixed; and there we may leave that theory by itself. And the second theory is, that the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend personally, and shall raise the saints from the dead, and the wicked shall be governed for a thousand years by the saints in this their resurrection state, and the saints shall reign literally a thousand years. But then, unhappily for this theory, we find in our text that "the child shall die an hundred years old," and that this child is evidently a child of God, as is seen by its contrast in the following clause, where we have the following clause commenced by a disjunctive conjunction; "but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." Therefore, the theory that the saints shall rise and reign all that time, and, of course, to die no more,—our text is fatal to that. And then, the third theory is, that the day of judgment will arrive; that the wicked shall be judged and banished from the earth into their awful destiny; that the saints shall be raised from the dead; and that this earth shall not be so burnt up as to pass away; but that the saints shall be raised up to meet the Lord in the air, and stay there while this earth by fire is undergoing a purification; and then, that Jesus Christ will descend to this earth, and his people with him, and that this same earth will be their heaven, where they are to dwell. But then, unhappily for this theory, our text stands in a four-fold form point-blank against it. In the first place, our text brings infants before us; but in the resurrection there will be no one in an infantine state. And secondly, our text brings an old man before us; but in the resurrection state there will be no old men. And third, our text brings death before us; "The child shall die an hundred years old;" but in the ultimate resurrection state there will be no death; they cannot die any more. And fourth, our text brings an old sinner before us; but in the ultimate blessedness of the saints there will be neither old sinners nor young sinners. So then, in all these theories, our text is a kind of mysterious sort of thing, that lets the water out of every one of the locks, and all these three theories,—these three ships,—sink to the bottom, with all their cargo of falsehood and rubbish; and there

we may leave them, and come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and read our text in the light of that which is practical for present and for eternal purposes. And, so far from our text being ambiguous or difficult, I think we shall find, as we go along, that the meaning of it is as simple, and as clear, and as plain as any other gospel part of the Bible; but if we get away from the new covenant into the theories of men, we are sure to be confused. Let us, then, cleave close to Jesus Christ, and let us cleave close to that order of things to which Jesus Christ belongs; he belongs to the new covenant, and it is new covenant laws which the Lord puts into the minds of his people, and which he writes in their hearts, and by which they are eternally saved.

Now, our text lies before us, as it seems to me at least, in what may be called three doublets. Here we have, in the first place, *the infant, and certainty of life*; "There shall be no more thence an infant of days," meaning, as the learned very well observe, that there shall be no more an infant of few days. So then, the first doublet of our text is, here is an infant, and the certainty that that infant shall live. And then, here is, secondly, *a good old age, and a happy death*; "nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child"—this same old man, you see, is called a child,—“shall die an hundred years old.” And then, third, here is *an evil old age, and an unhappy destiny*; “but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

First, then, we have *the infant, and the certainty of its life*. This infant, of course, will mean the spiritual infant,—will mean what Peter calls the new-born babe. This is what we have to look after this morning, then, to see if we can find out what these new-born babes are, and how they are distinguished from others, together with the certainty of their not dying. We know very well that this is intended as a kind of contrast to nature. Vast numbers die, as we are all aware, in infancy; but not one spiritual infant ever did die, or ever will die, or ever can die, because they are born of an incorruptible seed, that liveth and abideth for ever. And I shall not enlarge much upon the description of the infant, or evidence of being born of God. I will just take that Scripture in Job, and reverse it, where you read of infants that never saw light. Now, those who are born of God do see light; and what is the light they see? I answer, the light they see is the light of salvation. Hence, in the 18th of Matthew, where the Saviour speaks very much of little ones, he uses these beautiful words, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” He uses these words after setting before us a beautiful parable relative to the lost, the found, and the saved sheep; “Even so,” he says, “it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Now let me go back to the words again, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” So, this is the sweet evidence, or, at least, it is an evidence of being born of God, to know that without Christ’s life; that without Christ’s death,—atoning death; and without his Spirit, and apart from God’s everlasting life, we are lost. Ah, happy the man that has this religion,—a knowledge, a feeling sense of his lost condition. And let him ask himself some serious, some solemn questions upon this. What is it to be lost? Why, to be lost is to be banished from the favour of God; to be lost is to be banished from this earth into hell; to be lost is to come to where we read of one coming to; it is to lift up mine eyes in hell, and to desire that Lazarus might be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue. Ah, then the question is pushed home to the conscience, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Now, the new-born babe, then, he who is born of God, has this consciousness of his lost condition; he has this solemn apprehension of the solemn truth that he is without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. Now, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost; and the Lord turns their minds this

way; for "every one," saith the Saviour, "that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." And you say to yourself, What did Jesus Christ come into the world to do? He came to save that which was lost. Well, what does that mean now? It means, in the first place, that as we were lost by sin, he came to put sin away, so that we can get rid of sin only by faith in Jesus Christ. It means, in the next place, that as we stand condemned by the law of God, he came not to abolish that law, but he came to fulfil, to magnify, and establish that law on behalf of poor sinners; so that, he that believeth in Jesus is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

He came to save. What does it mean? Why, he came to establish free and entire and final forgiveness of sins; here sin is forgiven, forgotten, and blotted out. He came to save. What does it mean? Why, it means also regeneration; it means the ingathering of sinners to himself under a sight and sense of their lost condition, with an apprehension of the suitability of his salvation. He came to save. What does it mean? Why, to save not only from evil, but to exalt us into a life, a light, a peace, a joy, an inheritance, and possessions, and glories—shall I say crowns, and sceptres, and kingdoms, and robes of immortality?—and to bring us up into the highest association that exists: there is no association so high as that into which the saints are brought; it is association with Father, Word, and Holy Ghost. Our fellowship is with the Father—it is the highest of all associations; our fellowship is with the Son—it is the highest of all associations; our fellowship is with the Spirit—it is the highest of all associations. Here are springs that can never run dry; here is joy that can never end; here is glory that can never be tarnished; and here is a standing that can never—no, never be lost. Well might this same divinely-favoured prophet, Isaiah, sum it up in these beautiful words, that "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Now then, my hearer, if thou art one of these spiritual infants, one of these new-born babes, or one who is called by grace, one who is quickened by the Holy Ghost, thou wilt see thy need of this salvation; thou wilt see the suitability of Jesus Christ; you will seek the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby; and if you cannot bring your prayers into form, yet, like the infant literally, there will be a crying for something which, perhaps, you may not as yet very clearly understand, but there will be, as there is in the infant, the cry of nature; there will be in you the cry of grace, the cry of the new-born soul, and that cry will be after mercy, and after grace, and you will never be satisfied until the Lord shall manifest himself unto you, and until you shall receive that spirit of adoption by which you shall cry Abba, Father. Such, then, are the infants; such are the little ones. They are converted from what they were, and are converted to Jesus Christ, and by Jesus Christ converted to God in God's true and eternal counsels; thus they become converted and as little children, and so, by being thus humbled down, they enter into the kingdom of heaven. They can enter in no other way, for there is no other way but grace, there is no other way but faith. Such, then, are those that are born of God. Now, let us look at the certainty of their lives. Such persons can never die. How clear the Scriptures are upon this—that the soul thus born of God, there is every reason why that soul cannot die. And I may just say to you, some of you, perhaps, that are half halting between two opinions—not two opinions as to whether you should seek the Lord, but perhaps two opinions as to whether duty-faith and free-will are right, or whether free-grace be right—then I would just say, for the sake of clearness, to such, that when you see professors turn away from the truth, and become apostates, you think, that is a real child of God fallen away from grace. No, my hearer, that is a mere professor that has given up his profession, turned apostate, and

never had the grace of God vitally. Hear what the Scriptures say upon this. I do not wish you to believe in my words; it is my place to set before you, in all the simplicity I can, the Lord's words. John says of such persons that you think were children of God, and they have lost the grace they had—I mean, some of you may perhaps still think that—but just hear what John says, hear what the Holy Ghost saith by the apostle John, and take his word for your guide; you can't do better. John speaketh thus: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would doubtless have continued with us." Just look at that. Now let me drop a word to the Christian that knows the truth clearly, and I am sure your heart will respond to what I am going to say, and it is this, Do not all other Christs—in other words, do not all other gospels, as compared with the free-grace gospel of God, appear too contemptible in your eyes for you to turn away from the free-grace gospel of God, and to turn to those paltry gospels of men? and does not the glorious counsel of the blessed God, in having contrived the means that his banished ones should not be excluded from him, and having adopted those counsels that will stand good to eternity—for the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure,—does not that counsel appear to you so magnificent and so worthy of a God, so befitting his infinite glory, and so befitting his integrity, his love, and everything that he is, that all the inventions of men pertaining to eternal matters in your eyes appear contemptible; that you reject them with as much disdain as men of God in olden time rejected the literal idols that were made by men; that you reject the whole? As Watts sings,—

" I call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

Here are they that will not go out from us; here are they that follow the Lamb, Christ, in his sacrificial perfection, Christ in the victory he hath obtained, Christ in the certainty of his kingdom, Christ in the glory of his cross; here are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These are they that are born of God. And shall these have a few days? Oh, no; their days will be just as long as God's love is, and that is for ever, for as long as he loves they must live; their days will be just as long as God's choice is, and that choice is in Christ, and therefore eternal; their days will be just as long as the atonement of Christ can make them; their days will be just as many as the righteousness of Christ can make them; their days will be just as many as the resurrection and life of Christ can make them, and he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, and "because I live ye shall live also." Now, come, I ask you, is there any difficulty, then, in understanding this first clause, that "there shall be no more thence an infant of days," that is, of few days? In the kingdom of nature, how many infants there are of few days; but in the kingdom of grace there never was and there never will be an infant of few days; the child is sure to live, and "as one," saith the Lord to these little ones, "whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." Thus, then, if we look at these infants or new-born babes, their being children of God is evidenced by their being brought to see and feel their lost condition, and brought to see the suitability of Christ, become converted to Christ, not only in what Christ is as to his work, but also in what Christ is as to the order of that work, that he is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Now then, saith the Saviour, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish;" mark that! So my text very beautifully uses the singular, "There shall be no more an infant of days." And so here the words of the Saviour, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish;" mark that, one! Perhaps there may be one of these little ones saying, Well, if I am

one, I am such a weak one, such a helpless one, with all my rebellion, I am such an unworthy one, surely it cannot be me. Yes, it is you; that must be true; you are one: "It is not the will of my Father which is in heaven that *one* of these little ones should perish." And so my text says, "There shall be no more thence an infant of days." I love to dwell upon it. Satan must be mortified, surely, that of all the souls that have ever been born of God he has not been able to kill one. He destroyed the whole of us, for from the beginning he is a murderer; he destroyed the whole of us in the first Adam, but he cannot touch one in the second Adam. Hence saith John of the man that is in Christ, one with Christ, "He abideth, and the wicked one toucheth him not;" as though he should say, The wicked one did touch you in the first Adam, and the wicked one did touch you in yourself, and he will touch you in yourself again, and he will even get you to a certain extent, perhaps, under his dominion, but there stands the promise, "He shall bruise Satan down under your feet shortly." But in the life, and liberty, and perfection you have in Christ, the wicked one toucheth you not. And so there shall no more be an infant of a few days. In the first covenant there were infants of few days. Jewish children died as others died. When they were born, their names were inserted in the public register, called the book of life; when they died, their names were erased. Well, now, the people of God, their names are written in the book of life, and when they die their names will be erased. But then, they never will die, and therefore their names will never be erased. Hence the dear Saviour upon this very subject uses these beautiful words, "Neither can they die any more." What a sweet expression, "Neither *can* they die." Why, they could not die if they were to try to. No; the thing is impossible. That which killed them I have killed; and he who was the dragon over them, I have bruised his head, and I have swallowed up death in victory. "Neither *can* they die any more." But are the children of God not the children of men? Naturally, they are the children of men; but spiritually, they are the children of God. In their first birth they are the children of men; but in this, their new birth, born of God, they are the children of God. "Being," saith the dear Saviour, "the children of the resurrection." What resurrection? Why, his resurrection. For "I am," saith Christ, "the resurrection." "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs." Here, then, we have the little ones, conscious of their lost condition, looking to Jesus as the only Saviour; and here we have the certainty of their eternal life. They shall not die, but shall live. Out of the mouths of these babes and sucklings God hath perfected and ordained praise, and by their very testimonies and praises he shall finally silence all his foes, cast the adversary out, and exalt them to his own presence. I have said nothing of the joyfulness of their life. We are on this side of death, that we see the mortality, and we see but little of the immortality that lies just behind the shadow, just across the Jordan. I am sure of it, the more familiar we are made with Jesus, the less we shall fear to live, and the less we shall fear to die.

But I notice, in the next place, *the good old age, and happy death*. "Nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old." Now here is a good old age. What is a good old age? I will just touch upon that first. What is a good old age? Well, a good old age is a *praying* old age; a good old age is an old age that makes very much use of what Christ has done. That is a good old age; that is a praying old age. Psalm lxxi., "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." That is a good old age, then, that has this heart to pray to God. And see the authority of it; mark another scripture, the authority for this, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and will bear." I

will bear with you, and bear all the expenses, and bear all your infirmities;—he took our infirmities. “Even I will carry, and will deliver you.” And then, again, in that same 71st Psalm, “Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shown thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.” How should the psalmist do this? He should do this by the testimony he should bear. That is a good old age, then; that is a praying old age—a praying old pilgrim. We like to hear the old pilgrim pray; he can tell out some of the trials he has had by the way; he can tell out some of the mercies he has realized. I must not attempt to enter into the Psalm, to give an amplification of its several beautiful parts; I must therefore merely throw out two or three suggestions, and one is this: it is a remarkable thing—and you will see from the language of the Psalm that David was an old man when he wrote it;—it is a remarkable thing that he names the righteousness of God, that is, the righteousness of Christ;—he names it no less than five times in that Psalm. “Deliver me in thy righteousness.” Ah! David, David, what, have you been living all these years, and got no righteousness of your own yet? No, no, Lord, I have not; I am as bad off as ever. “Deliver me in *thy* righteousness.” Lord, though I have lived so long as I have, I am a poor sinner in myself; and if I be delivered now, it must be as heretofore, in thy righteousness. And then, again, he says, “My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness;” and then, again, in the same psalm, he says, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of *thy* righteousness;” and to tell us what the experience of his old age was, he says, “even of thine only.” I loathe myself more than ever, and I love thy righteousness and covenant more than ever. And such confidence had he by this righteousness of Christ, that he says, “Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.” How do you know that, David? Oh, there is a salvation that can do it; for “my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day.” “Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.” Well, what will you do when you get up? Why, “my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long;” and thus he closes the psalm. Five times in that psalm does David thus name the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So that “there shall not be an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old.” And hence, then, a good old age is a praying old age; a good old age is an old age found in the way of righteousness, for the hoary head is a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness, and that must be the righteousness of faith. Hence the Lord said to Abraham that he should die in a good old age. Well, what made Abraham’s old age good? Why, that that I have stated, and something more. In the 15th of Genesis the Lord said to Abraham, “Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” And in the same chapter, the Lord says to Abraham, “Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.” And then, if you take the trouble,—if it is a trouble to you,—to go from the 15th of Genesis to the 25th of Genesis, and just compare the promise with the fulfilment, you get the two. In the 15th chapter, the Lord says, “Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.” In the 25th chapter, about a hundred years afterwards, there is Abraham’s death, and there it is said, “He died in a good old age.” Oh, our God is a faithful God. So then it is said of Abraham, of Gideon, and of David, and others, that they died in a good old age, first, because they had a praying heart, a believing heart, and an experimental acquaintance with God’s salvation, and God was on their side, and that was a good old age. And then bearing fruit in old age, that is a good old age. Psalm xcii., “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree”—that is, Christ;—“he

shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon"—that is, Christ. "Those that be planted," in oneness with Christ, "in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age," to show that the "Lord is upright:" he said that he would take care of them, and so he has done. The Christian loves Jesus Christ, stands out decided for God, can bear a good testimony for the truth; he brings forth fruit in old age, "to show that the Lord is upright; he is my rock," saith the Psalmist, "and there is no unrighteousness in him."

But, again; let us take another view of this matter. "Nor an old man that hath not filled his days." I think it means there shall not be an old man that has not lived to purpose,—in contrast to the sinner I must touch upon presently. Ah! the old man that I have described, that knows the truth, he has lived to purpose. To what purpose has he lived? "Oh," he says, "I have lived to find out perfection; I have lived to find out that there is perfection in Christ; I have lived to find out that there is salvation in God; I have lived to find out the way of eternal life; and now my days are filled with Christ—my days are filled with God. I have filled my days. Ah! now I can bless God for creation, because I have found salvation; now I can bless God for my natural birth, because I am blessed with a spiritual birth; now I can bless God for my natural existence, because I have a supernatural existence; now I can bless God that I have lived to purpose. Ah! my life is worth having now. I have lived to know the Lord; I have lived to know Jesus." And then the second thing is, that he has filled his days in bearing his testimony. No Christian can die till he has finished his testimony. All Christians are witnesses for God, whether they will be witnesses or not:—sure to be,—and they shall finish their testimony. Many of the Lord's people are a kind of silent witnesses; the eyes of the world are upon them. The old Christians are generally pretty quiet. As we sometimes say, a young Christian is like a shallow stream—it makes a great noise as it rattles over the pebbles and stones, but when you come to it, it is but a shallow stream; but, by-and-bye, when the channel becomes deeper, the water becomes more concentrated, and it will go along quietly. So with the old Christian; he will go along very quietly; he will not make much noise, but still there will be a something everybody will respect that understands it; and he will become a kind of silent witness. "Dear me! What is that man? Never hear him swear; never see him get intoxicated; never see him in a public-house, or if he does go in, it is to get a little refreshment—such refreshment as it is—and he pops out again directly; always see him off on a Sunday morning somewhere. I wonder where he goes to? I should think he is religious. Hardly know what to make of him. He goes past that church, and past that chapel, and goes past a dozen places of worship. I will see where he goes to. I can't make it out." And, ten to one, they do find out before they have done. They don't say anything, and you don't say anything; and, depend upon it, you do ten times more good by this silent walking than by all the noisy talking in the world. Depend upon it, that is the best way. Stand out—walk out your principles—and stand out in this quiet way. Attend diligently to your worldly calling; fill up your place, and do your work to the very best of your ability; and pray God to increase your abilities, if you are a bungler at present; but don't talk about religion; let religion talk for itself. It will speak for itself ten times better than you can speak for it. And then, you that are servants, your master will not be able to drop in upon you and say, "I did not engage you to talk about religion, but to attend to your work." And so, then, go quietly along, and bear testimony in this way for God; and thus you will be an honour to his name, adorning the doctrine of God. You are walking in a way that will bring peace to your own conscience, and glory to the Lord; and the Lord will be with you; and though you will condemn those around you, not with words, but with works, and

they will feel a secret enmity against you, because they are conscious you are condemning them by the steps you take; still, at the same time, something in their consciences will tell them that, with all their enmity, you are right, and they are wrong; and they will respect you, secretly, after all; and you shall be the head, after a time, and they the tail; you shall go up, and they shall go down; and you will find that God will be with you, and will bless you; for the Lord hath said, "Them that honour me, I will honour." God enable you, therefore, to fill your days—to fulfil your mission. "There shall not be an old man that hath not filled his days." It is a good old age then; and that is the way in which they fill their days—by acquiring a knowledge of that perfection they have in Christ, and being living epistles among men, among whom they shall shine as lights in the world, that they may glorify God in the day of visitation.

But this same old man is called a child. I shall not be able to get to my last clause this morning. Now, "the child shall die an hundred years old." This may be taken two ways. First. Though he is a hundred years old, literally, yet, in the spiritual sense, he is but a child. Why, take that one aged Christian,—see his humility. Hear him say, "I am less than the least of all saints. I am not worthy to be called an apostle;" I am such a poor creature; I am but a little child; I know a mere nothing. And I am persuaded of it, if we are in the right path, our humility before God will increase. We shall sink, and sink, and sink in our own estimation, and say, Here I am, an aged man, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, or even a hundred years old,—yet, in the things of God, I am but a little child. I know as nothing: I am a poor creature. I am sure this will be the case; and the result will be that unto such the Lord Jesus Christ will be precious beyond description. See the Psalmist. He was seventy when he died; and see what his testimony was. Well, David, you have fought many battles for the Lord; you have stood out most scrupulously, all through your life, for his truth; you have subdued the enemy; you have established the national freedom of the people of God, and you have established the worship of God; you have shown a most laudable decision for the ark of God, the priesthood of the Most High, the truth of the Most High. Yea, David,—thou art the sweet psalmist of Israel, the anointed of the God of Jacob—one who is raised up on high. Yes, yes! Well, what do you say now? Have you not something to lean upon of your own in a dying hour? Oh, no! I have not. Where is your hope now, David? Let us hear how you can speak. You are an aged man. Ah! but in the things of God I am a little child; and here I simply am. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant." I have nothing else to live upon, or to die upon. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Oh, dear me! Have you not got beyond that, David? No; and the Lord forbid I should get beyond it. I bless his dear name I ever came to it. I do not want to go beyond it, nor to get away from it. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. This is all my salvation, and all my desire, though he make it not to grow." Ah! it will grow fast enough when you are in heaven, David; it will come into perfection then. Why, what was this but an old man and a little child in one?—a little child, and yet bearing that testimony on the banks of Jordan, that constitutes the very song and glory of heaven.