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A Better Country.

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A Better Country.

AN ASSOCIATION SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CHARLESTON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

AT ORANGEBURG, (S. C.)

Nov. 6th, 1809.

BY JOHN M. ROBERTS, A. M.

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"They desire a better country, that is an Heavenly." Heb. xi. 16.

IN this biographical chapter which treats of immortal heroes and invincible martyrs, the Apostle, sublimely and pathetically, delineates and exemplifies the nature, operations and triumphs of evangelical faith. Every stroke of his inimitable pencil, demonstrates that, he paints from the glowing image in his own inspired breast. He collects a bright cloud of faithful witnesses. He marshals, before our admiring eyes, a devout, magnanimous veteran phalanx of antediluvian and postdiluvian saints; of patriarchs and prophets, judges and kings, of male and even *female* heroes in the cause of God. We behold these intrepid, unconquerable sons and daughters of the King of Sion, singing songs of praise and shouting victory, in the hottest battles, in the most fiery trials and deepest waters of affliction. After suffering in bonds and prisons, in dens and in caves, in mountains and in deserts—After subduing kingdoms of darkness, quenching the violence of fire, and stopping the mouths of lions, these fearless servants of the most high God, are crowned with celestial laurels. Under the storms of persecution and the edge of glittering swords, they breathe the undaunted spirit, and utter the appropriate, triumphant language of St. Paul. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things, that are seen, are temporal, but the things, that are not seen, are eternal. Neither tribulation nor distress, sword nor famine, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, life nor death, shall separate us

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth, there is laid up for me, a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day. It is better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. O death ! where is thy sting ! O grave ! where is thy victory !” This is the spirit, this is the power, this the language and the victory of that supernatural gift, that spiritual principle, that cardinal virtue, that divine grace—Faith ; which, in all ages, generations and nations, has influenced, governed and characterised, the sincere, humble disciples of our adorable Redeemer.

Our text is fraught, is impregnated with the spirit of this primary, christian grace ; and therefore the doctrine of its nature, importance, necessity, and consolations as a fundamental principle of our holy Religion, will be the first proposition discussed and illustrated in this discourse.

Arguments to prove, that it is vital, genuine faith, with its concomitant, holy lights, which enkindles an ardent desire for the heavenly country ; and that the heavenly country is infinitely better than any earthly country, will constitute our second proposition.

We shall, then, conclude with a practical application of the subject—

May the spirit of divine wisdom assist hearers and speaker !

We are, in the first place, to discuss and illustrate the nature, importance, necessity and consolations of evangelical faith—In the first verse of the chapter, containing our text, we have a concise, comprehensive, grand definition of this characteristic of regenerated souls. “ Faith, says the Apostle, is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen”—True faith substantiates, embodies, realizes, and approximates beings, objects and enjoyments, invisible, distant and future. It penetrates through, and looks beyond a world of clouds, “ and the dark valley of the shadow of death.” —It gives us eyes to see and ears to hear the elements melting with fervent heat, the sun darkened, the moon turned to blood, the stars falling from Heaven, the sound of the last trump, the graves opening, the dead arising, and the universal conflagration : It beholds the eternal judge descending, seated on his august throne, all nations, and all worlds gathered before his dread tribunal ; the books opened, the process of the tremendous trial, the witnesses and testimonies, the final decision, and the irreversible sentences. Faith unbolts the harsh sounding iron doors of Hell, and alarms us with the

