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EMMONS

A

COLLECTION OF SERMONS,

WHICH HAVE BEEN PREACHED

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

AND

PUBLISHED AT VARIOUS TIMES.

BY NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN.



BOSTON:

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1813.

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OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

SERMON I.

Addressed to the Congregation in Franklin, upon the occasion of their receiving from Dr. FRANKLIN, the mark of his respect, in a rich Donation of Books, appropriated to the use of a Parish-Library.

1 KINGS ii, 2.

———*Shew thyself a man.*

DAVID closed the scene of life, with that propriety of conduct, and that composure of mind, which at once displayed the beauty of religion, and the dignity of human nature. When the time of his departure drew nigh he had nothing to do to prepare for death, but only, like other pious and illustrious Patriarchs, to converse with his friends, and to give them his last and best advice. And, as he had, some time before, committed to Solomon the care of his family and government of his kingdom; so he felt a strong and ardent desire, that this beloved son, in whom he had reposed such important trusts, should appear with dignity, and act a noble and worthy part upon the stage of life. Accordingly he called him into his presence, and with equal solemnity and affection, addressed him in these memorable words, “I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man.” This appellation sometimes signifies the dignity, and sometimes the meanness of our nature. Job makes use of it to express our meanness and turpitude in the sight of God. “How can man be justifi-

fied with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold, even to the moon and it shineth not, yea the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man that is a worm, and the Son of man which is a worm." But Isaiah employs this same appellative to represent the dignity of human nature, when he calls upon stupid idolaters to "remember this, and shew themselves men." So here, David in his dying address to Solomon, "shew thyself a man," evidently means to use the term in the best sense, and to urge him to act up to the dignity of his nature, and the end of his being.

Agreably therefore to the spirit and intention of the text, the subject which now properly lies before us, is the dignity of man. And, I hope, the observations which shall be made upon this subject, will do honor to our nature in one view, and pour contempt upon it in another, and so lead us all into a clear and just apprehension of ourselves, which is the most useful, as well as the most rare and high attainment in knowledge.

The dignity of man appears from his bearing the *image* of his Maker. After God had created the heavens and the earth, and furnished the world with a rich profusion of vegetive and sensitive natures, he was pleased to form a more noble and intelligent creature, to bear his image, and to be the lord of this lower creation. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This allows us to say, that man is the offspring of God, a ray from the fountain of light, a drop from the ocean of intelligence. Though, man, since the fall, comes into the world destitute of the *moral*

image of God, yet, in the very frame and constitution of his nature, he still bears the *natural* image of his Maker. His soul is a transcript of the *natural* perfections of the Deity. God is a spirit, and so is the soul of man; God is intelligence and activity, and so is the soul of man. In a word, man is the living image of the living God, in whom is displayed more of the divine nature and glory, than in all the works and creatures of God upon earth. Agreeably therefore to the dignity of his nature, God hath placed him at the head of the world, and given him the *dominion* over all his works. Hence says the Psalmist, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have *dominion* over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air; and the fish of the sea." How wide is the kingdom of man! how numerous his subjects! how great his dignity!

God, has, besides, instamped a dignity upon man by giving him not only a rational, but an immortal existence. The soul, which is properly the man, shall survive the body and live forever. This might be argued from the nature, the capacity, and the desires of the human mind, and from the authority of the wise Heathens, who have generally supposed the soul to be a spiritual and immortal principle in man. But, since the Heathen moralists might derive their opinion from a higher source than the light of nature, and since every created object necessarily and solely depends, for continued existence, upon the will of the Creator; we choose to rest the evidence of this point upon the authority of the sacred Oracles. Here indeed we find the immortality of the soul sufficiently established. Solomon saith, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that

goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" And, in another place, after describing the frailty and mortality of the body, he adds, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Agreeably to this, our Lord declares that men are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. And God has told us that he will, at the last day, separate the righteous from the wicked, and fix the latter in a miserable, but the former in a blessed immortality. Hence immortality appears to be the common property and dignity of the human kind.

The creatures and objects, with which we are now surrounded, have but a short and momentary being. One species of insects, we are told, begin and end their existence in twenty-four hours. Others live and flutter a few hours longer, and then drop into their primitive dust. The larger animals, which people the air, the earth, and the sea do, day after day, in a thick and constant succession, die and dissolve in their own elements. And even the whole material system will, after a few ages, either by the immediate hand of God, or by the gradual operation of the laws of nature, be rolled together as a scroll, and tumbled into one vast and promiscuous ruin. But we shall survive all these ruins and ravages of time, and live the constant spectators of the successive scenes of eternity. And this renders us infinitely superior, in point of dignity and importance, to all the objects and creatures, whose existence expires with time.

The dignity of man also appears, from the great attention and regard, which God hath paid to him. God indeed takes care of all his creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works: but man has always been the favorite child of Providence. God

before he brought him into being, provided a large and beautiful world for his habitation; and ever since the day of his creation, he has commanded all nature to contribute to his support and happiness. For his good, he has appointed the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. Into his bosom, he has ordered the earth and the sea to pour all their rich and copious blessings. And for his use and comfort, he has given the fowls of the mountains, the beasts of the forests, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. He has also given his Angels charge over him, to keep him in all his ways. Accordingly they have appeared from time to time, to instruct him in duty, to deliver him from danger, to bring him good tidings, to attend his dissolution, and to convey his departing spirit to the mansions of rest. But the most distinguishing and most astonishing display of the divine mercy, is the incarnation and death of the Son of God for the salvation of man. By the incarnation of Christ, our nature was united with the divine, and the dignity of man with the dignity of Christ. Hence all the sufferings, which Christ hath endured on earth, and all the honors, which he hath received in heaven, have displayed the dignity of man. And for the same reason, the dignity of man will be eternally rising, with the rising honor and dignity of Christ.

But, we must futhermore observe, that the large and noble capacities of the human mind, set the dignity of our nature in the clearest and strongest light. Let us therefore consider, in this place, several of these with particular attention.

First, Man hath a capacity for constant and perpetual progression in knowledge. Animals, indeed, appear to have some small degree of knowledge. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib."

But, as all the lower species are destitute of the power of reasoning, or the faculty of arranging and comparing their ideas; so they are totally incapable of enlarging their views, by intellectual improvements. The bee cannot improve her skill, nor the ant her prudence, by observation or study. All their knowledge is the mere gift of God, which he bestows upon them without any application or exertion of theirs.

But, man is capable of improving in knowledge as long as he enjoys the means or materials of improvement. Indeed he has power to improve the smallest stock forever. The faculty of reason, with which he is endowed, enables him to proceed from one degree of knowledge to another, in a constant and endless progression. The grounds of this are obvious. As a certain chain, or connexion runs through all branches of knowledge; so the acquisition of one degree of knowledge facilitates the acquisition of another, and the more a man knows, the more he is capable of knowing. And, as all the powers and faculties of the mind brighten and expand by exercise; so a man's capacity for improvement increases, as the means and thirst for improvements increase. Accordingly the path of knowledge, has resembled the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. One generation have been improving upon another, from age to age. And the improvements and discoveries of the last and present century are truly surprising, and justify this grand and bold description,

“Earth’s disembowell’d! measur’d are the skies!
 Stars are detected in their deep recess!
 Creation widens! vanquish’d *Nature* yields!
 Her secrets are extorted! *art* prevails!
 What monuments of genius, spirit, pow’r!”

But to show that reality in this case surpasses description, let me here mention Solomon, that great man, who is addressed in our text, and whose astonishing improvements in knowledge are recorded by the pen of inspiration, for the encouragement, as well as the instruction of all future ages. "And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes." The children of the East country were the Chaldeans, who, after the flood, made the first advances in astronomy, philosophy and other abstruse sciences. Next to them the Egyptians turned their attention to learning, and soon outrivalled all other nations in literary fame. Solomon therefore surpassed all the priests and poets, all the physicians and historians, and all the naturalists, philosophers, and astronomers of the two most ancient, and most refined nations in the world. What an exalted idea does this exhibit of his wisdom and learning! And, as we must suppose that he made these improvements by reading, by observation, and study; so he stands a lasting ornament of human nature, and a perpetual monument of man's capacity for constant and endless advances in knowledge.

Secondly, Man hath a capacity for holiness as well as knowledge. The horse and mule which have no understanding, and indeed all the lower animals, are utterly incapable of holiness; and even Omnipotence

himself, to speak with reverence, cannot make them holy, without essentially altering the frame and constitution of their natures. But man is capable of holiness. His rational and moral faculties both capacitate and oblige him to be holy. His perception and volition, in connexion with his reason and conscience, enable him to discern and feel the *right* and *wrong* of actions, and the *beauty* and *deformity* of characters. This renders him capable of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. In a word, this renders him capable of every holy and virtuous affection. And, as he is capable of growing in knowledge, so he is capable of growing in grace, in a constant and endless progression. What a dignity does this give to man, and how near does it place him to principalities and powers above! This leads me to observe,

Thirdly, That man hath a capacity for happiness, equal to his capacity for holiness and knowledge. Knowledge and holiness are the grand pillars which support all true and substantial happiness; which invariably rises or falls, accordingly as these are either stronger or weaker. Knowledge and holiness in the Deity are the source of all his happiness. Angels rise in felicity as they rise in holiness and knowledge. And saints here below grow in happiness as they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of holy and divine objects. Of this, we have a beautiful and striking instance in Solomon. View him at the dedication of the temple, when he fell upon his knees, and lifted up his hands and his heart to God, and poured into the ear of the Divine Majesty the voice of prayer and supplication, the voice of joy, of gratitude and praise. How near did he approach to God! How high did he rise in felicity! how much did he anticipate the joys of the

blessed! And, if we now follow him to the temple above, where his views, his affections, and his joys are incessantly enlarging; we may form some faint conception of that amazing height, to which man is capable of rising in pure and divine enjoyments. What a vessel of honor and dignity will man appear, when all his capacities for knowledge, for holiness, and for happiness, shall be completely filled! And to all this we must add,

Fourthly, That man hath a capacity for great and noble actions. Of this, we might find numerous monuments, if we had time to survey the land of Shinar, where Babel, Babylon, and Nineveh stood; or the land of Egypt, where so many grand and costly pyramids, tombs, and temples were erected; or the famous cities of Greece and of Rome, where the nobler efforts of human power and genius, have been still more amply displayed. But, the bounds of this discourse will allow us only to mention a few individuals of our race, who, by their great and noble exertions, have done honor to human nature. Noah, the second father of mankind, saved the world from total extinction. Joseph preserved two nations from temporal ruin. Moses delivered the people of God from the house of bondage, and led them through hosts of enemies, and seas of blood to the land of promise. David settled the kingdom of Israel in peace; and Solomon raised it to the summit of national glory. Paul, in spite of pagan superstition, laws and learning, established Christianity in the heathen world. Luther, by the tongue and pen of controversy, brought about a great and glorious revolution in the Christian church. Newton, by his discoveries in the *material*, and Locke, by his discoveries in the *intellectual* world, have enlarged the boundaries of

human knowledge, and of human happiness. And, to name no more, Franklin in the cabinet, and Washington in the field, have given independence and peace to America. But greater things than these remain to be done. The kingdom of Antichrist is to be destroyed, the Mahomedans are to be subdued, the Jews are to be restored, the barbarous nations are to be civilized, the gospel is to be preached to all nations, and the whole face of things in this world, is to be beautifully and gloriously changed. These things are to be done by the instrumentality of man. And by these, his capacity for great and noble actions, will be still more illustriously displayed. Thus the image, which man bears of his Maker, the immortal spirit which resides within him, the distinguishing favors which he has received from the Father of mercies, and all his noble powers and faculties, unite to stamp a dignity upon his nature, and raise him high in the scale of being.

It now remains to make a few deductions from the subject, and apply it to the happy occasion of our present meeting.

First, We may justly infer from the nature and dignity of man, that we are under indispensable obligations to religion. Our *moral* obligations to religion are interwoven with the first principles of our nature. Our minds are so framed, that we are capable of knowing, of loving, and of serving our Creator; and this lays us under *moral* obligation to worship and obey him. Nor is there one of our race, who is incapable of feeling his *moral* obligations to religion. Only draw the character of the Supreme Being, and describe his power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and mercy, before the most ignorant and uncultivated savage; and, as soon as he understands the character of God, he will

feel that he *ought*, that he is *morally obliged* to love and obey the great Parent of all. He will feel himself under the same *moral* obligation to pay *religious homage* to God, as to speak the truth, or to do justice to man. Every man in the world is capable of seeing that the worship of God is a reasonable service. Religion therefore takes its rise and obligation not from the laws of politicians, nor from the ignorance and superstition of priests; but from the immutable laws of nature, and the frame and constitution of the human mind. Hence it is utterly impossible for men wholly to eradicate from their minds all sense of *moral* obligation to religion, so long as they remain moral agents, and are possessed of common sense.

And, as man is formed for religion, so religion is the ornament and perfection of his nature. The man of religion is, in every supposable situation, the man of dignity. Pain, poverty, misfortune, sickness and death, may indeed *veil*, but they cannot destroy his dignity, which sometimes shines with more resplendent glory, under all these ills and clouds of life. While the soul is in health and prosperity; while the mind is warmed with holy and religious affections, the man appears with dignity, whether he is in pain, or in sickness, or even in the agonies of death. But, atheism and infidelity, with their evil offspring, serve more than all other causes put together, to defile the nature, and sink the dignity of man. This appears from the black description, which the great apostle Paul has drawn of those nations, who *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*. "They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. They changed the truth of God

into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. They *dishonored* their own bodies by the most mean and infamous vices. And they became of a *reprobate mind*, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud; boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." These are things which defile the nature, and degrade the dignity of man.

And these two are prejudicial to all learning and mental improvements. These debilitate the mind, cloud the imagination, and cramp all the noble powers and faculties of the soul. These degraded the Alexanders, the Pompeys, and the Cæsars of the world, below the human kind. Had they been influenced by truly virtuous and religious motives, their great exertions would have done honor to human nature, but now they have stained the glory of all flesh. Nay, even a *declension* in religion hath left indelible stains upon the brightest characters recorded in sacred story; I mean Noah, David, and Solomon. Solomon was at the height of his glory, when at the height of religion; but when he declined into vice and idolatry, he fell into shame and disgrace, and lost that dignity, which had filled the world with his fame.

Now there is nothing that can wipe off from human nature these blemishes, and restore the dignity of man, but true religion. That charity which seeketh not her own, that love which is the fulfilling of the law, is the essence of religion and the bond of perfection. This cures the mind of atheism, infidelity and vice, this fills the soul with noble views and sentiments,

and directs all its powers and faculties to their proper use and end. This exalts the dignity of human nature, and spreads the greatest glory around any human character. This rendered Noah superior to Nimrod, Moses superior to Pharaoh, David superior to Saul, Solomon superior to Socrates, Daniel superior to the wise men of Babylon, and Paul superior to Plato, and all the sages of the pagan world. "Happy is the man who findeth *religion*: For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her. Length of days are in her right hand; and in her left hand, riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is the man that retaineth her." Let us all then put on this rich and beautiful ornament and shew ourselves men.

Secondly, This subject may help us to ascertain the only proper and immutable boundaries of human knowledge. I mean such boundaries of our knowledge, as arise from the frame and constitution of our nature, and not from any particular state or stage of our existence. Our rational powers, it is often said, are limited, and therefore all our intellectual pursuits and improvements must be equally limited. This is doubtless true in a certain sense, but not in the sense in which it is generally understood. It appears from what has been observed in this discourse, concerning the powers and faculties of the human mind, that men are capable of making constant and eternal progression in knowledge. The only bounds therefore that can be set to their intellectual improvements, must be such as have respect to the *kinds*, and not the *degrees*

of their knowledge. There are, indeed, certain *kinds* of knowledge, which men are totally incapable of understanding; but these are only such *kinds* of knowledge, as require more than *created* faculties to understand. For, whatever *kinds* of knowledge any *created* beings are capable of understanding, *men* are also capable of understanding, though with more difficulty, and less rapidity. As Newton knew nothing, which any man is now incapable of knowing, in a certain time, and under certain circumstances; so there is nothing, which any intelligent creatures now know, that men are incapable of knowing, in a given time, and under proper advantages. The truth is, rationality is the same in all intelligent beings. Reason is the same thing in God, in angels, and in men. As men therefore bear the *image* of God, in a point of rationality; so they possess all the *rational* powers and faculties, which bear any analogy to the divine intelligence; or, which can be communicated to *created* beings. Accordingly angels are superior to men in the same sense, and perhaps nearly in the same degree, that Newton was superior to most of his own species. As Newton had no *rational* power or faculty peculiar to himself; so angels have no rational powers or faculties which are not common to all intelligent creatures. Every man therefore is capable of learning all that any man, or any intelligent creature has learned, or can learn. Hence the only natural and necessary distinction between angels and men, and between one man and another is this; that angels are capable of acquiring knowledge more easily, and more swiftly than men; and some men are capable of acquiring knowledge more easily, and more swiftly than others. And this difference between angels and men, and between man and man, to whatever

cause it may be owing, will probably continue forever; and forever keep up a distinction in their knowledge and improvements for the time being.

Now this being a settled point, we may easily, perhaps fix the proper boundaries of human knowledge, or determine the proper subjects of human inquiry. It is a caveat given to men but especially to inquisitive men, not to pry into things above their measure. This caveat, undoubtedly, in some cases, may be very proper and necessary, but generally, I imagine, it is not only needless but absurd. For, unless men attempt to pry into things which surpass *created* powers and faculties. I do not know that they transgress the boundaries of human knowledge. There are some things, which, in a moment, we know cannot be understood by *creatures*. And there may be many others, which, by a little attention, we may perceive, come under the same predicament. All therefore that divines and metaphysicians, as well as philosophers have to do, in order to know where to *begin*, and where to *end* their researches, is only to determine whether or not, the proposed subjects require more than *created* abilities to investigate them. If they do require more than *created* abilities, it is vain and absurd to proceed: but if they do not, we have the same grounds to proceed, that men have ever had, to attempt new discoveries.

Thirdly, This subject gives us reason to suppose, that men, in the present state, may carry their researches into the works of nature, much further than they have ever yet carried them. The fields of science, though they have been long traversed by strong and inquisitive minds, are so spacious, that many parts remain yet undiscovered. There may be therefore room left in divinity and metaphysics, as well as in

philosophy and other sciences, to make large improvements. The large and growing capacities of men, and the great discoveries and improvements of the last and present century, give us grounds to hope, that human learning and knowledge will increase from generation to generation, through all the remaining periods of time. Men have the same encouragements now, that Bacon, Newton and Franklin had, to push their researches farther and further into the works of nature. It is, therefore, as groundless, as it is a discouraging sentiment, which has been often flung out, that all the subjects of enquiry, all of human inquiry, are nearly exhausted, and that no great discoveries or improvements, at this time of day, are either to be expected or attempted. The present generation have superior advantages, which, with capacities no more than equal to their fathers, may enable them to surpass all who have gone before them in the paths of science. Let this thought rouse their attention, and awaken their exertions, to shew themselves men.

Fourthly, The observations, which have been made upon the noble powers and capacities of the human mind, may embolden the sons of science to aim to be originals. They are strong enough to go alone, if they only have sufficient courage and resolution. They have the same capacities, and the same original sources of knowledge, that the ancients enjoyed. All men are as capable of thinking, of reasoning, and of judging for themselves in matters of learning, as in the common affairs and concerns of life. And would men of letters enjoy the pleasures of knowledge, and render themselves the most serviceable to the world, let them determine to think and judge for themselves. Their progress may perhaps, in this way, not be so rapid; yet it will be much more entertaining and useful. When I say their progress may not be so rapid, I mean with res-

pect to those only, who possess moderate abilities; for as to those of superior powers, they will make much swifter progress by going alone out of the common, beaten track. The way to outstrip those who have gone before us, is not to tread in their steps, but to take a nearer course. What philosopher can expect to overtake Newton, by going over all the ground, which he travelled? What divine can expect to come up with Mede, Baxter, or Edwards, while he pursues their path? Or what poet can hope to transcend Homer and Milton, so long as he sets up these men as the standards of perfection? If the moderns would only employ nature's powers and converse freely and familiarly with nature's objects, they might rise above the ancients, and bear away the palm from all who have gone before them in the walks of science.

Fifthly, What has been said concerning the nature and dignity of man, shows us, that we are under indispensable obligations to cultivate and improve our minds in all the branches of human knowledge. All our natural powers are so many talents, which, in their own nature, lay us under *moral* obligations to improve them to the best advantage. Being men, we are obliged to act like men, and not like the horse or the mule which have no understanding. Besides, knowledge, next to religion, is the brightest ornament of human nature. Knowledge strengthens, enlarges, and polishes the human soul, and sets its beauty and dignity in the fairest light. Learning hath made astonishing distinctions among the different nations of the earth. Those nations, who have lived under the warm and enlightening beams of science, have appeared like a superior order of beings, in comparison with those, who have dragged out their lives under the cold and dark shades of ignorance. The Chaldeans and

Egyptians, as well as the Greeks and Romans while they cultivated the arts and sciences, far surpassed, in dignity and glory, all their ignorant and barbarous neighbors. Europe since the resurrection of letters in the sixteenth century, appears to be peopled with a superior species. And the present inhabitants of North America owe all their superiority to the Aborigines, in point of dignity, to the cultivation of their minds in the civil and polite arts. Learning has also preserved the names, characters, and mighty deeds of all ancient nations from total oblivion. A few learned men in each nation, have done more to spread their national fame, than all their kings and heroes. The boasted glory of Britain is more to be ascribed to her Newtons, her Lockes, and her Addisons, than to all her kings, and fleets, and conquerors.

But the cultivation and improvement of the mind is more necessary for use, than for ornament. We were made for usefulness and not for amusement. We were made to be the servants of God, and of each other. We were made to live an active, diligent, and useful life. As men therefore, we cannot reach the end of our being, without cultivating all our mental powers in order to furnish ourselves for the most extensive service in our day and generation. Knowledge and learning are useful in every station; and in the higher and more important departments of life, they are absolutely and indispensably necessary.

Permit me now, therefore, my hearers, to suggest several things, which may serve to excite you to improve your minds in every branch of useful knowledge, which, either your callings, or your circumstances require.

I am happy to congratulate you, my countrymen, that we live in an age which is favorable to mental

and literary improvements. In the present age, our country is in a medium between barbarity and refinement. In such an age, the minds of men are strong and vigorous, being neither enfeebled by luxury, nor shackled by authority. At such a happy period, we come upon the stage, with the fields of science before us opened but not explored. This should rouse our dormant faculties, and call up all our latent powers in the vigorous pursuit of knowledge. Those, who have gone before us in these pursuits, have only set us an example, and facilitated our progress, without damping our hopes, or forbidding our success.

Again, we live under that form of government, which has always been the friend of the Muses, and parent and nurse of Arts. It was while Greece and Rome were free, republican States, that learning there sprang up, flourished, and rose to its height; and enrolled their names in the annals of fame. Liberty, which is the birth-right of man, and congenial with his nature, ennobles and exalts the mind; inspires it with great and sublime sentiments; and, at the same time invites and encourages its highest exertions, with hopes of success and the promises of reward. For, in free Republics, where liberty is equally enjoyed, every man has weight and influence in proportion to his abilities, and a fair opportunity of rising by the dint of merit, to the first offices and honors of the state.

Another motive to improvement, you will allow me to say, may be taken from your past singular and laudable efforts to cultivate and diffuse useful knowledge in this place. It is now more than thirty years, since this single and then small congregation collected a very considerable Parish-Library, in order to improve their minds in useful and divine knowledge. This

was such an effort to promote mental improvements as, I imagine, cannot be easily found in this country: The benefit of this Library you have all perhaps more or less experienced; and, to its happy influence owe, in a measure, your general character as a religious and intelligent people. May this consideration have all its weight upon you, since our Lord hath said in the parable of the talents, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance."

In this respect, how wonderful the smiles of Providence upon you! Whose heart doth not glow with gratitude for the auspicious occasion which hath now brought us together! How great our obligations to God for the unmerited and unexpected favor of a rich collection of books now received, as a mark of respect from the first literary character in America, his Excellency President FRANKLIN! This well-chosen and very valuable Library, while it sets the divine kindness in a high and engaging light, lays you under the strongest ties of gratitude to improve the means of cultivating your minds for the service of God and of your fellow-men. Should you second the views of that great man, and build upon the broad foundation which he has generously laid, you may enjoy ample advantages, in point of books, to improve your mental powers, and furnish yourselves for usefulness in all your various stations and employments of life. Nor can you neglect or abuse such advantages, without drawing upon yourselves the reproach of the world, and what is infinitely more, the reproach of your own consciences. Be entreated then to improve to the best advantage, every price put into your hands to get wisdom.

There are three grand sources of knowledge before you, nature, men, and books. Attentively read each of these great volumes.

Read nature, which is truly an original author. King David, studying this large and instructive volume, which filled his mind with the noblest views and sentiments, broke forth in a rapture of praise, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."

Read men, "for as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." This volume David perused and digested in the court and camp of Saul, where human nature, with, and without a veil, was very visible to his critical and discerning eye.

But the design of this discourse more directly leads me to urge the reading of books in particular. These are a grand magazine of knowledge, and contain the learning and wisdom of ages. But, you must know, that books are a peculiar fountain, from whence may be drawn either *sweet* waters or *bitter*, the waters of *life*, or the waters of *death*. For this reason, you will allow me here to advise you, to take heed *how* you read.

And, in the first place, read with caution. A person may be undone by a single volume. Nothing contains such secret and fatal poison as books. Though they profess a kind and friendly intention, yet they often bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. Be careful what books you read. There are many, which the young and inexperienced at least, should totally avoid. In this particular, if you are wise, and faithful to yourselves, you will endeavor to obtain and follow good advice.

Read with judgment. This is, in every view, indispensably necessary, in order to read to advantage. This will enable you to discover and ascertain the main object of your author, which will be a key to all he says in the various parts and branches of his subject. This will help you to distinguish truth from error, good sentiments from bad, and sound reasoning and strict demonstration, from mere conjectures and bold assertions. But if you read without judgment, you will be in danger of imbibing error as well as truth, of always believing the last author you read, and of never having any fixed and settled sentiment of your own.

Read for use and not for amusement. The time is worse than thrown away, which is spent in reading for amusement, without any particular end or object in view. We should be careful how we take up a book, especially, if it be an entertaining one, with which we have no particular concern; for it will require a considerable effort of the mind to throw it aside, and if we do not throw it aside it will steal away our time, and prevent our being better employed. Almost any book, if read for use, may be of advantage. We may read amusing, and, even corrupting books to advantage, if we read them in order to make a good use of them. The bee can suck honey from the same flowers, from which other insects suck poison. But we may read all our lives to very little purpose, if we read every book which happens to fall in our way for amusement and not for use. We should always read with reference, either to our own particular profession, or to the particular state and situation of our own minds. When we read with either of these objects in view, we shall be apt both to understand and digest what we read. There is great and singular advantage

in reading proper books at a proper time, when we really stand in need of them. This is of the same happy tendency, as eating and drinking at the proper seasons, when it serves to nourish and strengthen, instead of clogging and surfeiting the body.

Read with patience. Many authors are both prolix and obscure in conveying their ideas; and after all, have much more chaff than wheat in their writings. In reading such, we must go over a great deal of ground in order to reap a small harvest of ideas. It is difficult, however, for any man to treat any subject in a method entirely new. We must expect therefore to find many common and familiar thoughts in every author, which we must patiently read, if we would *properly* come at those which are more new, entertaining, and instructive. And for this reason it is generally best perhaps, if authors are of any tolerable size, to read them through, with patience and attention. This is but justice to them, and prudence to ourselves.

Read with confidence. In our first essays after knowledge, we are obliged, by the laws of our nature to depend upon the assistance and instruction of others, and in consequence of this, we are apt to feel, through life, too great a sense of our own weakness and imbecility, and to despair of going a step further than we are led. This, however is very unfriendly to all improvement by reading. We ought therefore to feel that we are men, and place a proper degree of confidence in our own strength and judgment. We ought to fix it in our minds that we are capable of improvement. Such a confidence in ourselves as this, will embolden us to read with a view not only of understanding, but of improving upon the authors we read. Very few authors have exhausted the subjects upon which they have treated, and therefore have gen-

erally left us ample room to improve upon what they have written. And by reading with this view, if we fail of improving upon those we read, we shall, however, more clearly and fully understand *their* meaning, and more thoroughly make *their* ideas and sentiments our own.

Yet at the same time, every one should read with humility. Reading, more than any other method of improvement, is apt to puff up the mind with pride and self-conceit. For, persons of reading are very prone to estimate their knowledge more according to the number of books which they have read, than according to the number of ideas which they have collected and digested. And so are ready to imagine, that they have engrossed to themselves all knowledge; though, in reality, they have not read enough to learn their own ignorance. This should teach us to take the Poet's advice.

"A little learning is a dangerous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain;
And drinking largely sobers us again."

Nor is pedantry peculiar to those only, who begin to read and study late in life; for it is too often found among those, who have enjoyed a regular and liberal education. Do not physicians and attorneys, by reading a few books in divinity, sometimes fancy themselves masters of that sacred and sublime science? And, on the other extreme, do not divines, by reading a few books in law and physic, sometimes fancy themselves masters of those two learned professions? But this is rank pedantry. It is an easy matter to gain a superficial acquaintance with the general objects of science; but it is a laborious task to acquire a deep and thorough acquaintance with any single

branch of knowledge. It is easy to know *something* about *every thing*; but it is difficult to know *every thing* about *anything*. If men of reading would collect the whole stock of their knowledge, and the whole force of their genius more to a point, and aim to be complete masters of their own professions; they would become at once, much less pedantic, and much more useful to the world. Many men of real abilities and learning, have defeated their own usefulness, by attempting to know, and to do too much.

In the last place, read *prayerfully*. "If any of you lack wisdom, says the apostle, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." This Solomon found to be true, by happy experience. "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and *I am but a child; I know not how to go out or come in*. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen; a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. *Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart; to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing*. And God said unto him, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not ask-

ed for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself *understanding* to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee *a wise and understanding heart.*" It was Dr. Doddridge, I think, who never used to take up a new book to read, without an ejaculatory prayer for divine influence and direction. This example is worthy of universal imitation. Let us therefore always accompany our essays after knowledge with a humble and prayerful spirit; and then we may hope to read and study with safety and success.

To all these directions, I might now add diligence and perseverance, which always have had, and always will have, a mighty influence, in all the great things done by mankind. But I shall only add a few words to those, who are very immediately and deeply interested in the things which have been said in this discourse.

This subject calls upon parents in particular, to shew themselves men. You are, my respectable hearers, men in years, be men also in virtue, in religion, and in understanding. Let the dignity of man appear in all your conduct, and especially in your conduct towards your children. Let them see the dignity of human nature exemplified before their young and attentive minds. They are every day, and every hour, watching your conduct, and looking up to you for example and instruction. Take heed, that none of your words, none of your actions, none of your pursuits, be unworthy of men. But let all your conversation and behavior be such as your children may follow with propriety, with safety and dignity. And while you are teaching them by example, teach them also by precept. Give them good instruction; and for this purpose, provide them good instructors,

These are of great importance to your children, whose progress in knowledge, will generally bear a very exact proportion to the abilities and fidelity of their teachers. The education of children has always been an object of great attention among all wise nations, and especially among all wise and good parents. Let this then be the object of your attention. Consider the dignity of man. Consider the worth of the soul. Consider the rich and invaluable treasure put into your hands. Consider how much the dignity and happiness of your children both in time and in eternity, depend upon your care and fidelity. And let the ties of nature, the authority of God, and your own solemn vows, engage you to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to cultivate and embellish their opening minds in every branch of useful and ornamental knowledge. Admit not the thought, that such little, such weak, and to appearance, such useless creatures, are of small importance; but remember that they are men in miniature, and may, one day, surprise the world with their dignity. When a young Prince is born, all the kingdom feel the importance of his education, and are anxiously concerned to have the ablest instructors employed, to form him for great and noble actions. But you have more than Princes, even young Immortals, committed to your care, whose powers and capacities, whose dignity and importance, will astonish you, at the great day, if not before. How happy will that parent be, who shall then be found to have been faithful to his children! "He will then join," as a celebrated writer observes, "his virtuous offspring in the habitations of the just, and there see them rise up and call him blessed. But if a parent neglects his duty to his children; if he sets before them an exam-

ple of irreligion, and suffers them to grow up loose and unprincipled, he may expect that their blood will be required at his hands, and he should tremble to think of that period of retribution, when probably they will curse him for that negligence which has ruined them."

Finally, Let this subject awaken the attention of the youth, to the dignity of their nature and the end of their being. My dear young friends, you will soon be called to act your various parts upon the stage of life. You are now the hope of your parents, of your pastors, and of your country. The eyes of the world are upon you. Be entreated then to cultivate all your noble powers, and to shew yourselves men, in whatever departments of life, divine Providence shall place you. Piety and knowledge will prepare you for a useful and honorable life, and for a peaceful and triumphant death. Let these then be the supreme objects of your pursuit. Early consecrate all your time and all your talents to the service of God, and of your fellow-men. Seek for knowledge, as for silver, and search for it, as for hid treasures; and sacrifice every object which obstructs your pursuit of it. "Through desire a man having *separated himself*, says Solomon, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." If you would make progress in learning, and rise to any distinguishing degrees of knowledge, you must separate yourselves from the vanities of youth, and devote those vacant hours to mental improvements, which, too many of your age trifle away in folly and vice. In particular, flee youthful lusts, which war against both the body and the mind. Shun that all-devouring monster, intemperance, by which so many *strong minds* have been cast down and destroyed. Avoid bad company and unmanly diversions, which are an

inlet to every vice. Hold in steady contempt, *Beaus* and *Fops*, those butterflies which live upon the filth and dregs of the earth. Diogenes walking the streets of Athens at noon day with a lanthorn in his hand; and being asked, as he intended to be, what he was searching after, tartly replied, "I am looking for men." A severe satire upon the luxury and effeminacy of that once manly and virtuous people. The dignity of man appears in the ornaments of the mind, and not in those of the body. Seek therefore to adorn and embellish your minds both by reading and observation, and your gifts and abilities will make room for you, and bring you before great men. You have peculiar advantages and encouragements to animate you to great and noble exertions. *Therefore set your mark of intellectual attainments as high as you please, and, according to the common course of events, you will, by uniformity, diligence, and perseverance, infallibly reach it.* Your generous benefactor hath set you an example, as well as given you the means of intellectual improvements. That great man, in the morning of life, was surrounded with uncommon difficulties and embarrassments, but by the mere dint of genius and of application, he surmounted every obstacle thrown in his way, and by his rapid and astonishing progress in knowledge, he hath risen, step by step, to the first offices and honors of his country, hath appeared with dignity in the courts of Britain and of France, and now fills more than half the globe with his fame. Keep this illustrious example in your eye, and shew yourselves men.

SERMON II.

Preached before the Convention of the Congregational Ministers in Boston,
May 31, 1804.

1 COR. i, 10.

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

UNITY of sentiment has a happy tendency to promote and preserve that mutual affection, which ought to reign in the hearts of all the followers of Christ. There is nothing which can disturb the peace, or alienate the affections of any society of Christians, while they really believe and openly profess the same religious sentiments. The church of Corinth which Paul planted, abounded in brotherly love, so long as they mutually agreed in believing and professing the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. But when a disagreement in their religious opinions appeared, it destroyed their mutual attachment, and involved them in bitter animosities and contentions. The apostle, perceiving the primary cause of these deplorable evils, laid the axe at the root of the tree, and entreated them to unite in sentiment, as the only proper and effectual way to recover their former peace and tranquillity. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." By this he did not mean to inculcate insincerity, or urge them to speak the same thing, while they did not believe the same

thing; and therefore he immediately adds, "but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Such a unity of faith seems to be his darling theme, in his writings to other churches. In his epistle to the Philippians, he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be *thus minded*; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the *same rule*, let us mind the *same thing*." And in his address to the Ephesians, he enlarges upon the subject, and represents Christ as appointing the means of grace for the particular purpose of uniting all his followers in the belief of the same truths. "But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the *perfecting of the saints*, for the *work of the ministry*, for the *edifying of the body of Christ*; till we all come *in the unity of the faith*, and *of the knowledge of the Son of God*, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, *tossed to and fro*, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*." These passages confirm the construction we have given of the text, and leave us no room to doubt, that the apostle meant to enjoin it upon all Christians, to be united in their religious sentiments. It is, therefore, the intention of the ensuing discourse, to illustrate the propriety of this divine injunction.

Paul was a man of sound judgment, and of extensive information. He had studied Moses and the Prophets. He had read the writings of the heathen sages, and thoroughly examined their religious opin-

ions. He had been well acquainted with the Jewish teachers, and had once been carried away with their vain traditions. And besides all this, he had, upon clear conviction, renounced his former creed, and cordially embraced the pure principles of Christianity. Hence he knew, by experience as well as speculation, whether men ought to be required, notwithstanding their various talents, their various means of information, and their various modes of thinking, to become united in their religious sentiments. Upon this subject, he was the most impartial and the most competent judge. And since he has solemnly enjoined it upon the whole Christian world, "to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment;" it must be presumption to call the propriety of his own precept in question. But though we may not dispute the propriety of the apostle's injunction, yet we may inquire into the reasons upon which it is founded. And there are two very plain and obvious reasons, why Christians should be required to think alike upon religious subjects.

One reason is, that God has given them an infallible rule of faith. His word contains a complete and connected system of divine truth. All the doctrines which compose this system are to be believed, and all which stand in opposition to it are to be rejected. It is a perfect standard, by which all religious opinions are to be tried and decided. Hence those who are assaulted by false teachers, are directed to regulate their faith by this criterion. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The apostle agrees with the prophet, in representing the sacred oracles, as an unerring guide in matters of faith as

well as practice. He asserts, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." God having given Christians such a complete system of divine truth, there is a plain propriety, in his requiring them to believe not only that it is a complete system of divine truth, but also to believe all the particular truths, which compose the system. For it would be absurd to require them to believe the system in general, and yet allow them to disbelieve any or all the particular truths contained in it. So that if it be conceded, that the Bible is *any* rule of faith, it must be acknowledged, that it is a *perfect* rule of faith. And since all Christians have this perfect rule of faith in their hands, God may justly require them, to form their religious opinions exactly according to it; which is precisely the same thing, as to require them to unite in their religious sentiments. For it is a universal maxim, that when two things agree with a third, they also agree with each other. If, therefore, we say, as we ought to say, that God may properly require all Christians to agree with the Bible; then we must say, that he may properly require them to agree with each other, or to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. But since it may be thought, that this argument is lame, because Christians are imperfect creatures, who are incapable of understanding and following that perfect rule of faith, which God has given them, it seems necessary to observe,

In the second place, That the word of God is not only a *perfect* rule of faith, but *sufficiently plain and intelligible to every capacity*. "The law of the Lord is *perfect*, converting the soul; the testimony of the

Lord is sure, *making wise the simple*. The statutes of the Lord are *right*, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is *pure, enlightening the eyes*." The word of God is no less *plain*, than *powerful*. It must be plain, because the truths contained in it, naturally result from the character of God, and from the various relations which mankind bear to him and to one another. All who are capable of knowing that they are the creatures of God, are equally capable of knowing what he has required them to believe concerning himself, and concerning their own character, their present situation, and their future state. This may be easily illustrated. The doctrine of *moral depravity*, for instance, is agreeable to the observation and experience of all the children of men. The doctrine of divine decrees is level to every one's capacity, who is able to form any just conception of the existence and character of God. The doctrine of Christ's atonement is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, who have always entertained some idea of a Mediator between them and their offended Sovereign. The doctrine of divine influence upon the human heart, in the production of its moral exercises, has been generally believed, by heathens as well as Christians. The doctrine of God's existing a Trinity in Unity, and the doctrine of the personal union of humanity and divinity in the glorious Immanuel, are as easy to understand, though not so easy to explain, as any other doctrines in scripture. Nor is it any more difficult to remove all plausible objections against these high points in theology, than to remove all plausible objections against the existence of motion, or spirit, or personal identity, or any other visible or invisible object. These observations might be extended to every doctrine of the gospel; but there is a shorter and easier way to demonstrate the plainness of that

rule of faith, which we find in the sacred oracles. The Bible is the word of God; he gave it to be a rule of faith to all; he knew the characters, the circumstances, and the capacities of all; it must therefore, be plain and intelligible to all. To deny this, is to impeach both the wisdom and goodness of God in giving us his word. Now, if God has given a perfect rule of faith to all, which all are capable of understanding, then there appears to be a propriety, in his requiring all to believe and speak the same things in matters of religion. It is no less proper, that he should require all to believe alike in respect to the whole system of revealed truth, than that he should require all to believe alike in respect to any single article of Christianity. But who will say, that it is not proper, that he should require all to believe alike in respect to any one doctrine of the gospel? But if we allow the propriety of his requiring all to believe alike in one, in two, or in ten points, we must be constrained to allow, that it is equally proper, that he should require all to believe alike, in all points. No reason can be assigned for a single exception in this case, if the rule of faith be perfectly right, and altogether intelligible.

Though these few observations may be deemed sufficient to establish the propriety of God's requiring Christians to be united in their religious sentiments, yet candor seems to demand a fair and distinct consideration of some of the most ingenious and plausible things, which have been urged against this unpalatable doctrine.

The objection, which first occurs to the mind upon this subject, arises from the great and visible diversity in the intellectual powers and external circumstances of Christians. It is supposed to be *naturally* as well as *morally impossible*, that they should all think alike

upon religious subjects, so long as this internal and external difference remains.

The whole force of this objection will vanish, if we only consider, that unity of sentiment does not require equality of knowledge. Ten, or twenty, or twenty thousand persons, of different degrees of knowledge, may be united in the same sentiment, or in the same scheme of sentiments. A pastor and his people may embrace the same religious opinions in general, though as individuals, they may possess very different powers of mind, and very different degrees of mental improvement. A whole denomination of Christians may be united in their distinguishing tenets, though some may be much better able than others, to explain and defend their peculiar system of doctrines. It is easy to see how such a unity of sentiment may take place among such a variety of individuals, without an equality of knowledge. For, so far as they all know the same scheme of sentiments, they all agree; and so far as some feel their deficiency in knowledge, they do not pretend to judge; and, of consequence, do not presume to differ. And it is only in this way, that there can be perfect unity of sentiment in heaven. As one star differs from another star in glory, so angels will differ from saints, and one saint differ from another, in the state of perfection. But their difference in knowledge will not create any diversity of opinions respecting the same subjects. Saints will agree with angels so far as their knowledge extends; but so far as it fails, they will wait for further light. And just men made perfect in holiness, will conduct in the same manner towards those, who had been endowed with superior powers, and had been longer instructed in the school of heaven. It is, therefore, just as easy to see how Christians may, notwithstanding their dif-

ference in knowledge and talents, come to an entire unity of faith, in *this life*, as in the *life to come*.

The wide difference in the education and instruction of Christians, is often supposed to be an insuperable bar in the way of their becoming sentimentally united, in their present imperfect state.

There is no doubt but Christians are extremely prone to imbibe and retain the peculiar doctrines, in which they have been early and uniformly instructed. But since they have the word of God in their hands, it is completely in their power, to bring their own opinions and the opinions of their instructors to an infallible standard, and to decide for themselves what they ought to believe, or to disbelieve. Neither their private nor public teachers can lay them under a natural necessity of thinking, or reasoning, or believing wrong; but only throw difficulties in the way of their thinking, or reasoning, or believing right. And it is their indispensable duty, if they meet with such difficulties, to surmount them, and form their religious sentiments according to the holy scriptures, which will necessarily unite them in the truth. It was in this way, that Paul, and all the primitive Christians, whether Jews or Pagans, divested themselves of the errors and prejudices of education, and became united in the belief of the gospel.

Another thing strenuously urged against the doctrine we are pleading for, is the right of private judgment, which is supposed to give Christians full liberty to differ in opinion as much as they please.

It is readily granted, that every Christian has a right to think, to read, and to converse upon any religious sentiment, in order to collect evidence of its truth, or falsehood; and after that, to judge according to the evidence which he has collected. But he has no right, in any case, to examine and judge under

the influence of prejudice, and form his opinion contrary to the dictates of reason and the declarations of scripture. Though the Bereans were commended for searching the scriptures, in order to determine whether Paul preached the truth; yet we have no ground to suppose, that they would have been commended, if they had rejected the truth, after they had searched the scriptures. What they were commended for was, their honestly seeking the best evidence of the truth, and their heartily embracing it upon that evidence. This was their duty as well as privilege; but it was neither their privilege nor duty, to examine and reject the doctrines of the apostle, which were perfectly agreeable to the word of God. In this instance, we see the nature and extent of the right of private judgment. It is a right which all Christians have, to see with their own eyes, and to form their religious sentiments according to the infallible standard of truth. So that the proper exercise of this right will not *suffer* them to *differ*, but *constrain* them to see, and to embrace the same truths.

There is but one other objection, which appears to be worthy of notice; and this is drawn from the fourteenth chapter of Romans, in which the apostle is supposed *to allow* Christians to differ in their religious sentiments, and only exhorts them to view their difference in opinions with a candid and charitable eye.

This is rather an objection against the apostle himself, than against the leading sentiment in this discourse; for it supposes, that in writing to the Romans, he contradicts what he had written five or six years before to the Corinthians. But who can really suppose, that he would require the Corinthians to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, and yet expressly allow the Romans

to differ in their religious opinions? The truth is, the apostle wrote consistently, and his consistency will appear, if we only look into the chapter, from which the objection is drawn. He is there treating of the ceremonial law, which was then abrogated by the gospel. He allows, that real Christians might entertain different opinions concerning the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, which were things in their own nature indifferent, and which might be observed or neglected, under a sense of duty. Accordingly, he forbids them to censure one another on account of such non-essential points of difference, and exhorts them to exercise mutual affection and esteem. But, at the same time, he reminds them, that they must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, where their *opinions* as well as *actions* would be either approved, or condemned. From this it appears, that the apostle did not allow the Christians at Rome, any more than the Christians at Corinth, to differ in opinion: but if they did differ in opinion, concerning mere non-essential points, he exhorted them to exercise mutual love and forbearance. This is the plain meaning of the apostle in the fourteenth chapter of Romans, which is entirely consistent with his requiring all Christians to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Having set the propriety of God's requiring Christians to be united in their religious sentiments, in as clear and consistent a light as I am able; I shall now attempt to point out a number of serious and interesting truths, which naturally flow from the subject.

1. If God does, with propriety, require Christians to believe alike upon religious subjects; then it is not a matter of indifference what religious sentiments they embrace

Some seem to think, that there is but one truth, which is absolutely necessary to be believed, and that is the inspiration of the scriptures. They suppose, if men only believe the Bible to be divine, they are at perfect liberty to believe, or to disbelieve the doctrines contained in that sacred volume, without the least offence to God. Yea, some presume to say, that God is as much pleased with that variety, which appears in the faith of Christians, as with that variety, which appears in their external features. On this supposition, it must be a matter of total indifference what scheme of religious sentiments any man embraces, in order to obtain the divine favor. But how can this pleasing and prevailing opinion be reconciled with that unity of faith, which we have been considering? It appears, that men are bound to *believe what is true*, by the same authority, by which they are bound to *do what is right*. They are as much under law to God, in respect to faith, as in respect to practice. They have no more reason, therefore, to hope that God will save them, without believing the *doctrines* which the gospel contains, than without performing the *duties* which the gospel enjoins. Their future and eternal happiness as much depends upon the rectitude of their faith, as upon the rectitude of their conduct. It is true that every deviation from the law of faith will not exclude them from the kingdom of heaven, nor will every deviation from the law of love: but there are some essential doctrines to be believed, as well as some essential duties to be performed, in order to obtain eternal life. Our Savior said to the Jews in his day, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And in his last interview with his apostles he said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is bap-

sized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The faith here mentioned is saving faith; this saving faith implies a belief of the gospel; this belief of the gospel implies a belief of the doctrines of the gospel; and this belief of the doctrines of the gospel, our Savior affirms, is absolutely necessary in order to salvation. We have no right, therefore, to entertain the thought, that it is a matter of indifference what religious sentiments men embrace; for it appears that God has suspended *his* favor and *their* everlasting happiness, upon the condition of their *believing*, as well as *loving*, the great and essential doctrines of the gospel.

2. If Christians have been justly required to be united in their religious sentiments; then we have reason to believe, that they have contracted a great deal of guilt, from age to age, by embracing and propagating error. Though the multitude of them, who first believed the gospel, were of one heart and of one soul, and continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship; yet this union of faith and of love was of short duration. Some among these primitive professors of Christianity, soon raised an unhappy dispute concerning circumcision, which could not be decided, without the aid of an ecclesiastical council. This, we know, was followed by greater and more dangerous errors and disputes, which corrupted the purity and disturbed the peace of the principal churches in Greece and Asia, even while the apostles were living. And the same mystery of iniquity, which began to work in their day, has continued to operate, through every age of the church, to the present time. There have been, and still are, as great and dangerous errors in the *Christian*, as in the *Pagan* world. Indeed, the very errors of Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans, are often

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to be found in Christian creeds. And these corruptions of Christianity have divided the Christian world into a vast variety of sects and denominations, who have hated, opposed, and persecuted each other, with fiery zeal and unrelenting cruelty. Here then every one must see, that those who have embraced and propagated such gross and destructive errors, have had no excuse to make. They were favored with a plain and infallible rule of faith. They were tenderly and solemnly admonished to speak the same things, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. And they were threatened with the loss of the divine favor, if they either added to, or deducted from the sacred canon of scripture. They have always, therefore, drawn upon themselves a heavy load of guilt, by causing divisions, debates, and persecutions; by corrupting the sentiments and destroying the souls of men; and by obstructing the spread of the gospel and the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

3. It appears from what has been said, that Christians who are united in the belief of the truth, have a right to blame those, who think differently from them, upon religious subjects. We often hear it said, that one man has no right to blame another, merely for differing from him in his religious sentiments. But why may not any man, who really believes a certain doctrine of the gospel, blame another for disbelieving and denying that doctrine? The notion, that men ought not to blame one another for thinking differently upon religious subjects, is built upon the principle, that none can *really know*, that their own sentiments are *certainly right*. But this is a false principle, because there is a plain and infallible rule of faith, which

gives those who conform to it, certain evidence of their believing the truth. And a certainty of being right in sentiment is very different from the strongest confidence of being so. Those who embrace error, may be extremely confident that they embrace the truth, and they may mistake confidence for certainty. But should they ever actually embrace the truth, they will then *know*, that their present opinion is right, and that their former one was wrong. Paul verily thought that he *knew* the truth, while he rejected the gospel; but when he really embraced the gospel, he *knew*, that he *knew* the truth, and that his former opinion was a gross and dangerous error. The question among Christians is not, who are *probably*, but who are *certainly* right, in their belief of the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel? There is *certainty* to be obtained in these points, and all who have obtained it, *know* that those who differ from them, in these points, are certainly wrong. It is true, indeed, their knowing themselves to be right, is no proof to others that they are so; but it authorizes them to say positively, that all who deny the great truths which they believe, are grossly and criminally erroneous.

Accordingly, the inspired writers every where direct those, who embrace the truth, and *know* that they embrace the truth, to avoid, to condemn, and even reject all such as hold and propagate false and dangerous opinions. "Cease, my son," says Solomon, "to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Paul says to the Romans, "I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; and *avoid them.*" He directs the Galatians to condemn and reject the perverters of the gospel. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called

you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, *let him be accursed.*” And before he concludes the epistle, he adds, “I would they were even *cut off* who trouble you.” The beloved and benevolent apostle John, after all his pathetic exhortations to brotherly love, expressly forbids Christians to receive, or even countenance the teachers of false doctrine: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” In these instances, the apostles appear to follow the example of their divine Master who solemnly warned his friends to avoid and reject false doctrines and false teachers. Whilst he was upon earth, he said, “Beware of false prophets. Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” And since his ascension to heaven, he highly censured the churches in Asia, for not censuring and rejecting those, who had crept in among them, and propagated gross and fatal errors. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to conceive how it is possible for those, who are united in the belief of the truth, to obey these divine directions and admonitions, without disapproving and condemning, and, in some cases, totally excluding from their communion, such as openly deny the essential doctrines of Christianity.

4. If there be a propriety in God’s requiring Christians to be united in the belief of the truth, then there appears to be no propriety, in attempting to unite them in *affection* without uniting them in sentiment. Many seem to be much engaged to promote Christian

union and harmony in this way. They warmly urge us, to overlook the vast variety of religious errors in the Christian world, and to unite in affection, with all who bear the Christian name. They would have us give up the groundless hope of ever becoming united in sentiment, and to use all our efforts, to bring about mutual love and peace among all the professors of Christianity. But is this either a proper, or lawful method, to obtain the desirable end proposed? It seems the apostle did not deem this a proper method, to remove the divisions and disputes in the church of Corinth. Instead of urging them to overlook each other's errors, and agree to differ in sentiments, he exhorted them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, that then they might love as brethren, speak the same thing, and live in perfect peace. And this is the only proper way, to promote brotherly love, among any, or all denominations of Christians, upon a solid and permanent foundation. For, the brotherly love, which the gospel requires, is very different from general benevolence. We ought to feel benevolently towards all mankind, and wish well to the bitterest enemies of Christianity. But it is hard to conceive how the true believers of the gospel, can exercise brotherly love to those, who appear to disbelieve and despise the precious truths, upon which they found their hopes of heaven, and in the contemplation of which they expect the happiness of heaven will chiefly consist. They can no more exercise brotherly love to such as disbelieve and deny the *essential doctrines* of the gospel, than they can exercise brotherly love to such as deny the gospel itself. Unity of faith is the only proper basis of unity of spirit. Christians may be, and must be united in affection, so far as they are uni-

ted in sentiment: but so far as they are disunited in sentiment, they are and must be disunited in affection. There is, therefore, no propriety, nor prospect of success in attempting to unite the professed friends of Christ in brotherly love, without first uniting them in the belief of the same essential doctrines of the gospel.

But supposing that the whole Christian world could be brought to unite in affection, while they retain all their different and inconsistent opinions, it would be utterly wrong to attempt it. For, if Christians should form such a coalition, it would be criminal in itself, and highly injurious to the cause of religion. They would disobey the divine injunction, "to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." They would become an unchristian combination, to countenance and support each other in all their errors and delusions. They would, in practice, justify all the errors and delusions of Deists, Atheists, and Skeptics. And they would actually exercise that same kind of catholicism, which heretics and infidels have so long been pleading for, and by which they have done more mischief to Christianity, than by any other weapon, which they have ever employed against it. Under the pretext of promoting universal toleration, they have taught multitudes and multitudes, to extend their catholicism to disbelievers, deniers and opposers of the gospel. This unlimited catholicism naturally tends to subvert the gospel, and to involve the whole world in error and infidelity. Let none, therefore, cherish this spirit, and strengthen the hearts and hands of the enemies of truth, by attempting to unite Christians in affection, without uniting them in the belief of the great and essential doctrines of Christianity.

It now appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that it seriously concerns all who acknowledge the truth and divinity of the gospel, to use every proper method to become entirely united in sentiment. The apostle enjoins this duty upon the Corinthians, with peculiar solemnity and pathos: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." He addresses the Ephesians on the same subject, with equal ardor and zeal. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye would walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called—endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." The propriety and importance of this, he proceeds to show, by observing "there is *one* body, and *one* spirit, even as ye are called in *one* hope of your calling; *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all." And he inculcates this sentimental union upon the Philippians, with still warmer and tenderer feelings. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be *like minded*, having the same love, being of *one accord*, of *one mind*." If these divine precepts ever bound Christians, they bind them still. If Christians were ever able to obey these divine precepts, they are still able to obey them. And if Christians were ever under obligation, they are still under obligation, to use every proper method to become united in their religious sentiments.

For this purpose, therefore, let them freely examine the various points, in which they mutually differ

This is, undoubtedly, too much neglected on all sides, through indolence or aversion. One side are very apt to imagine, that those who differ from them, have no scripture, nor reason on their side, but are altogether governed by an improper spirit, in forming their opinions upon religious subjects. But if they would freely examine each other's peculiar sentiments, they would probably find, that those who differ from them, have sometimes been as laborious, impartial, and judicious, in searching after truth as they have been; and have approached nearer to it in some points, than they have done. There is no ground to suppose, that any one denomination of Christians, nor any individuals in any one denomination, have engrossed all truth, and renounced all error. If Christians in general, therefore, would more freely examine each other's sentiments, they would think much more nearly alike upon disputed subjects.

It would have the same happy tendency, if they would examine the points of difference between them, *candidly* as well as *freely*. Candor would dispose every one to lay aside prejudice and partiality, and make him willing to discover whatever is *erroneous* in his own sentiments, and whatever is *true* in the opinions of others. It is much more owing to a deficiency in candor, than to a deficiency in discernment, that so many disputes arise, and remain unsettled among the various denominations of Christians. If they would put on candor, it would cure them of bigotry, and open the eyes of their understanding, to discover truth and error wherever they exist. And they must imbibe this amiable and conciliating spirit, before they can have the least ground to expect, that they shall approach any nearer to the unity of the faith.

But the most direct and effectual method they can possibly take, to become united in sentiment, is *practically* to acknowledge the word of God to be the only infallible *standard* of truth and error. It is one thing to acknowledge the infallibility of scripture in *theory*, and another to acknowledge it in *practice*. If we practically acknowledge this sacred guide, it will restrain us from paying a blind and partial deference to any human authority in matters of faith. There is no man, perhaps, who is not liable, in some cases, to swerve from the scriptures of truth, through *fear of offending*, or through *desire of pleasing* those, whom he esteems wiser and better than himself. This danger our Savior foresaw, and forewarned his followers to guard against it. "Call no man your father upon the earth." They must strictly regard this caution, if they would become united in their religious opinions. And if they do regard it, they will naturally meet upon the same ground, and adopt the same sentiments. The Bible is a magnet, which will necessarily draw all men to the same point, if they will only yield to its attractive influence. Let them only think, and speak, and walk, *by the same rule*, and they will become perfectly united in sentiment and practice, without the least condescension to each other.

There are various considerations, which urge Christians to pursue these plain and easy methods of cultivating such a sentimental union among themselves. It will directly tend to unite them in affection. We find that those, who agree in their speculations upon any art, or science, commonly feel a mutual attachment, arising from their concurrence in opinion. And a unity of faith never fails to produce a mutual esteem and affection among Christians. Though some profess an unlimited catholicism, yet they, as well as

others, appear to be the most intimately and affectionately united with those, with whom they are best united in sentiment. Universal observation and experience, in this case, speak louder than words, and compel us to believe, that mutual affection will naturally flow from mutual agreement in opinion. Let Christians be of one mind, and they will be of one heart. Let them think alike and speak alike, and they will lay aside their prejudice, their discord, their alienation of affection, and become in reality a band of brothers. This is confirmed by the sure word of prophecy, which predicts the future peace and harmony of the church, as resulting from the knowledge of the truth. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth. Thy watchman shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing: *for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.*"

In the mean time, by uniting in sentiment, Christians will not only prepare themselves for the latter day glory of the church, but remove one of the strongest prejudices of unbelievers against the Bible. They make a very ill use of that diversity of opinions, which they discover among the professed friends of divine revelation. They pretend to reject the Bible, because they cannot understand it. They say, if it had any plain and consistent meaning, those who believe it to be divine, would explain it in the same manner, and

derive from it the same doctrines. And since the professors of the gospel themselves, make it mean any thing, every thing, or nothing, they say, they choose to reject it, and adhere to the plain and intelligible book of nature, which speaks the same language to all, and which cannot be corrupted, or misinterpreted, by ignorant or designing men. But, however unjust this mode of thinking and speaking is, Christians are under peculiar obligation to remove the occasion of it, by uniting in the belief and profession of the first principles of the oracles of God.

And by doing this, they will not only stop the mouths of cavillers, but at the same time, strenght en and animate one another, in promoting the cause of Christ. When they are united in the belief of the same truths, and in the pursuit of the same objects, they will appear formidable to the unbelieving world, and convince them of their folly as well as guilt, in opposing a cause, which will certainly prevail, and triumph over all opposition. Many are ready to imagine, that the cause of religion will fail, just like the cause of particular denominations of Christians. They know, that one sect has flourished and triumphed for a while, and then gradually decayed and become extinct: and they expect, that all denominations will share the same fate, and Christianity itself be erased from the earth. But if Christians were united in the truth, they would destroy these vain hopes and expectations of the ungodly, and feel a peculiar courage and resolution, to use every effort to bring mankind to the obedience of faith. They are entreated, therefore, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to become of one mind, that they may, with one heart and one hand, promote his cause and interest in the world.

Now, my Brethren, may we who are stewards of the mysteries of God, apply this interesting subject to ourselves. Let us remember, that we must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who will expose and condemn every one of our errors, before the assembled universe; for he has told us that "every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." The apostle Paul also assures us, that men's principles will be brought into view, and either approved or condemned, in the great day of decision. "I have laid the foundation, but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." It is our interest as well as duty, to come to the light, and renounce every false sentiment, which we have ever embraced. If we believe the truth, if we love the truth, if we preach the truth, it will afford us peculiar consolation in the close of life; and enable each of us to say, in the nearest view of eternity, "I have fought a 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; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Amen:

SERMON III.

Preached at the Installation of the Reverend Caleb Alexander, to the Pastoral
Care of the Church in Mendon, April 12, 1786.

JOHN vii, 46.

The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

LONG before the Messiah made his appearance in our nature, it was foretold by the spirit of prophecy, that he should sustain the office of a preacher. Isaiah speaks of him as announcing his divine mission, to preach the joyful news of the gospel to all penitent, broken-hearted sinners. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." On the ground of this and other prophecies, the Jews generally expected that the Messiah would appear in the character of a superior preacher. This we learn from what the woman of Samaria said to Christ: "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things." This general expectation of the Jews, Christ did by no means disappoint. For having lived about thirty years in the obscurity of private life, he submitted to the rite of baptism, by which he was inaugurated into his office, and duly prepared to preach the gospel.

As soon as he appeared in the character of a preacher, he drew the attention of the admiring multitudes, who hung upon his lips, and sensibly felt the heavy truths, which, with surprising power and pungency, he

poured into their minds. His serious and solemn addresses, however, were too pinching and galling to corrupt nature, not to raise the resentment and opposition of the enemies of truth. While therefore some highly applauded his preaching, others secretly murmured and complained; till at length they carried their complaints to the Pharisees and chief priests, who, urged by their own resentment as well as by the importunity of others, immediately "sent officers to take him." The officers, no doubt, were well pleased with their commission, and secretly rejoiced in the prospect of dragging this disturber of their peace, through crowds of exulting enemies, to the place of public justice. But their raised expectations were soon blasted. For, when they came to Christ, who was warmly engaged in preaching the gospel to poor, perishing sinners, they found themselves suddenly arrested by the invisible hand of truth, and secretly constrained to renounce their malignant purposes, and to return to those who sent them, with the painful conviction of the irresistible power and energy of this more than human preacher.—"The officers answered, Never man spake like this man."

But how did Christ preach, or what did he say, to make such deep impressions on those, who had firmly resolved to resist and oppose the truth? This question, especially at this time, justly deserves particular attention, and naturally leads us to exhibit the character of Christ as a preacher of the gospel.

Whether Christ was superior to all other men, in his personal appearance and his natural powers of persuasion, we shall not pretend to conjecture, since nothing is said concerning these in the sacred oracles. We shall only mention some of his most distinguishing excellencies as a preacher of the gospel, which may be

fairly collected from the inspired writers, who have given us the history of his life and character.

First, Christ was a *plain* preacher. A plain preacher is one who has clear and distinct ideas in his own mind, and who conveys them to the minds of his hearers in plain language. Such a preacher was Christ. His own ideas lay clear and distinct in his own mind. He was master of every subject upon which he preached. He understood the whole system of divinity. He was a member of the council of peace, who devised the plan of redemption. He was acquainted with the whole character and whole council of God. He was mighty in the scriptures, and understood every passage of divine inspiration. He had a thorough knowledge of the frame and constitution of the human mind, and comprehended, at one view, all the characters, circumstances and connexions of mankind, through every period of their existence. And as these views were perfectly clear and familiar to his own mind, so he was able to express himself upon any subject, with the greatest ease and perspicuity; and to exhibit every divine truth in a plain, unstudied style, which is not only intelligible, but agreeable to persons of every character and capacity. Sensible that *figurative* language is the voice of nature, and best adapted to explain and illustrate whatever is dark and obscure; he made a free use of images, which spread much light and perspicuity upon all the subjects he handled. He borrowed his images, however, not from music, painting, poetry, or any of the arts which are confined to the learned few; but from the most familiar appearances and productions of nature, which lie open and common to every observer. In the temple, he used those similitudes which were naturally suggested by the various objects there. At Jacob's well,

he drew his metaphors from the qualities of water. In the open air, he explained his meaning by the motions of the wind. At seed-time, he borrowed his images from the sower: at harvest, from the reaper; and in the spring, from the birds of the air, the blooming flowers, and the opening foliage. These images he used not for the sake of decorating his style, or embellishing his subject, but for the more important purpose of enlightening and impressing the minds of his hearers. He chose his words, his figures, and all his modes of expression with no other view than to be easily and clearly understood; and in that respect, was the plainest preacher in the world. Hence we are told, what it is natural to suppose and believe, "the common people heard him gladly."

Secondly, Christ was a *searching* preacher. He aimed directly at the hearts of those, to whom he preached. For this he had a superior advantage. He knew the heart. He was able therefore on every occasion, when the multitudes flocked to hear him preach, to speak to the heart of each individual. This gave his preaching irresistible force and energy. He described the hearts, and thoughts, and characters of men so exactly, that while they heard him preach, they felt their whole souls lie open and naked before an all-seeing eye, which they could neither deceive nor escape. In short, he made his hearers feel as men will feel at the day of judgment. This perhaps was the case with respect to the officers. He knew their characters and all their secret intentions, and probably in some part of his discourse, he took occasion to describe and expose just such characters and views as they were conscious to themselves were their own, which made them feel and say, "never man spake like this man." This however is certain, that

He generally preached according to the peculiar knowledge he had of the human heart, which enabled him to enter into every man's bosom, and search the inmost recesses of his soul. Hence we read, "*Christ knowing their hearts, knowing their thoughts, or knowing their hypocrisy,*" said this, or that, which was the most directly calculated to hit their real characters, and present views and feelings. The inspired writers furnish us with a variety of instances of this nature. His sermon on the mount immediately occurs. Nothing could be better adapted than that was, to search the hearts, and expose the characters and conduct of the shining Pharisees, who neglecting all inward, vital piety, placed the whole of religion in the bare observance of the outward forms and rites of divine worship. As he was preaching to "certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others," he spake the parable of the Publican and Pharisee, which was directly suited to humble and abase such proud and conceited hypocrites. When a rich young man very respectfully put this question to him, "Good master what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he directed him to keep the commandments, and sell all that he had, and give to the poor. This answer exactly reached his case, carried conviction to his conscience, and drew tears from his eyes. At another time, one of the company where he was present, desired him to speak to his brother, to divide the inheritance between them, but instead of replying to his words, he replied to his heart, by reading him a solemn lecture upon covetousness and worldly-mindedness in the parable of the rich fool, who lost his soul by the love of the world. Though he tenderly respected Martha, yet when she complained of her sister's conduct, he severely reproved her own. When he "per-

ceived the thoughts of his disciples," who had been cherishing ambitious views respecting their relation to him as the promised Messiah, he introduced a little child before them, to convince them of their sin and folly, and to teach them to maintain and cultivate a more meek and humble spirit. And knowing the character of those who desired his opinion concerning the woman taken in adultery, he said unto them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." This pointed answer stung them with guilt and remorse, and therefore we are told, "being convinced by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

CHRIST never drew a bow at a venture, but always directed the arrows of truth to the hearts of his hearers. He described the character of the saint, and the character of the sinner, with so much truth and propriety, that every person might easily distinguish the one from the other, and know which belonged to himself. Nay, he did more than this; for he directed every man's eyes inward, and obliged him by the light of truth, to see and feel his own character. This is that peculiar excellence in preaching, for which, "the finest encomium, perhaps, ever bestowed on a preacher, was given by Lewis XIV. to the eloquent Bishop of Clermont, Father Massillon. After hearing him preach at Versailles, he said to him, "Father I have heard many great orators in this chapel; I have been highly pleased with them; but for you, whenever I hear you, *I go away displeas'd with myself; for I see more of my own character.*"

Thirdly, CHRIST was a *sentimental* preacher. His sermons were replete with sentiment. He fed his hearers with knowledge and understanding. He delivered plain, heavy, interesting truths, which not only enlighten the mind, but find the nearest passage to the

heart. Though there was a rich variety in his preaching, yet he chiefly insisted on those peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which are the most disagreeable to corrupt nature; and which, perhaps, for that reason alone, have often been called obscure and deep points of mere speculation.

That Christ was a *sentimental* preacher, we need no other evidence than his public discourses. He plainly taught the doctrine of the sacred Trinity, which supports the scheme of redemption, and lies interwoven with the capital doctrines of the gospel. He said, that "He and his Father were one;" that "He was in the Father, and the Father in him;" and that "the Holy Ghost proceeded from both." He insisted however, principally on his own Divinity, which was so essential to his character as the Savior of sinners. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." He said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." And he called God his Father in such a sense, as plainly implied, and was understood to mean, that he was equal to God in every divine perfection. He inculcated the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, as a truth of great practical importance. He spoke of the elect as those whom his Father had given him: as those for whom, in a particular sense, he laid down his life; and as those whom no impostor could seduce, and whom God himself would avenge. Indeed it was a familiar expression with him, "many are called but few are chosen." Divine sovereignty was another delightful theme of his preaching. He delivered a sermon upon this subject, in the congregation of Nazareth, which with its remarkable effects, we find recorded in the fourth chapter of Luke. And this doctrine was so agreeable to his own heart that upon

seeing a bright and glorious display of it, he broke out into a rapture of praise, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

He urged the absolute necessity of *disinterested* love upon all his followers, as the essence of true religion, and as that alone which discriminates the characters of the children of God "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

That mankind by nature are totally destitute of this *disinterested* love, and wholly governed by the opposite spirit of *selfishness*, he abundantly taught in the course of his preaching. "I know you," said he to sinners, "that ye have not the love of God in you." And he scrupled not to call them vipers, and serpents, and even the children of the devil. And he carried the doctrine of total depravity into its natural and necessary consequences, and condemned sinners for all the affections of their hearts, and all the actions of their lives.

Accordingly upon this ground, he asserted the absolute necessity of regeneration, or the renovation of

the heart by the spirit of God. He expressly said to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" And when Nicodemus appeared to misapprehend his meaning, he rejoined, "verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh: and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." And in full consistency with this, he commanded sinners to repent and believe the gospel immediately. Accordingly we read, "after that John was put in prison, Jesus came from Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

He assured all his faithful followers, that they should finally *persevere* to eternal life. "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Again, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

I might proceed to mention the doctrines of a general, and of a particular Providence, and the duties of self-denial, unconditional submission, and universal obedience to the divine commands; all which Christ plainly taught from time to time in his public discourses. But I shall only add, that he absolutely asserted in the plainest terms, the endless punishment of those who die in impenitence and unbelief. In this

respect, he brought life and immortality to light, and discovered more of the invisible scenes of the invisible world, than had been ever discovered before, by any of the teachers sent from God. Thus the words which Christ spoke, the doctrines which he delivered, they were life, and they were death, and the same that shall judge the world at the last day, and therefore he eminently deserves the character of a *sentimental* preacher. This naturally leads me to observe,

In the last place, that Christ was a *moving* preacher. He is the most moving preacher, and possesses the power of persuasion, to the highest degree, who is best able to convey *his own views and feelings* to the minds of his hearers. No speaker can effect, nor even desire to effect more than this. Were a criminal to plead for his own life, he could desire to do no more, than convey *his own views and feelings* to the mind of his judge. This Christ was able to do, and by doing this, he was able to move the minds of his hearers, with whatsoever affections or passions he wished to excite. He had clear views and warm feelings. He was perfectly acquainted with God, with heaven, with hell, with the nature and worth of the human soul, and with all its relations and connexions both in time and eternity. All his affections were pure and clear as the crystal stream. His heart was a flame of love. His soul was all sensibility. His life was immaculate innocence. And more of heaven sat on his countenance, and sparkled in his eye, than ever shone in the face of Moses, or the face of Stephen. With such views, such feelings, such heavenly appearance, could he possibly fail of speaking with astonishing solemnity and pathos? We never heard him preach, and we never shall; but we may conceive of his rising up in a large assembly of poor, guilty, perishing sinners, and like a mighty stream, bearing down

all before him, while he clearly, solemnly, and affectionately laid open his own views and feelings respecting their guilt and danger, their happiness and misery to all eternity. What could equal the language of his vengeance to secure hardened sinners? "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" But what could be more soft and melting than the language of his love? "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." In reference to these words, the officers said, and who would not have said the same? "Never man spake like this man." Such a plain, searching, sentimental, moving preacher was Christ, who is the standard of perfection, and the pattern of preaching to all who assume the ministerial character.

But if this be true, how can those answer it to Christ, who profess to be *his* ministers, and to preach *his* gospel, and yet pay no regard to *his* example in their preaching? Have not such persons crept into the ministry from age to age? Did not some preachers begin to make shipwreck of the faith, while the apostles were alive? Did they not wax worse and worse, soon after their death? Did not some deny even the Lord that bought them, and maintain that he was a mere creature, a mere man, a mere phantom? Did not the body of the clergy, in the dark ages of Christianity, mix and corrupt the plainest truths of divine revelation, with the vain philosophy, which they borrowed from the school of Alexandria, or the

academy of Plato, till scarce a single article of the gospel was left pure and unadulterated?

But to come more home, do the sermons of some at this day, contain one sentiment delivered by Christ in his sermon on the mount, or in any other of his public discourses? Might we not hear them preach from year to year, without perceiving the least resemblance between their sermons and his, either in matter or spirit? Nay, do not some plainly preach *against* the sentiments which Christ delivered? Do they not preach against the revealed mode of the divine existence? Against the divinity of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost? Against the doctrine of election and divine sovereignty? Against *disinterested* love and total depravity? And against regeneration, saint's perseverance, and the interminable punishment of those who die in their sins? Do not such ministers preach against Christ, and the souls of men? And are they not workers together with the god of this world, in blinding the minds of them that believe not?

How then can they answer this to Christ at the day of judgment, when the truths which he preached, and which they denied, shall shine forth in all their lustre and awful importance? How will they feel when the immortal souls whom they have been the means of destroying forever, shall bitterly upbraid and reproach them for their infidelity, unfaithfulness and cruelty? What excuse can they make? Can they plead ignorance? Did they not live with the gospel in their hands, and the example of Christ before their eyes? Was it not the proper business of their lives to search the scriptures, to study the mind and will of Christ, to imbibe his spirit, and imitate his example both in living and in preaching? How therefore could they be ignorant; unless it were owing to stupidity, indolence, selfishness, and blindness of heart? And will

they not be obliged to confess with shame and confusion of face, that they did seek their own things, rather than the things of Christ, and did endeavor more to please men, than to be the servants of Christ?

We may be very certain how Christ will treat corrupt and unfaithful ministers at the last day, from the manner of his treating such persons here on earth. He treated them with more severity than any other order of men. His love to God and precious souls seemed to inflame his indignation against corrupt preachers. He stigmatized them as blind leaders of the blind; as those who took away the key of knowledge: as those who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering them that were entering, to go in; as wolves in sheep's clothing; and as thieves and robbers, who come on purpose to steal and kill, and destroy his flock. Against such, he denounces the severest anathemas. Woe unto you lawyers, woe unto you scribes and pharisees! Hence of all men in the world, corrupt and unfaithful ministers may justly expect to meet with the heaviest frowns from the face of Christ, their injured and incensed Lord and Master, at the day of judgment.

Again, how can those people answer it to Christ, who will not receive his faithful ministers, who follow his example, and preach the same truths which he preached? The experience of ages shews, that mankind have generally refused to give a proper reception to the ambassadors of Christ. Men naturally hate the light, and will not come to it, lest their deeds should be reproved. Therefore they feel an aversion from those preachers who exhibit the light, and inculcate the soul-humbling truths of the gospel. This perhaps they never so fully manifested as by their treatment of Christ, while he tabernacled in flesh, and preach-

ed the truth with superior power and pungency. We hear of no opposition to Christ till after he commenced a preacher; but then they employed every opprobrious epithet to asperse his character. They said he was mad, and had a devil. They said he was a friend of publicans and sinners. They said he was a disturber of the peace, and a blasphemer of God. But all this hatred and obloquy arose from no other cause, than his plain and faithful preaching. He testified of the world that their deeds were evil. He declared that what is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God. He unmasked sinners, and exposed their real characters to view. This they could not endure. Accordingly they accused, condemned, and crucified him, for telling them the truth. And as Christ knew that human nature would be the same in every age, and operate in the same manner under the same circumstances; so he forewarned his faithful ministers to expect the same treatment from the world, that he had met with from it. "Ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Has not this prophecy been constantly fulfilling? Does not the truth of it appear at this day? Will men now endure sound doctrine? Will they hear those ministers who tell them the truth, search their hearts, and clearly and faithfully lay open their true characters? Will vacant congregations generally receive and choose a preacher, who agreeably to the spirit and example of Christ, inculcates disinterested love, total depravity, divine sovereignty and the other distinguishing and cardinal doctrines of the gospel? Will even churches, who are the professed friends of Christ, embrace and

defend the same truths which he preached, and maintained at the risk of his life? And are not people very generally saying to the seers, see not, and to the prophets, prophesy smooth things; and joining hand in hand to prevent the admission of such ministers among them, as make Christ the pattern and standard of their preaching?

But how will people be able to answer this before the bar of Christ? Will they be able to plead ignorance? Hath not Christ given them his own character as a preacher, to direct them in the choice of ministers? Hath he not solemnly warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and to avoid all false teachers as wolves in sheep's clothing? Hath he not expressly told them that he shall consider their opposition to the truth, and to his faithful ministers, as opposition to himself? "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Churches, congregations and individuals, therefore, who are conscious to themselves, that they have been guilty of rejecting and abusing Christ, by rejecting, opposing, and abusing his faithful ministers, have reason to tremble in the prospect of standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Except they repent, they may read their own doom in the character and fate of Capernaum, Korazin and Bethsaida; or rather in the character and tremendous destruction of the whole Jewish nation, who stoned the prophets, crucified Christ, and rejected both his gospel and ministers.

Once more, will not this subject teach all ministers, why they *preach* no more like Christ? Is not this in a great measure owing to their *living* no more like Christ? A minister's life *must* have influence upon his preaching. To preach well, it is necessary to live well. To preach like Christ, it is necessary to live like Christ.

Christ lived the minister. He carried the minister into all companies. He conversed freely, indeed, with publicans and sinners; but yet was a companion only of them who feared the Lord. He kept his heart and his lips with all diligence, and never said or did the least thing out of character. He was harmless and undefiled, and maintained the awful authority of innocence. He was meek and lowly in spirit, and when he was reviled, he reviled not again. He sought not the riches, honors, or pleasures of the world, but by self denial lived above them all. He lost no time by sloth, or vain amusements, but indefatigably pursued his Father's business. He loved the ministry, and gave himself wholly to it, and relied upon Providence alone for all needful supplies. He allowed none of the vanities of time to employ his thoughts, but kept all his views and affections fixed steadily on the great objects of eternity. He spent days and nights in prayer. He lived habitually in devotion and communion with God. In short, he lived religion; he lived in heaven, and exemplified his doctrines and preaching, by his own heavenly and devout life.

Now if we who profess to be his followers and ministers, should live as he lived, should we not more likely preach as he preached? Would not such a life transfuse a spirit, an energy into our preaching, which would surprisingly arrest the hearts and consciences of our hearers? Would it not give us a fervor, a solemnity in all our private and public discourses, which nothing could gainsay or resist? Should we not speak as having authority, and not as the scribes? Why then do we not live so? Are we not bound as men, as Christians, and especially as ministers of Christ, to live such a life? And unless we do this, is there any prospect of our fulfilling our ministerial vows and engage-

ments? We have engaged to preach like Christ in matter and spirit. We have bound ourselves to adopt every article in his creed, and to preach as far as we know, every sentiment which he preached, though at the hazard of our interest, reputation and lives. But shall we have love, resolution, and self-denial enough to carry us through such trials, unless we imbibe the spirit, and copy the life of Christ? O! let us then live better, that we may preach better, and die better, and be better prepared to meet our people at the bar of Christ; where we must shortly stand upon a level with the lowest in the flock, and receive that final sentence from the mouth of the great Bishop of souls, which will either wring our hearts with despair, or fill them with a flood of joy.

I hope, my dear Brother, you will let these thoughts sink deep into your heart, at this serious moment. Permit me to remind you, that you are to make Christ the great pattern, end, and object of your preaching. Endeavor, therefore to live, and pray, and preach like Christ. He is this day sending you to preach to this people in his own room; and committing the eternal interests of their precious souls to your care and charge. For Christ's sake, be faithful to your trust. If any of this flock are scattered, or lost, or perish by a famine of the word, their blood will be required at your hands. Remember that Christ, your Lord and Master, will keep his eye upon you, and watch you every moment. He will be with you in the study, and observe you in your private preparations. He will attend you to the pulpit, and hear you preach. He will sit with you at his table, and observe your behavior at the head of his family; and he will accompany you among the people, and mark all your conversation and carriage against the day of judgment. Let Christ then be at-

ways in your eye and in your heart. Converse with him, consu't him, and engage that gracious presence of his, which he hath promised to all his faithful ministers. Often ask yourself, how would Christ preach?—how would Christ live?—how would Christ converse?—how would Christ behave under this trial, or that trial?—how would he treat this church and congregation, were he in my place and situation? And always aim to follow the example of Christ, both in living and in preaching. Only do this, dear Brother, and be assured, you shall meet your whole flock at the last day with joy; and be unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish!

The church and congregation in this place, will permit me to ask them, in this serious connexion, whether they are willing to receive a plain, searching, faithful minister of the gospel. Such a minister, we really hope you are this day to receive from the great Head of the church. And should he prove to be of this character, he will do great execution here, and fit every one of you for heaven, or hell. It is a serious and important circumstance, to have a minister of Christ live among you, whose presence will resemble the presence of Christ; who will exhibit religion before your eyes wherever you see him; who will teach you by example, what it is to live for eternity; who will put vice and irreligion to the blush, and strike an awe upon the mind of every secure and thoughtless sinner; and who will from sabbath to sabbath, lay open the blackness, turpitude and malignity of the human heart, and bring God near to you, and you near to God, and make you feel that there is but one alternative before you, either to believe, and be saved, or to refuse, and be damned. You will moreover please to

lay it up in your minds, that your treatment of such a minister, will be considered as your treatment of Christ himself. If you love him, you will love Christ; if you are kind to him, you will be kind to Christ; if you hear him, you will hear Christ; and if you receive him, you will receive Christ: But if you despise him, you will despise Christ; if you abuse him, you will abuse Christ; if you reject him, you will reject Christ; and one day know to your cost, that there has been a minister of Christ among you.

In a word, let me say to this whole assembly, take heed how ye hear. Serious and eternal are the consequences of your living under the preaching of the faithful ministers of Christ. You may indeed be able to despise and reject the solemn messages, which they bring to you from sabbath to sabbath, till the day of grace and space of repentance are no more: But you will not be able to despise the voice of Christ, who on earth, spoke as never man spake; and who, at the day of judgment, will speak as he never spoke before, and say to all impenitent gospel sinners, behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!

SERMON IV.

Preached at the Installation of the Reverend DAVID AVERY, to the Ministerial Office in the church in Wrentham, May 25, 1786.

1 TIMOTHY i, 12.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

MANY of those favored persons whom Christ has employed as signal instruments of promoting his wise and gracious designs, have been raised up and qualified for his service, in a manner very unexpected both to themselves, and to the world. The Lord Jesus raised up Joseph, Moses, and David; and prepared them for the noble and important parts, which they had to act upon the stage of life, by a series of surprising and mysterious causes and events. But the most remarkable instance of this nature, that we find in all the sacred pages, is the great apostle Paul. Christ, by a miracle of grace, took him out of the kingdom and service of Satan, and employed him in promoting and defending that glorious cause, which just before, he had been laboring with all his might to overthrow and destroy. And this wise and gracious conduct of Christ so deeply affected his heart, that he could never speak of it without the warmest gratitude, and the highest expressions of admiration and praise. "By the grace of God I am what I am. Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that

he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." This text, without any comment, plainly implies, that those, whom Christ furnishes for the ministry, are thankful for their office.

We shall therefore first show, that Christ furnishes men for the ministry; and then suggest several reasons, why those, whom Christ furnishes for the ministry, are thankful for their office.

It belongs to Christ, as the Governor of the world, and as the Head of the church, to raise up and qualify men for the service of the sanctuary. This Paul more than intimates in the words of the text. And every where in the New Testament, ministers are represented as the servants and ambassadors of Christ, and as his peculiar, ascension gifts to the church. Christ is said to give not only apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, but also pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry. Hence we may justly consider Christ as forming and qualifying, as well as authorizing all his own ministers, in every age of the church.

The weakest eye is capable of discerning a great diversity in the characters of men as to their natural powers and abilities. This difference, indeed, sometimes appears almost equal to that, which draws the line of distinction between us and the various tribes of sensitive natures. Solomon, Socrates, and Newton, to name no more, differed as much from some of the lowest of our own species, as one star differs from another star in glory. But all this diversity of intellectual furniture originates from Christ, who endows mankind with various abilities, according to the various services, in which he designs to employ them. Some men he means to employ in preaching the Gospel, and for that reason, enriches their minds with such

distinguishing qualities, as he knows the importance of their office justly requires. Paul, we are told, was a chosen vessel. Christ always meant to make him a minister. He raised him up to preach the gospel among the heathen nations. And accordingly we find, that he endowed him with those superior powers and talents, which were equal to his superior office; and which in the eye of the prince of critics, gave him a rank among the celebrated orators of Greece and Rome. By this instance of his conduct, Christ has plainly told us, that in his view, there is no station nor employment of life, which requires better natural abilities, than the ministerial office. Nor can we conceive, that any one should need a clear perception, a penetrating judgment, a lively imagination, and all the powers of persuasion, more than a minister of the gospel, whose business it is, to understand, to explain, and to enforce the deep things of God, which carry life or death to every hearer. Christ therefore, who always acts with infinite wisdom and propriety in adapting means to ends, bestows a large portion of intellectual furniture upon those, whom he forms for the great and arduous work of preaching the gospel.

But the noblest powers of nature stand in need of the nurturing hand of education. The uninstructed mind resembles the unpolished diamond, before the artificer's hand has given the finishing stroke, to display its sparkling beauties. Sensible, therefore, of the happy influence of instruction, to strengthen and enlarge, as well as to soften and refine the opening powers of the mind, Christ has taken particular care from age to age, that those, whom he designs for great and extensive service in his church and kingdom, should enjoy the benefit of a learned education. As he raised up Paul to be a pillar of the church, and a princi-

pal instrument of spreading the gospel through the world; so in order to furnish him for this great and arduous work, he brought him up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most noted and learned Rabbi in the Jewish nation. And no doubt Paul improved his time to the best advantage, and acquired a large stock of that human knowledge, which he found to be of eminent service afterwards, in preaching the gospel, and opening the great truths of divine revelation. I know, indeed, Dr. Campbell conjectures, that he derived most of his learning from the Jewish Rabbies, who taught mere fables, traditions, and endless genealogies, which could be of no great service to a preacher of the gospel. But, if we only consider, that he was born in the famous city of Tarsus;* that there probably he spent his younger years in the study of the sciences; that he went into Judea merely to finish his education, and gain a more thorough knowledge of the religious sentiments of his own nation; that he was well acquainted with the heathen Poets, and able to quote them with beauty and propriety; and that he disputed the Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers in the city of Athens, which, as the seat of learning and of learned men, was called the eye of Greece; I say, if we only consider this, we shall be apt to conclude, that Christ furnished him with large measures of human, as well as divine knowledge, to qualify him to preach the gospel in every part of the world. But besides Paul, we may mention many others, whom Christ has formed for his more immediate and especial service, by means of a public education. He educated Moses in the court of Pharaoh. He educated Samuel in the house of the Lord in Shiloh. He educated David in

* See Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, vol. ii, p. 182.

the court of Saul. He educated Solomon in the court of David. He educated the prophets in the schools of Samuel, of Elijah, and of Elisha, which were at Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal.* He educated Daniel, Hannaniah, Mishael, and Azaraiah in the academy in the city of Babylon. And to supply the defect of a learned education in the apostles and primitive ministers of the gospel, he miraculously endowed them not only with the gift of tongues, but also with the superior gifts of *knowledge and of wisdom.*† These instances plainly show, that Christ is a friend to learning, and that he commonly makes use of it, to qualify men for eminent service in his spiritual kingdom.

But, besides all these powers and improvements of nature, he also communicates his own spirit to his ministers, and makes them like-minded with himself. For this is one of his invariable maxims, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." He views every natural man as a real enemy to his cause and kingdom, and therefore totally unfit to preach the gospel, until he has experienced a saving change, and become heartily united to his person and interest. Of this, we have a clear and striking instance in the apostle Paul. Before his conversion, notwithstanding all his shining qualities, and literary improvements, he was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; and fit to be the minister of satan only, in whose cause and service, he was most heartily engaged. Christ therefore appeared to him as he was going to Damascus, and struck conviction into his conscience, laid open the plague of his heart, destroyed his false hopes, and raised him from spiritual death to spiritual life. And this divine

* See Lewis's Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic. † 1 Cor. 12

change sanctified all his natural and acquired abilities, directed them to their proper use and end, united his heart to the cause of truth, and inspired him with holy zeal and fortitude to spread the triumphs of the cross in the face of a frowning world. Thus a good capacity, a good education, and a good heart, are the noble qualifications, which Christ bestows upon those whom he raises up, and employs in the sacred work of the gospel ministry.

We shall now, in the second place, as proposed, suggest several reasons, why the ministers of Christ are thankful for their office.

The *first reason* to be given is this; that the ministerial office bears a favorable aspect upon a life of religion and vital piety. The ministers of Christ hunger and thirst after righteousness, and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of God. They are thankful therefore for that employment, which serves to advance, rather than to obstruct their progress in the Christian and divine life. In this respect, we find a difference among the various callings, which divine providence requires various persons to pursue. Some useful and necessary employments seem rather unfavorable to piety and devotion, and throw obstacles in the way of that habitual intercourse and communion with God, which every Christian ardently desires to maintain and improve. The common business of merchants, of farmers, of mechanics, is apt to engross their attention and divert their minds from divine objects and leave them too little time and inclination for the secret duties of devotion. Some, who go down to the sea in ships, and others, who jeopard their lives in the high places of the field, lament the loss of those divine ordinances and numerous aids to piety, which they once enjoyed in the more retired

and silent scenes of life. And the pious physician painfully feels the embarrassments of his calling, which so often rob him of his happiest hours in the closet and in the family, as well as in the house of God.

But the minister of Christ is freed from all these obstructions to piety, by the nature of his office, which gives him time, retirement, and all the means of secret, private, and public devotion. His main work is the proper food of a pious heart, and serves to nourish and strengthen every holy and religious affection. His daily business calls him to retirement, and in that retirement to commune with God and his own heart, to search the scriptures, and meditate upon the glorious objects of eternity. His public office leads him to the house of God, and there to take the most active and animating part in the public exercises of religion. His own discourses, which should always flow warm from his own heart, give him an opportunity of deriving the largest portion of spiritual instruction, from every subject, upon which he descants in public. His duty calls him to the houses of mourning, and to the chambers of the sick and of the dying; where all the feelings of benevolence, of compassion and friendship, are naturally awakened and improved. His duty also carries him among lively Christians, among mourning saints, and distressed sinners; where the beauties of religion, the worth of souls, and the presence of God, serve to solemnize his mind, and to warm his heart with devout and heavenly affections. Besides all this, the peculiar difficulties, which attend his office, yield him a fair opportunity of improving his mind in some of the most amiable of the Christian graces. The difficulties, which he discovers in his studies; the difficulties, which he finds in discoursing

with his people, under a great variety of soul-concerns; and the difficulties, which arise from the blindness, the caprice, and the baser passions of human nature, all unite to lead him to God, and to oblige him to live in the continual exercise of faith and hope, of submission and dependance, of humility and meekness. Paul appears to have made great proficiency in the school of affliction, and to have derived much benefit from the heavy trials, which he underwent in the discharge of his office. "He learned in whatever state he was therewith to be content." And therefore he says, "most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong." Hence the apostles, and the primitive ministers of Christ, and those of their successors, who have gone through the most fiery trials, have exhibited the most shining characters of practical religion and vital piety. So that the ministry, both by its duties and its trials, is eminently calculated to improve those who are employed in it, in all the branches of the Christian and divine life, and therefore affords them abundant reason to be thankful for their office.

Secondly, The ministers of Christ are thankful for their office, because it gives them peculiar advantages to enrich their minds with useful and divine knowledge. A thirst for knowledge, especially for the knowledge of God and of divine things, always accompanies a good capacity and a good heart. And as these are qualifications of the ministers of Christ; so they are thankful for an office, which not only permits, but requires them "to incline their ear to wisdom, to cry after knowledge, and to lift up their voice for understanding; to seek her as

silver, and to search for her as for hid treasures." It is the unhappy lot of mankind in general to pursue employments, which confine their whole attention to a very small number of low and sensible objects; and thereby prevent the cultivation and refinement of all their nobler powers and faculties. But the ministerial office gives a free scope to the excursions of the mind, and opens a wide field for intellectual pleasures and improvements. The divine may walk with historians, metaphysicians, and philosophers as far as they go, and then pass on to regions beyond the circle of their acquaintance. For they confine their researches to the laws and works of nature, which are objects that were born with time, which live with time, and which shall die when time dies. But his business leads him out of time into eternity, carries him back to endless ages before creation began, and pushes him forward to interminable ages beyond the judgment day, and requires him to be acquainted not only with the works and laws of nature, but also with the God of nature, and his supreme end in all the works of providence and grace. A man therefore might be as great a metaphysician as Locke, as great a philosopher as Newton, as great a naturalist as Solomon, and yet in point of the noblest knowledge, fall far below the apostle Paul, who understood the deep things of Divine revelation, which alone can explain all the works and ways of the supreme Being. As it would be of little service to know all the springs and wheels and motions of a watch, without knowing the end for which it was made; so it would be of little service to know the whole machinery and construction of the whole material and intellectual system, without knowing the end for which it was created. Hence it is of more importance to know *why* things exist, than

how they exist; *why* God has established the laws of nature, than *how* they operate; *why* he has made us as we are, than *how* he made us such. There is no study more agreeable and more useful, than the study of *final causes*. And this is the study of the divine, to whom it properly belongs to discover the chief end of man, to vindicate the ways of God, and to explore the *final cause* of things, from the sacred oracles of truth. His business therefore requires him to extend his researches to matters of a higher nature, and of more importance, than those which employ the attention of the sons of science; and so affords him a happy opportunity of feeding his mind with the same glorious truths, which angels now desire to look into, and which all holy beings will forever contemplate, with growing ardor and delight. And this is a good reason why he should be thankful for his office. But,

Thirdly, A greater reason is, that it opens before him the largest sphere of usefulness. It is the sincere and ardent desire of a pious heart to be useful. The language of Paul, is the language of every real saint, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And the ministerial office appears so adapted to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, that, perhaps, almost every young convert, for a while at least, wishes to be a minister and thinks that he should be able to convert all the world. So young Melancthon thought till painful experience taught him to the contrary. This, however, is certain, that no other employment of life opens so fair a prospect of doing good, as the work of the ministry. A minister has the same opportunities which other men have to be useful in all the common relations and connexions of life. He has still an opportunity peculiar to himself, to do good by the in-

sensible and powerful influence of example; because his office places him on such an eminence, and is of such a sacred nature, as naturally to draw the eyes and attention of all to his conduct. It belongs to his office, to strengthen the cords of civil society, by condemning vice, by inculcating virtue, and by enforcing the righteous laws of man, from the word of God and the motives of eternity. And it is a part of his duty, to attend to the rising hopes of his flock, and instil into their young and tender minds the first principles of virtue and wisdom, which lay the broadest foundation for peace and harmony among families, among societies and larger communities. But his widest sphere of usefulness lies in that divine authority with which he is invested, to bear the messages of God to men, and teach them those great and important truths, by which, they may become wise to salvation. By virtue of this authority, Paul became so extensively useful in the first age of Christianity. When Christ appeared to him to put him into office, he addressed him in such serious and animating language as this; "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." This was as much as to say, "Go, and be my instrument of converting thousands of immortal souls, who are now perishing for lack of knowledge; that they may be delivered from the power of satan, and from the dominion of sin, and

restored to the favor of God, and set up as the everlasting monuments of free and sovereign grace." All this good, we have reason to believe, that Paul was actually the means of promoting, by fulfilling the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. Where then shall we find another such instance of extensive usefulness? Joseph, who saved two nations from temporal ruin, was a useful man; Moses, who led the people of God through seas, and swords and plagues to the borders of Canaan, was a useful man; David, who served God and his generation upon the throne of Israel, was a useful man; and Solomon, who built for the honor and service of God, the most grand and elegant temple that the sun ever beheld, was a useful man: But, I appeal to all who have read the labors of Paul, and the fruits of his ministry, whether he was not the means in the hand of Christ, of diffusing much greater, much nobler, and much more permanent happiness among his fellow-creatures, than Joseph or Moses, than David or Solomon, or than any other man before or since. Hence Paul was so thankful for the ministry, and so willing to live and preach the gospel, even while he longed for heaven, and the immediate presence and enjoyment of Christ. And hence all the ministers of Christ are thankful for the same office, which opens such an extensive field for usefulness in promoting the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Especially when they consider once more,

Fourthly, That their work is of such a nature, as to carry its own present and future reward with it. The ministers of Christ receive no inconsiderable reward as they go along, before their labors and their lives are ended. They enjoy the pleasure, which there is, in separating themselves from the world, and intermed-

dling with all wisdom. They enjoy the benefit, which there is, in the effectual and fervent prayers of those, who esteem them highly in love, for their work's sake. They enjoy the satisfaction, which there is, in observing their people growing in knowledge and grace, under their public and private instructions. And they sometimes enjoy that more noble and divine happiness, which results from the success of their labors in the conversion of sinners, of whom they had travelled in birth, till Christ was formed in them. These spiritual children are their reward, while they live and converse with them in this life; they will be their reward when they meet them in Heaven; they will be their reward, when they meet them at the day of judgment; and they will be their living and growing reward from that day forward forever. Such a prospect as this, supported and animated Paul, under all his labors and sufferings in the vineyard of Christ. Hence he writes thus to those, whom he had begotten through the Gospel, at Corinth. "For we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in *us* but life in you.—Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up *us* also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you—for which cause we faint not." To the same persons he says again in this same epistle, "ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are *your* rejoicing, even as *ye* also are *ours* in the day of the Lord Jesus." He calls the Philippian converts. "his joy and crown." And, in the pleasing language of raised expectation, he asks the Thessalonians, "what is *our* hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even *ye* in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? How glorious does the apostle now appear in

heaven, surrounded with the living fruits of his labors? And how glorious will he appear at the last day, when Christ shall present him and all his spiritual family to the view of the assembled universe, to be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing forever? We are no where told what shall be the particular reward of Moses, of Samuel, of David, or of any other eminent servants of God; but we know that Paul's reward shall finally consist in the fruits of his labors in the work of the ministry. His work *has* carried, and *will* carry its own reward with it, as long as he and his people shall enjoy the mansions of heaven. Hence he might well say, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." And all the ministers of Christ have the same reason to be thankful for their office, while they are now reaping, and expecting, hereafter to reap, such a living and growing reward of their labors, in the salvation of souls.

A few reflections will now conclude the subject.

First, The office of the ministry, is the most desirable office in the world. "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." There is no office that can be more desirable than this. It is every way suited to gratify all the desires of a pious and devout heart. It carries religion, learning, usefulness, and its own divine and permanent reward with it. And it gives the freest scope to the utmost exertions of all the powers and faculties of the soul. The general rebellion of our world, has opened the widest field for the ambassadors of Christ to employ all their gifts and graces, in beseeching sinners to become reconciled to God. Every minister of the gospel has a more important cause to plead than ever employed the eloquence of Demosthenes, or Cicero.

And if he gain his cause, he not only saves a soul from death, and recovers a subject to God; but also conquers the powers of darkness, and fills the world of light with joy. Besides, his works bear the stamp of immortality, and can receive no injury from the blasting power and influence of age. The works of Raphael and of Hogarth, are every day perishing under the mouldering hand of time. The laws and constitutions of Solon, of Lycurgus, of Numa, are no more. The works of Homer, of Milton, of Shakespeare, are constantly verging towards oblivion. Noah's ark, which was a hundred and twenty years in building, has, for ages and ages, been dissolved in dust. And Solomon's temple, the noblest monument of wealth and of art, has long since been razed to its foundation, and thrown into heaps of ruins. But the works of Paul, those living temples, which he raised up, have followed him to Heaven, where they still survive the ruins and ravages of time, and grow in beauty as they grow in age. His office therefore, was a good office; his work a good work. And whoever desires this work, desires the best work that ever employed the head, or heart, or tongue of man. "He that winneth souls is wise;" and he that desireth the office of winning souls, is wise in the choice of his office.

Secondly, The ministerial office needs no foreign aid, to recommend itself to those who are qualified for it. Some are ready to apprehend, that the ministry would soon become *vacant*, if it should once unhappily lose the protection and support of the civil power. Our learned youth, we are told, are turning their attention to law, physic and merchandize, and but few, and those too not of the most promising parts, are looking forward to the ministry. And what, we are asked, will soon become of the sacred office?

Who will desire it under so many worldly embarrassments and disadvantages? Our subject replies, those who desire a *good* work for the sake of a *good* work, and not for the sake of honor, ease, or filthy lucre. The ministerial office will live as long as religion lives, and will be filled with able and faithful men, as long as able and faithful men are in the world. The church has always had the best pastors, when there were no secular advantages to draw men into the ministry; and the worst spiritual guides, when there were the strongest worldly motives to preach the gospel. Hence there is no ground to fear that the ministerial office will ever suffer by being deprived of worldly appendages. The work of the ministry will always recommend itself to able and faithful men, who will esteem it a privilege to plead the cause of Christ, and promote the salvation of sinners. Why did Paul thank Christ for putting him into the ministry? Did the ministry in his day enjoy the smiles and support of the civil magistrate? Or did the office open the road to honor, opulence, or ease? Certainly this was not the case. He chose the ministry therefore, because it was a good office in its own nature, independent of all human establishments. He often intimates, indeed, that the world called him a fool for his choice. But he thought it sufficient to reply, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel."

Thirdly, The ministerial office is no burden to the people. One* who calls himself a moral philosopher, undertakes to prove in the face of stubborn fact, that the people of Israel were utterly unable to support their *expensive* priesthood. And many, at this day, seem to have the same opinion concerning the ministers of Christ. They look upon the institu-

* MORGAN

tion as a burden, and wish to be exempted from maintaining such a numerous set of men, whose support costs them, in their view, much more than they are worth. But if there be any weight in this objection, we presume to say, that it lies not against the office of the ministry, but against those only who unworthily sustain it. The office requires great and good men to fill it, who are endowed with the richest gifts and graces of Christ, and who are able to instruct the people in things, which infinitely concern them as rational and immortal creatures. And though individuals have disgraced their office, yet the ministers of Christ as a body, have actually done more to enlighten the minds, to restrain the corruptions, and to cultivate the virtues of mankind, than any other order of men in the world. This, every christian people are obliged to own, and especially the people in New-England. We have long sustained, and perhaps in some measure, still sustain the character of a *sober, virtuous, and religious people*. But this, under God, must be chiefly ascribed to the succession of able and faithful ministers, who have planted and watered our churches; and who have so firmly fixed us in the faith once delivered to the saints, that no deceivers have been able to eradicate from our minds the first principles of virtue and religion, or to turn us aside from the fundamental doctrines* of divine revelation. We therefore, have no reason to complain of the ministerial office, from which we have derived, and do still derive such precious and important advantages. But, on the other hand, we have every reason to venerate the divine institution, to esteem the ministers of Christ highly in

* See the Westminster Catechism, which has been generally adopted; the Massachusetts Confession of Faith; and the writings of Hooker, Shepard, Stoddard, Edwards

love for their work sake, and to give them a support, which is the best suited to render them the most extensively useful.

Fourthly, The ministers of the gospel ought to give themselves wholly to the duties of their office. Do they love their office? Are they thankful for their office? Do they esteem their office a peculiar privilege? Then surely they ought to exert themselves, with unwearied diligence, in the faithful discharge of all its duties. These are various and important enough to employ all their time and all their abilities. The greatest and best of men have found themselves unequal to the arduous task, and felt themselves ready to sink under the weight of their sacred work. Even Paul was so sensible of the difficulty and importance of ministerial duties, that he cried out, under a deep sense of human weakness and imbecility, "who is sufficient for these things?" Ministers have no time to spare for amusements, for diversions, or for the peculiar studies of any other profession than their own. And if they had time, the nature of their office, forbids them to dissipate their minds by the cares, the pleasures, or the pursuits of the world. But some, perhaps, may plead *necessity for neglecting* the duties of their office. This necessity very seldom takes place. Let ministers therefore consider their solemn vows to Christ, and by a faithful discharge of their office, convince their people, that they are entirely devoted to their service; and then if their complaints be not removed, their consciences will be eased. This however, is certainly that course of conduct, which Paul directs Timothy and every other minister of the gospel to pursue. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath

chosen him to be a soldier. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

Fifthly, The ministers of the gospel should cheerfully submit to that state of self-denial, in which, the nature of their office requires them to live. Their peculiar station deprives them of many worldly enjoyments, and naturally subjects them to a life of self-denial. They have no grounds to expect that honor, that ease, that affluence, or that independence, which attends many other employments of life. These alluring prospects they are called to renounce, and cheerfully submit to more humble and self-denying circumstances. To such a state of humility and self-denial, Christ and the apostles cheerfully subjected themselves, through the whole course of their ministry. Paul, in particular, made great sacrifices to his office, and readily submitted to all the scenes of self-denial, which he knew would attend the preaching of the gospel. He says, "when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*" Flesh and blood would naturally say, "spare thyself, and plunge not into all the dangers and mortifying circumstances, which overwhelm the despised preachers of the cross." But, resisting these solicitations of nature, and yielding to the motions of grace, he resolved to obey the call of Christ, and preach the gospel, at the hazard of every worldly interest. This was a signal act of self denial. For, he was a young man of shining talents, and of great expectations; at least, the great men of the nation had fixed their eyes upon him, and had given him a mark of their particular esteem and regard, by granting him

a commission to execute a very important design. But all these flattering prospects he cheerfully gave up, for the sake of the ministry. And when he was called to the trial, he made good his resolutions, and courageously endured the afflictions of the gospel. The account of his trials and sufferings, is enough to make the first clergymen in Europe, the prelates of all established churches, and all who sustain the ministerial character, ashamed of themselves, whenever they complain of the burdens of their office.—“He was in labors abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times he received forty stripes save one. Thrice was he beaten with rods, once was he stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, a night and a day he was in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness, in painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Yet after all this, in the close of his life he could sincerely say, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” He always maintained such a grateful sense of the distinguishing privilege of being a minister of the gospel, that he *felt* as though he could never *do* nor *suffer* enough to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of sinners. Surely then *we*, who sustain the same office, ought to feel the same spirit, and cheerfully go through all the trials that attend us in the course of our ministry. If we love our office; if we are thankful for it; how readily should we take up the cross, despise the pomp and splendor of the world, and silently walk in the low vale of obscurity, neglect, and dependence?

Sixthly, Christ has laid his ministers under the most endearing obligations to be faithful in their office. He has raised them up. He has given them their noble powers and faculties. He has enriched their minds with all their treasures of knowledge and grace. And besides all this, he has put them into the highest and best office in his kingdom. They are bound therefore by their office, by their gifts and graces, and by all the ties of love and gratitude, to preach the gospel with the utmost plainness and fidelity. Paul felt the weight and influence of all these tender motives, and accordingly chose to be the servant of Christ, rather than the servant of men; and to displease all the world rather than to displease *Him*, who had put him into the ministry. He renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. He walked not in craftiness, nor handled the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. In all his Epistles, but especially in those to the Romans, and Ephesians, he inculcates, without the least palliation or reserve, the doctrine of native depravity, of regeneration, of election, of divine sovereignty, and of divine operation in forming the vessels of mercy and the vessels of wrath. And this faithful discharge of his office, he tells us, gave him peculiar comfort and satisfaction in the nearest views of eternity. "I have fought a 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: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Now, my fathers and brethren, if we are the ministers of Christ, we shall likewise feel the force of these strong and tender obligations, to be faithful in our office. We shall not seek to please men, but we shall

seek to please Christ. We shall tell men the truth, even though they should become our enemies for telling them the truth. We shall plainly lay open the depravity and corruption of the human heart. We shall aim to strip sinners of their self-righteousness, and drive them from all their refuges of lies. We shall endeavor to make our hearers understand and feel the most *disagreeable*, which are indeed the most *important and profitable* doctrines of the gospel. And we shall labor to lodge in their consciences as well as in our own, a lasting evidence, that, having declared the whole counsel of God, we are pure from the blood of all men.

Seventhly, It is a privilege to *hear*, as well as to *preach* the gospel. It was a privilege of the gentiles to *hear* Paul, as well as a privilege of Paul to *preach* to the gentiles. And it is a privilege of the people now to *hear* the ministers of Christ, as well as a privilege of the ministers of Christ to *preach* to the people. Indeed, the opportunity of hearing the gospel, is one of the highest privileges that mankind can ever enjoy. What greater privilege can Christ bestow upon any people, than to raise up an able and faithful minister, and furnish him with his richest gifts and graces, and send him among them, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God? This great and invaluable blessing, my hearers, you all enjoy, who enjoy able and faithful ministers. How then will you be able to answer it to Christ at the day of judgment, if you esteem it a *burden* rather than a *privilege*, to hear them preach; and from Sabbath to Sabbath, neglect to appear in the house of God, to seek the law at their mouth? You had better misimprove any other day in the week, than misimprove the Sabbath. You had better misimprove seed time and harvest, than misimprove the

precious season of hearing the word of God. You had better absent yourselves from any other place, than from the place of public worship, where God manifests his presence, and displays his pardoning mercy. You had better therefore abuse any other privilege you enjoy, than abuse the privilege of *hearing* the gospel, for if you abuse this privilege, you will abuse light, which above all things will enhance your guilt, and aggravate your everlasting ruin. For says Christ himself, "*This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.*"

SERMON V.

Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. JOHN ROBINSON, to the pastoral care of the Church in Westborough, January 14, 1789.

It was needful for me to write unto you, and to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

The Apostle JUDE.

ACTS XX, 24.

— *To testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

PAUL, in his passage from Greece to Jerusalem, having landed at Miletus, sent and called the elders of the Church of Ephesus. When they were come together, he addressed them with peculiar solemnity and affection, on the important subject of the gospel ministry. And to make the deeper impression on their minds, he not only recalled to their remembrance his former manner of life and preaching among them; but expressed, in the most feeling manner, his present views of the *nature* and *importance* of the gospel, which both he and they were under solemn and inviolable obligations to preach. "Ye know," says he, "from the first day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons: serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befel me by the lying-in-wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide

me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" In these last words we see the ground upon which the apostle was so much attached to the gospel, and so much engaged to preach it, in the face of every danger. It was because he viewed the gospel as containing and exhibiting the grace of God to our guilty world. Accordingly I shall confine my attention to this single point, that the gospel is a scheme of divine grace.

Though grace is one of the most common words in use, yet it seems necessary, in treating on the subject before us, to fix the meaning of this easy and familiar term. Grace is often used to signify goodness; but this is not the strict and proper sense of the word. For grace is the exercise of love to the *guilty*; whereas goodness is the exercise of love to the *innocent*.* Goodness and grace therefore immutably differ, as much as guilt and innocence, the objects upon which they finally terminate. And this distinction will forever remain and be felt in heaven. While angels there will forever drink of the rivers of goodness, saints will forever drink of the rivers of grace. When we say, therefore, that the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, we mean that it is a method which God has devised, to open the way for the free and full display of divine love to the *guilty*.

Now, if we search the New Testament, we shall find the gospel is every where represented as a scheme

* I do not mean, that every exercise of love to the guilty, is grace, nor every exercise of love to the innocent, is goodness, in the strictest sense. But what I mean is, that wherever there is goodness in the strictest sense, it consists in love to the innocent; and wherever there is any grace at all, it consists in love to the guilty.

of divine grace. The angels who brought the news of Christ's birth to the shepherds, were constrained on that occasion, to celebrate the grace of the gospel, with the most joyful acclamations. "And lo the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, *good will towards men.*" This is good will to the guilty, which is grace in the highest and best sense.

Christ himself, who was equally concerned in devising, and principally concerned in executing the plan of redemption, represents it as a scheme of divine grace. "For," saith he, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Such love as this to the guilty, is astonishing grace.

The apostle Paul, however, says more concerning the grace of the gospel than any other of the inspired writers. He touches upon this darling theme in all his Epistles, and in some he undertakes to *prove* the gospel to be a scheme of divine grace. In the third chapter of Romans he reasons thus: "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." From these premises he brings out this fair and just conclusion, that we are "justified freely by *his grace*, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." He continues this train of reasoning to the

end of this and of the next chapter, and finally concludes with these strong and striking expressions: "But where *sin* abounded, *grace* did much more abound. That as *sin* hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace* reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, after opening the nature and design of the gospel, he represents it as a scheme of divine grace. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. We then as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the *grace of God in vain*." By the grace of God here, the apostle evidently means the grace of God displayed in the gospel.

He wrote his Epistle to the Galatians, with a particular design to unfold the genius and spirit of the gospel as a scheme of divine grace. I shall, however, mention but one passage, which breathes the spirit of the whole Epistle. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved* me, and gave himself for me. *I do not frustrate the grace of God*: For if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain." By this the apostle plainly suggests, that the gospel is so entirely built upon *grace*, that if this foundation be once destroyed, the whole gospel is completely frustrated and subverted.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, he employs the strongest expressions to celebrate the riches of divine

grace displayed in the gospel. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace*, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the *riches of his grace*." He pursues this pleasing subject in the next chapter, and carries the idea of grace as high as language can carry it. "But God *who is rich in mercy*, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins; hath quickened us together with Christ, (*by grace are ye saved*;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in ages to come, he might shew *the exceeding riches of his grace*, in his kindness towards us through Jesus Christ. *For by grace are ye saved*, through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God*."

I might observe, that he calls the gospel the grace of God—the grace of God in truth—the dispensation of the grace of God—the grace of God which bringeth salvation. And I might still further observe, that in the salutations of almost every epistle, the apostles abundantly celebrate the *grace* of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, displayed in the work of redemption. But without adducing any more passages of Scripture, I shall rest the truth of the doctrine upon the plain texts which I have already cited. These are not loose, independent sentences, but chiefly distinct arguments, linked together in a chain of clear and strong reasoning, by which the apostle demonstrates the gospel to be, in its whole frame and contexture, a scheme of divine grace.

I now beg the patience and attention of my hearers, while I proceed to point out a number of truths, which immediately flow from the nature of the gospel.

1. If the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, then the work of redemption is the most glorious of all the works of God. His works of creation are great and glorious. When he created the world, he made bright displays of his power, wisdom and goodness. These works, however, gave him no opportunity to display the attribute of grace. And had he continued creating world after world, and system after system to this day, he might, indeed, have astonished all intelligent beings with the variety and magnitude of his works, but could have made no discovery of his grace, without the work of redemption. This is the only work in which grace is concerned, and in which grace is displayed. This work therefore is very diverse from all the other works of God, and as much superior to them, as it is different from them. The wonders of divine grace displayed in this work, divert the attention of the most exalted creatures from every other object in the universe. The angels, those morning stars, who saw the world created, and who have been acquainted with all the works of God, still desire to look into the work of redemption, in order to make new and larger discoveries in the divine character. And when all the works of God shall be completed, and all holy beings collected, it will be their everlasting employment to celebrate the displays of divine grace in the work of redemption. Indeed this work, which has employed the thoughts of God from eternity, which has brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, and which has raised the guilty sons of men from earth to heaven, will forever remain the grand mirror, to reflect the brightest beams of the divine glory.

2. If the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, then it is really founded on this single truth, that all the human race *deserve* complete and endless ruin. This I take it for granted, is the dreadful misery, from which the gospel is designed to save sinners. And this misery they *deserve*, if there be the least grace in the gospel. For grace consists in saving men from *deserved* misery. There is no grace in saving them from *undeserved* evils, however great and dreadful. If they were exposed to eternal destruction, and if the gospel should save them from it, yet there would be *no grace* displayed in their salvation, unless they *deserved* the damnation of hell. The gospel therefore, which bringeth salvation to sinners upon the footing of grace, necessarily supposes that they *deserve* eternal destruction upon the footing of *justice*. So that if the gospel be a scheme of grace, which is designed to save sinners from eternal misery, then it must solely rest on the ground of their *just desert* of complete and endless ruin. "If one died for all, says the apostle, then were all dead;" so if the gospel offers grace to all, then all *deserve* to be damned. If we admit, therefore that the gospel offers to save us from eternal destruction, upon the footing of *grace*, we must admit that we are ill-deserving, and hell-deserving creatures. This character we must not only believe but feel, if we ever feel and enjoy the *grace* of the gospel.

3. If the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, then all the essential or fundamental doctrines which compose it, are doctrines of grace. The gospel is built upon a number of essential doctrines, which constitute its nature, and distinguish it from every other scheme of religion. Every system of religion, as well as every form of government, must have some peculiar and fundamental principles. This we must grant, or else deny that there is any essential difference between the religion of

a Christian, and that of a Turk or a Pagan. If the gospel then must have some fundamental principles, we may safely conclude, that these are the doctrines of grace. We have no occasion to determine the *number*, in order to determine the *nature* of the first principles of the gospel. To determine the *nature* of the gospel, is sufficient to determine the *nature* of all its leading and fundamental principles. We have shewn that the gospel is a scheme of divine grace, and this shews that all the doctrines which are necessary to compose this scheme of religion are doctrines of grace. The nature of the gospel, therefore, directs us how to find its *fundamental* doctrines, and how to distinguish them from all other doctrines which are not *essential* to Christianity, or which are *subversive* of it.

4. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then to deny the doctrines of grace, is to deny the gospel. To deny the first principles of any system of sentiments, is to deny the system. To deny the first principles of Newton's philosophy, is to deny his system of philosophy. To deny the first principles of Bishop Berkley's ideal system, is to deny his system of metaphysics. So to deny the doctrines of grace, which are the first principles of the gospel, is to deny the gospel. It is by no means necessary to deny the inspiration of the scriptures, in order to deny the Christian religion. The Jews readily acknowledged the inspiration of the scriptures; but yet they denied the doctrines of grace which were contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets, and for that reason, denied and rejected the gospel of grace, which Christ preached in all its purity and simplicity. And there were some in the apostle's day, who believed the gospel as a divine Revelation, but at the same time denied the doctrines of grace, and therefore in the apostle's view, really and totally deni-

ed the gospel. "I marvel," says he to the Galatians, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the *grace* of Christ, unto *another gospel*: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert* the gospel of Christ." The apostle here considers the gospel of Christ as a gospel of *grace*, and therefore considers any system of doctrines which is contrary to grace, as another gospel. But not, strictly speaking, as another gospel, because no system of sentiments which is contrary to grace, deserves the name of a gospel. Besides, he considers every one, who preaches a scheme of religion which is contrary to grace, as denying and subverting the gospel of Christ. This passage of the apostle therefore, fully proves what our subject suggests, that to deny the doctrines of grace, is to deny the gospel.

5. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then it must disapprove and condemn all schemes of religion, which are not built upon these peculiar principles. Accordingly we find the gospel has, under every dispensation, disapproved and condemned every other scheme of religion, without distinction. To this peculiarity of the gospel, we must ascribe the general enmity, opposition, and virulence of mankind against it, in every age of the world. It was on this account, bishop Warburton observes, that the enemies of the Jewish religion agreed to stigmatize it, as the *unsociable* religion. The Jews might have lived in harmony among the Pagans, had they only exercised a little catholicism towards the Pagan religion. But they insisted with inflexibility, that *their* religion was the only true and divine religion, and every other false and absurd. And this *uncharitableness* towards the various species of the Pagan religion, drew upon them a load of infamy,

reproach, and contempt. So when Christianity was propagated in the Roman empire, the emperors had no objection against its spreading among the people, until they found that the Christians exercised no *charity* towards their religion; but as soon as they perceived this, they immediately commenced the most virulent enemies and persecutors of the meek and harmless disciples of Christ. The Pagans cultivated universal harmony and mutual charity among themselves, notwithstanding their various objects and modes of worship, for they considered all their own religions as absolutely equal in point of truth, divinity, and importance. And had the Christians only allowed them to consider their religion in the same light, they would have treated them with the same candor and forbearance. But the Christians understood the genius and spirit of the gospel too well, to place it upon a level with any other scheme of religion in the world. They had imbibed the opinion of the inspired teachers, who unanimously condemn every system of religion but the true. The prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, reprobate all false teachers and false sentiments, with the greatest freedom and severity. Christ denounces the heaviest woes against the Scribes and Pharisees, who taught for doctrines the commandments of men, which, in his view, made void the doctrines of grace. And with what a spirit of confidence does the apostle Paul address the Galatians on this serious subject: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before; so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." All the inspired writers speak the same language, and breathe the same spirit towards those

who deny the first principles of the gospel. They have never, in any of their writings, let drop a single expression, which requires or even allows us to exercise the least catholicism towards those, who maintain any system of sentiments, which is subversive of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

6. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then modern catholicism is real infidelity. Men of modern catholicism make no distinction between *essential* and *non-essential* doctrines; but universally embrace, in the arms of charity, all sects or denominations of men, who believe the Bible to be the word of God, whether they profess Arianism, Socinianism, Materialism, Universalism, or any other particular system of Religious principles.* And what is still more remarkable, they are so lavish of their charity to these *needy objects*, that they have little or none to spare for others, who are more strict and orthodox than themselves. Mr. Locke, in his Reasonableness of Christianity, labors to prove, that all a man needs to believe in order to be saved, is this single proposition, *that Jesus is the Christ*. And Dr. Price is equally liberal in his religious sentiments. In a letter to Dr. Priestley, he expresses his most ardent wish that this sentiment might be stamped on every human mind, "*That worth of character, and true integrity, and consequently God's acceptance, are not necessarily connected with any particular set of opinions.*" Yet this great and catholic divine, in one of his late sermons, first gives a concise and accurate account of the doctrines of grace, and then reprobates them as

* "Indeed this charity is as mysterious as the faith of the most bigotted Catholic; it is equally full of contradictions; and seems resolved to found itself, not upon evidence, but upon the want of it."—*Dr. Witherspoon's Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, *Maz* in xii.

the most absurd set of principles to be found in the Christian world.

This is modern catholicism, which extends to all but those, to whom it ought to extend; and which would break down all distinction between *essential* and *non-essential* doctrines, that every man may have full liberty to embrace any scheme of religion, however false and absurd.

Now is not such a catholicism real infidelity? Does it not carry in it a *disbelief* of all that Christ, the prophets, and the apostles have said concerning the fatal tendency of corrupt sentiments in religion? And does it not at the same time, equally carry in it a *disbelief* of all the *fundamental* principles of Christianity? Can any man really believe the essential doctrines of the gospel, and yet believe that he or any other person may disbelieve and deny them at his pleasure, without the least danger or guilt? This would be to set a lower price upon Christianity, than the Jews set upon its Divine Author, and to betray the doctrines of grace, for less than thirty pieces of silver.

Besides, this catholicism tends to beget and diffuse a deistical spirit among all ranks and classes of men. For if once they imbibe the notion, that the gospel may be made to mean any thing, every thing, or nothing; that it has no essential and fundamental doctrines which are absolutely necessary to be believed in order to salvation; they will readily draw this easy and natural conclusion, that it is of no real importance, whether they believe the gospel to be of *divine inspiration* or not. And were it true, that men might be saved without believing a single doctrine of the Bible, it would be difficult, indeed, to shew why they could not as well be saved without believing the Bible itself. Modern catholicism, therefore, which sets the doc-

trines of grace and all the fundamental principles of Christianity in such a low and trifling light, serves more to propagate the spirit of deism and universal skepticism, than all the boasted and specious arguments of professed infidels. Indeed let any one only adopt this catholic principle, and there is nothing to restrain him from embracing the grossest errors and absurdities, that can possibly be suggested. This is already exemplified in Dr. Priestley, who would fain pass for a warm and bold defender of Christianity, after he has exerted the whole strength of his genius and the whole force of his learning, to subvert some of the fundamental principles of both natural and revealed religion.

7. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then there may be a propriety in forming and subscribing creeds or confessions of faith. These are considered in a very bad light by men of moderation and catholicism. They would have the Bible to be the only standard of orthodoxy, and represent creeds and confessions of faith as a clog to inquiry, a source of hypocrisy, and even a violation of the sacred rights of conscience and private judgment. But let us consider whether there be any just ground to discard all creeds and confessions of faith. If a man may believe the *divinity* of the gospel, and yet disbelieve and deny the doctrines of grace which are the fundamental principles of the gospel; then his most ample profession of believing the inspiration of the Scriptures, is no proper evidence of his being sound in the faith, and established in the first principles of the oracles of God. There is therefore a necessity of having some standard more *particular* and *definite*, than the *general* standard of the

Scriptures, if we wish to *ascertain*, whether a man really believes the doctrines of grace, which are the distinguishing principles of Christianity. And if such a standard be proper and necessary, it is as easy to *form* it, as to distinguish and define the *nature* and *essence* of the gospel. For if the gospel be plain and easy to understand, then it is easy to distinguish and collect the first principles of it, and to throw them into the form of a creed or confession of faith. Nor do any at this day, if I conjecture right, object against creeds because they do not understand them, but because they do. And, after the first principles of the gospel are thus thrown into the form of a creed, a man may solemnly *subscribe* them as articles, *which he now believes, and which he always will believe*. For the *doctrines of grace* are not *mere opinions*, which a man may change every day in the year, but real, essential, important *truths*, which he may *know* to be truths, and which he is obliged always to believe and profess, at the risk of his life. There is a wide difference between *essential* and *non-essential* truths, or between *bare opinions*, and *infallible doctrines*. The primitive martyrs understood this distinction, and accordingly gave up their lives, rather than give up the essential doctrines of the gospel. Paul likewise understood this distinction, and therefore *kept the faith*, at the expense of his life. And upon the ground of this distinction, the inspired writers, exhort Christians to maintain a firm and unshaken adherence to *the doctrines according to godliness*. The wise men bids us, "buy the truth, and sell it not." Paul forbids the Ephesians "to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." He tells the Colossians that they would render themselves acceptable to God, "*if they continued in the faith grounded and settled, and*

were not removed away from the hope of the gospel." And again he says, "as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; *rooted and built up* in him, and *stablished in the faith.*" In his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, after describing the man of sin, who should bring in strong delusions to the destruction of those who should believe them, he says, "but we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and *the belief of the truth*: whereunto he called you by our gospel,—Therefore brethren, *stand fast* and *hold* the traditions which ye have been *taught, by word, or our epistle.*" In one of his directions to Timothy, he says, "take heed unto thyself, and unto *thy doctrine; continue* in them." And in another, he says, "*hold fast the form of sound words*, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." Now if the Scripture thus binds us to be rooted, grounded, settled, stablished in the faith, then we may bind ourselves, to hold fast the form of sound words, and to be stedfast and unmoveable in the doctrines of Christ. *For whatever God may bind us to do, we may bind ourselves to do.* Christians in general therefore, and Christian ministers in particular, may, whenever there is a proper occasion for it, *bind themselves* to be sound in the faith by owning and subscribing a creed or confession of faith. There is the same safety and consistency in owning and subscribing an orthodox creed, as in owning and subscribing the Bible itself. For we may as *certainly know*, whether the principles which lie in a creed be true, as whether the principles which lie in the Bible be true. And it is as warrantable to profess our belief of certain truths which lie in a creed, as

to profess our belief of certain truths which lie in the Bible. And this has always been the general opinion of the Church, from the first ages of Christianity down to the present day.* Nor do I see how a particular Church can now be properly formed, without adopting some creed or confession of faith, as the bond of their union in the faith and practice of the gospel. At least, I cannot see how a church which has no such bond of union, can consistently refuse or exclude any from their communion, who profess to believe the Bible, though they deny all the essential doctrines of the Christian religion.

S. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then it is proper and necessary that ministers should examine those, whom they approbate to preach the gospel, respecting their belief of the fundamental principles of Christianity. Ministers are set for the defence of the gospel, and in order to discharge this duty, they ought, as far as possible, to keep out of the ministry all such as would pervert the gospel of Christ. The right of ordaining others to preach the gospel, gives them a right of inquiring into their religious sentiments. And this right involves an obligation, to use all proper means of knowing, whether they are properly established in the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Nor can they be faithful to Christ, nor to themselves, nor to candidates, nor to the souls of men, if through fear, or favor, or negligence, they introduce those into the ministry, who are disposed to wrest the scriptures to their own, and others's destruction. To guard them against this, the apostle charges them "to lay hands suddenly on no man," and "to commit the gospel to faithful men.

* See Dunlop on Creeds.

who are able to teach others also." It is an alarming circumstance, at this day, that ministers have become so remiss in examining candidates for the work of the ministry. They not only approbate them to preach, but even ordain them to the pastoral charge, without the least examination of their religious principles. And some boast of this conduct, under the noble idea of liberality of sentiment. It deserves, however, serious consideration, whether it will appear in this light, in the view of Him who hath set them for the defence of the gospel.

9. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then if ministers neglect to preach the doctrines of grace, they neglect to preach the gospel. We may preach many real and important truths, while we neglect to preach the doctrines of grace. But while we neglect to preach these, our sermons, however elegantly composed and gracefully delivered, are no better than the empty declamations of heathen moralists. Socrates taught the existence of the Deity, the immortality of the soul, and its happy or miserable state after death. Cicero beautifully described and inculcated justice, veracity, temperance, and all the moral and social virtues. Seneca read solemn lectures upon the vanity of the world, the deformity of vice, and the wisdom and importance of improving time and preparing for eternity. And if we preach the same doctrines and duties upon the same natural principles, we deserve the name of heathen, rather than Christian preachers.

But this is not the worst, for while we confine our preaching to these duties and doctrines of natural religion, we betray the cause of Christianity, and rob our people of the knowledge of those doctrines of grace, which alone are able to make them wise unto salva-

tion. If we neglect therefore to preach the doctrines of grace, we are unspeakably worse than no preachers at all. Our people had much better be left alone with the Bible in their hands. Peradventure they may read, understand, believe and be saved. But if we preach, every Sabbath, something directly contrary to the spirit and genius of the gospel, we take the most effectual method to deceive and ruin their souls forever. Error according to the inspired writers, has as great a tendency to destroy, as truth has to save the souls of men. Christ compares error to *leaven*, and Paul compares it to a *canker*, or *gangrene*. Error is the same to the soul, that poison is to the body. As a small degree of poison will injure the body, so a small degree of error will injure the soul. And as a large degree of poison will destroy the body, so a large degree of error will destroy the soul. It is as dangerous and fatal therefore to preach a system of error to our people, as to inculcate a course of practical vice and immorality; for either will directly tend to destroy both their souls and ours forever. Hence, says our Lord, "if the blind lead the blind, both shall into the ditch."

10. If the gospel is a scheme of religion composed of the doctrines of grace, then none who are friendly to grace, can be really unfriendly to the doctrines of grace. Some who profess to be very friendly to grace, appear open and bitter enemies to the *doctrines* of grace. But how is this consistent? If they are really pleased with grace, why should not be as much pleased with the *doctrines* of grace. To be pleased with grace, is to be pleased with the character of God in damning sinners for the least violation of his holy and righteous law. Whoever can see a beauty in this part of the divine character, can see a beauty in divine grace. And whoever can see a beauty in divine grace, can see a beauty in the doctrines of grace.

For all the doctrines of grace grow out of, or unite with this single truth, that God is *amiable and glorious* in the displays of his punitive justice. How then can those who love this divine truth, hate and oppose the doctrine of election, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of unconditional submission, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, or any other of the doctrines of grace? Is there any thing more displeasing in these doctrines, than in the doctrine of eternal destruction for the least sin? Or if there be any grace in God's saving sinners from complete and endless ruin, is there not as much grace in those doctrines which immediately flow from this source? None therefore who really love the grace of God in the salvation of sinners, can understandingly hate and oppose the doctrines of grace. Here, however, I beg leave to borrow the words of a late pious and elegant writer, who has set this subject in a clear and striking light. "Believe me, my dear friend, salvation, both in its root and all its branches, is entirely of grace; or else believe me, for the many cogent testimonies of scripture, which most circumstantially ascertain this great truth. Election is of grace. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, not on account of human worthiness, but according to the good pleasure of his will.* Equally gratuitous is our effectual vocation: *God hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace.* Faith is owing to the same cause. *By grace are ye saved through faith.* From hence springs justification: *Being justified freely by his grace.* This is the origin of regeneration: *Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.* The consummation of bliss flows from the same all-supplying cause: *The gift of God is eternal life.* It is in every respect a gift; the superstruc-

ture is reared by the hand of grace; and when the topstone is brought forth, when our felicity is completed in the kingdom of heaven, the everlasting acclamation will be, *grace, grace unto it*. This is that glorious gospel, which human learning could never have discovered; which carnal reason cannot understand; which the wisdom of this world accounteth foolishness; which the envy of the devil, and the pride of man will always oppose.”

You will now permit me, my hearers, to bring this subject home to our own bosoms, and ask this serious question—do we oppose the gospel?

In particular, do we who profess to be ministers of the gospel, oppose it? This is possible. For we are by nature children of wrath, even as others. We have naturally a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. We naturally hate the doctrines of grace, as much as other men. But if we neglect to preach these doctrines, because *we* hate them; or if we neglect to preach them, because *others* hate them; or if we preach them, while *our own hearts rise against them*; how unspeakably guilty are we in the sight of our divine Master! Let us then settle this question, which it concerns us more than any other men in the world to settle,—do *we love* that glorious gospel which we are solemnly bound to study every day, and to preach every Sabbath, with supreme affection and delight?

Nor is this question uninteresting to him who is this day to lay himself under the most solemn obligations “to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” How much does it concern him to be established in the *faith* and in the *love* of the gospel! In this his own soul, and the souls of this people are deeply interested. Let him therefore be entreated to take heed unto him-

self, and unto his *doctrines*, and *continue* in them; that he may both save himself, and them that *hear* him.

And may this church and congregation inquire, whether they are willing to receive the grace of God in truth. The man who is now to be set over them in the Lord, will, we trust, come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of grace. We beseech them therefore not to receive the grace of God in vain. If he plainly and faithfully preaches the doctrines of grace, they will be a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death to your souls. Take heed therefore how ye hear.

And let us all who are present on this solemn occasion, take heed, lest we reject the gospel of the grace of God. Our divine and gracious Redeemer hath forewarned both ministers and people of their imminent danger. "The stone which the *builders* rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, *shall be broken*; but on whomsoever it shall fall. *it will grind him to powder.*"

SERMON VI.

Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. WALTER HARRIS, to the Pastoral Care of the Church in Dunbarton, August 26, 1789.

ACTS XX, 27.

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

THE apostle makes this declaration under peculiar circumstances, which carry the strongest evidence of sincerity. He is taking his final leave of those to whom he had preached the gospel with saving success. They expect never to see his face again, nor he theirs, until they meet in the world of spirits before the Supreme Judge. In this situation he solemnly calls upon them to bear testimony of his ministerial faithfulness. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." This seems to be the spirit of the apostle's appeal. "I know, and you know, and the Searcher of my heart knows, that I have faithfully preached the gospel among you; for instead of using any mean arts or subterfuges to conceal the truth, I have laid open the whole scheme of redemption, with all possible freedom and plainness."

As this declaration breathes the true spirit of a faithful minister, so it naturally leads us to show, in this discourse, that faithful ministers mean to preach the whole counsel of God.

Paul was a faithful minister. He loved that gospel, which he once hated. He admired that divine Savior, whom he once persecuted. He espoused that glorious cause, which he once opposed. His former views

and affections being totally changed by divine grace, he was prompted to preach the gospel from an ardent desire to promote the Redeemer's kingdom, and increase the number of his cordial subjects. He knew nothing more desirable, than to be instrumental in turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. He was willing to spend and be spent for the salvation of sinners. He was willing to sacrifice the most promising earthly prospects, and to endure the heaviest load of evils, that the world could heap upon him, for the sake of Christ and the good of souls. He felt therefore, no inclination to handle the word of God deceitfully, but sincerely desired, by the manifestation of the truth, to approve himself to his own, and to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.

This was Paul's character. And this is the character of all faithful ministers. They all have the same spirit, act from the same motives, and pursue the same objects. There is therefore no occasion to spend time in proving, that faithful ministers mean to preach as the apostle Paul did. This point is sufficiently clear from their Christian character. The only thing here that needs to be considered is, how they preach so as to declare the whole counsel of God. This indeed deserves particular attention. And upon this let me observe,

1. That faithful ministers in preaching the gospel, trace it up to its original source and fountain-head.

The gospel is not an emanation of the divine *nature*, but a fruit of the divine *will*. God is a voluntary agent. He acts of choice, not of constraint. His nature lays him under no natural necessity of acting, or producing any effects out of himself. Had it been agreeable to *his will*, he might have existed, from eter-

nity unto eternity, without giving being to any created object. His *nature* therefore by no means obliged him to give existence to men, and much less to give his Son to die for them, after they had forfeited every mark of his favor. Hence it appears plain and obvious, that the gospel of divine grace must have been a perfectly free and voluntary scheme, which the supreme Being devised, determined, and adjusted in all its parts, before the foundation of the world. For, God is a wise as well as a voluntary agent. And every wise, voluntary agent always forms his plan, before he begins to operate. The general concert his scheme, before he orders his army to march. The master of the ship determines his course, before he launches into the mighty deep. And the architect draws a complete plan of his intended work, before he shapes his materials, or begins to put them together. So the only wise God, the Creator and Governor of the world, voluntarily determined and adjusted the whole scheme of redemption, before he brought men, the intended subjects of it, into existence. The schemes of men are often imperfect, because they determine the *end*, without determining and securing the *means*. But no such imperfection ever attends the divine counsels. God determines the means as well as the end, and binds them together by an invincible connexion. The gospel therefore, as it lay in the divine mind from eternity, was one uniform, consistent, perfect scheme.

Accordingly, faithful ministers, in preaching the gospel, mean to trace it up to its original source and fountain-head. So Paul tells us he preached. "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And in his writings, he appears to make a point of illustrating this leading and capital idea of the gospel. Permit me to read you a passage to this pur-

pose, in his Epistle to the Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, *according to the good pleasure of his will*,—Having made known unto us *the mystery of his will*, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to *the purpose* of him, who worketh all things according to *the counsel of his own will*." The apostle here represents the gospel of God, as the mystery of his will, as the good pleasure of his will, as the choice, the counsel, and purpose of his will, which he *purposed in himself, before the foundation of the world*. He is so far from aiming to conceal the original and eternal source of the gospel, that he uses a great variety of similar terms to make it plain and intelligible to every capacity, that the gospel took its origin from the voluntary purpose and design of God, which he completely formed and established in his own mind in the early ages of eternity. And every faithful minister means, in the same manner, to trace the gospel up to its fountain-head, and so declare the whole counsel of God.

2. Faithful ministers mean to preach the gospel in its full latitude and extent.

The gospel is very extensive. It comprehends all the designs of the Creator. It is, strictly speaking, the

sum and comprehension of all the divine purposes. Though the designs of God in creation and providence are very numerous and complicated; yet numerous and complicated as they are, the gospel contains them all. They are all but so many constituent and necessary parts of the one great design of redeeming love. When God concerted the scheme of redemption through the mediation of Christ, he fixed on the works of creation and providence, as the *means* to carry into effect this supreme and ultimate object. In this extensive view, the apostle frequently considers and represents the gospel. Speaking of the purpose of God in the work of redemption, he says (Ephes. i, 10) "That in the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." This intimates that Christ, in his mediatorial character, is the grand centre of union and of blessedness among both men and angels.

In the third chapter of this same Epistle, he says again, "unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the *mystery*, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known *by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose*, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." This passage exhibits the gospel scheme of redemption, as that which lay a mystery or secret in the divine mind from eternity; as that which constituted the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners; and in a word, as that which *comprehends* all the manifold wisdom of God, which ever has been.

and ever will be displayed in the works of creation, providence, and grace.

This same apostle, in another place, gives us a still more full and particular representation of the universal extent of the gospel scheme. The text I advert to is in the first chapter of Colossians. These are the words: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him and *for him*: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of *the body, the church*: Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Here we are expressly told, that all things visible and invisible, from the highest seraph to the lowest insect; from the largest globe to the smallest atom, were created not only by Christ, but *for him*; that is to promote and accomplish the great work of redemption, which shall finally terminate in the complete union and blessedness of all holy beings. Such is the length, and breadth, and magnitude of the gospel scheme. It involves all the divine counsels, and all created natures

and objects. And in order to declare the whole counsel of God, it is necessary to exhibit the gospel in this wide and comprehensive latitude and extent. This leads me to observe once more,

3. That faithful ministers mean to preach the gospel in its full and final effects.

We have just now observed, that the gospel is a great and extensive scheme, which takes in all intelligent natures, and comprises all the counsels and operations of God towards them, through every period of their existence. It must therefore most essentially and universally affect all their views and feelings forever. It has, indeed, already deeply affected them. All the events which have hitherto taken place, in carrying forward this gracious design, have produced great and lasting effects in the minds of both good and evil spirits in this and other worlds. The solemn scenes, which are this day passing before us, may perhaps as much engage the attention, and as sensibly impress the minds of *invisible* as of *visible* beings. But however inattentive and unaffected we or they may be on this occasion, yet we should do well to remember, that all these steps which are now *taking*, as well as all those which *have been taken*, to promote the work of redemption will eventually and eternally affect every intelligent creature. And this great and extensive scheme will have a growing influence upon the whole intellectual system, from age to age, to its final accomplishment. Heaven, earth, and hell, will be deeply affected by the general conversion of Jews and Gentiles; by the destruction of the power and authority of the man of sin; by the restraints which shall be laid upon the malice and influence of satan; and by the universal dominion which shall be given to the people of God for a thousand years together. But when God shall judge

the secrets of men, as the apostle says, *according to my gospel*, then, and not till then, its full effects will be universally seen, and universally felt. Then it will appear that the gospel, in its rise, progress, and final issue, fixed the states, and formed the characters of all the inhabitants of heaven and of hell; and that these amazing effects of it, will not be transient and momentary, but permanent as the throne of God, and interminable as the ages of eternity.

Thus all faithful ministers, after the example of the great apostle, mean to lay open the gospel scheme in its original source, universal extent, and final influence and effect upon the whole intelligent creation. And by this mode of preaching they do in the highest and best sense of our text, declare the whole counsel of God.

I now proceed to make a few reflections upon the subject we have been considering.

I. Faithful ministers never lose sight of the gospel in their preaching. All their discourses breathe an evangelical spirit. They treat every subject, which they have occasion to consider, in a gospel strain. Not that they confine their attention to one, nor even to a few subjects; for they studiously aim at a rich variety in the course of their preaching. But whatever subject they undertake to handle, they explain it upon gospel principles, and enforce it by gospel motives. For they consider the gospel as including all the doctrines and duties of religion. Accordingly, they never treat any subject, as totally detached from the general system of Christianity. They never preach mere philosophy, nor mere metaphysics, nor mere morality. If they treat of the being and perfections of God; if they treat of the works of creation and providence; if they treat of the powers and faculties of the

human soul; if they treat of the social and relative duties of life; they consider all these subjects as so many branches of the one, comprehensive scheme of the gospel. "For they determine with the apostle Paul, not to know any thing among their people, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Hence when they preach upon the inward exercises and affections of the heart, they represent love, repentance, humility, submission, sobriety, &c. not as *moral virtues*, but as *Christian graces*. And when they discourse upon moral topics, they inculcate the duties of rulers and subjects, of parents and children, of masters and servants, by motives and obligations drawn from the precepts and sanctions of the gospel. So that all their public discourses are peculiarly suited to awaken and convince sinners, and to quicken and edify saints; and of course, to carry into execution the great and benevolent design of the Christian system. Hence faithful ministers eminently merit the distinguishing character of gospel preachers.

2. Faithful ministers dwell largely upon some particular doctrines, which others silently pass over, or but rarely mention in their public instructions. They say much about God's design in the creation of the world. They insist that he aims supremely and ultimately at his own glory in all his works. They say much about the *perfection* of the divine plan. They insist that it is, of all possible ones, absolutely the best. They say much about the evils which are found in the divine system. They insist that God makes them all, sometimes the means, and always the occasion, of superior good. They say much about the divine supremacy. They insist that God is concerned in all events, and guides all the views, designs, and voluntary actions of moral agents. They say much about the decrees of God. They insist that he hath chosen some to everlasting life, and predestinated others to

everlasting ruin; that he hath brought both natural and moral evils into his original plan; that he hath immutably fixed the characters and conditions of all intelligent beings; that he hath established an intimate and indissoluble connexion between causes and effects, means and ends, both in the natural and moral world; or to say all in fewer words, that he hath from eternity, fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. They say much about the fall of man, the moral corruption of human nature, the perishing state of sinners, the grace of God in providing a Savior, the sovereignty of God in the application of redemption, the irresistible agency of God in the renovation of the heart, and the power and faithfulness of God in the final perseverance of saints. These doctrines lie in the way of those who declare the whole counsel of God. For they grow out of the root, and spread through all the branches of the gospel. The gospel therefore, cannot possibly be laid open in its original source, extensive nature, and final influence, without setting these doctrines in a full and fair light. Besides, those who declare the whole counsel of God, consider these doctrines as the nerves and sinews of the gospel, and the best adapted to awaken a sense of duty, and a spirit of devotion in the hearts and consciences of their hearers. Accordingly they make these the leading subjects of their public discourses. And though they often treat on other less interesting topics; yet they are careful to say nothing, which may serve either to obscure the evidence, or weaken the importance of these distinguishing articles of the glorious gospel.

3. We hence see why faithful ministers are so much more apt than others, to irritate and displease men in their preaching. This difference among preachers is often observed and mentioned by their hearers, who generally entertain very different opinions about it.

While some look upon it, as very strange and unaccountable, others, without the least hesitation, ascribe it to the worst of causes. But we may easily discover the truth of the case, if we only attend to what has been said. Faithful ministers declare the whole counsel of God, by which they represent every thing in a disagreeable light to sinners. By opening the gospel scheme, they make it appear, that every creature, every object, and every event in the universe, shall serve to *save* or *destroy* the enemies of truth, just as God absolutely determined from eternity. If they treat of the divine decrees, they make this appear. If they treat of the divine sovereignty, they make this appear. If they treat of the divine agency, they make this appear. If they treat of the common course of providence, they make this appear. In short, if they treat of any other truth, they carry it so far, as to make this appear. For, they always treat every subject in its intimate connexion with the one great scheme, which comprises all the designs, all the creatures, and all the works of God. And viewed in this light, one thing is nearly as disagreeable as another, to every carnal heart: grace is as disagreeable as justice; heaven as disagreeable as hell; time as disagreeable as eternity; prosperity as disagreeable as adversity; the promises of the gospel as disagreeable as its most awful threatenings. For, all these things stand equally prepared to destroy every one of those, whom God designs should be finally destroyed. But some preachers never declare the whole counsel of God; and of consequence, never display any one truth, nor any one object in this full and important light. Hence they never preach any thing which is very displeasing to sinners, who are willing to hear, at least, some part of the truth about the most important subjects. In particular, they can bear to

hear that God decrees *some* things—that he acts as sovereign in *some* cases—that he governs them in *some* respects—that he disposes of *some* of their interests—and indeed, that he intends to punish *some* of the most incorrigible of the human race in a future state. But when they hear divine truths carried in their full latitude and extent, through all their relations and connexions in the great and comprehensive scheme of redemption, their hearts rise, and they can no longer sit with ease or patience under the preached gospel. The whole truth is infinitely too much for their proud hearts to endure. It is neither strange nor new therefore, that faithful ministers should give peculiar offence to sinners, who have always been displeased with such preachers.

Paul, it must be allowed, was every way qualified to preach the gospel to the best advantage. He was a man of learning, a man of eloquence, a man of prudence, and a man deeply acquainted with human nature, and the most engaging modes of address. He very well knew how to please mankind, and he spared no pains to please them, so far as the genius of the gospel and the dictates of his own conscience would permit him to do it. This he assures us in the strongest terms. “Give none offence,” says he to the Corinthians, “neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: *Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*” “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not with-

out law to God, but under law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I, as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." But notwithstanding all this prudence, condescension, and winning address, the apostle highly displeased many by his preaching. When he preached at Damascus, he displeased the Jews so much, *that they took counsel to kill him.* When he went from Damascus to Jerusalem, he there raised the resentment of some so high, *that they went about to slay him.* At Antioch, *they expelled him out of their coasts for preaching.* At Thessalonica, they were so exasperated at his doctrines, *that they beset the house where he was, with a determination to destroy him;* nor is this all: for even his friends, it seems, once forsook him for preaching too plainly. "At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me, *the preaching might be fully known,* and that all the Gentiles might hear." These are plain facts, which carry convincing evidence, that no faithful ministers can possibly exhibit Divine truths as they lie connected in the Divine counsel, without giving offence to sinners. The gospel thus fully displayed, always did, and always must, give offence to those whose hearts and deeds are evil.

4. Faithful preachers are weighty and powerful preachers. Their discourses have a peculiar energy, which we often see bears down the minds of a whole assembly. Not a single person is able to resist their weight and influence. This is not so much owing to the *manner* of their speaking, as to the *importance* and *perspicuity* of what they deliver. They plainly and

fully lay open the gospel scheme, and thereby lay open the *nature* and *importance* of all created and uncreated objects, as they stand connected with it. And this at once gives both meaning and weight to every expression they use. Accordingly, when they speak of God, they are understood to mean that Being who exists of himself, who determines all events, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, and who carries in his hand the eternal interests of the whole creation. When they speak of the law of God, they are understood to mean a law, which requires perfect obedience on pain of his eternal displeasure. When they speak of the justice of God, they are understood to mean that justice, which will doom all the finally impenitent to endless perdition. When they speak of the mercy of God, they are understood to mean that sovereign mercy, which saves one sinner, and which leaves another to perish in his sins forever. When they speak of love to God, they are understood to mean that impartial, universal, disinterested charity, which never seeks her own, but always prefers the divine glory and the general good, to the personal happiness of any individual. When they speak of submission to God, they are understood to mean absolute, unconditional submission. When they speak of obedience to the divine commands, they are understood to mean nothing short of true holiness. When they speak of regeneration, they are understood to mean the renovation of the heart by the divine Spirit. When they speak of saints, they are understood to mean the elect of God, vessels of mercy, and heirs of glory. And when they speak of sinners, they are understood to mean totally depraved, guilty, hell-deserving creatures, who are constantly exposed to eternal destruction. In short, let them treat on what subject

they will, their meaning is both *plain* and *important*, which gives a peculiar weight and energy to every word they speak.

Besides, they have the advantage of speaking under the united weight and influence of the whole of the divine system. As they consider every subject in connexion with the whole counsel of God, so the whole counsel of God seems to be more or less brought into view by every subject they handle, which necessarily gives it additional force and solemnity. For, the whole counsel of God inseparably connects time and eternity, heaven and hell, all worlds, and all beings in the universe. And every truth exhibited in such a connexion as this, must appear unspeakably weighty and solemn to every discerning mind. Hence their preaching has a superior power to seize the hearts and consciences of men; and the gospel, as it falls from their lips, falls, as our Savior says, like a weighty stone, which will grind every opposer to powder. Hence,

5. It is of vast importance, that those who undertake to preach the gospel, should make it appear as it really is, one great, comprehensive, and perfectly connected scheme. This is the apostolic mode of preaching, and this is the best mode of preaching, that ministers can possibly pursue. There is no other, as we have just observed, which will give their discourses such a superior weight and solemnity. But besides this advantage, they will derive many others of equal importance, from exhibiting the full import and extent of the gospel.

One is, that they will preach much more consistently. This is a point worthy of their particular and constant attention. For, consistency is the beauty and ornament, if not the essence of good preaching. And this arises from considering the relation which one truth bears to another, and which each bears to

the whole counsel of God. While preachers lay open this uniform scheme, they are obliged to keep the general connexion of divine truths in view, which will naturally produce a beautiful consistency through all their discourses. But, whenever they explode systems and despise forms in preaching, they are perpetually liable to fall into the grossest contradictions and absurdities. And indeed we find this two often exemplified. A series of inconsistency runs through the whole course of some men's preaching. They not only contradict in one discourse, what they have said in another; but they say and unsay, assert and deny the same things in the same discourse. Such inconsistency is very disagreeable and detrimental in preaching. It strengthens infidels, and wounds the feelings of believers. And therefore to avoid this, it is of absolute importance, that ministers should preach the whole counsel of God.

Again, they must preach in this manner, if they wish to *distinguish* themselves from *false* teachers, who corrupt the gospel and destroy the souls of men. Such teachers, amidst all their follies and absurdities, always preach *some* truth, but not the *whole* truth. The best way therefore, to expose their errors, and to defeat their influence, is to preach the *whole* truth, or declare the *whole* counsel of God, which contains that perfectly uniform and consistent scheme of religion, which stands opposed to all the dreams and delusions of weak and wicked men. If any preacher will only lay open the great design, the full extent, and final operation of the gospel, he will effectually distinguish his character and convince every hearer, that he is no Arminian, no Antinomian, no Socinian no Arian, no Universalist, no Deist. And surely every faithful minister must feel the importance of distinguishing himself from the various species of heretics, in order to discountenance er-

ror, and throw the whole weight of his influence into the scale of truth.

Again, by preaching the whole counsel of God, ministers will convey the largest portion of knowledge to their hearers. Those preachers, who perpetually swim upon the surface of the gospel, never teach their people any real knowledge of the great system of Christianity. For no subject in divinity can be said to be really *known*, without being *known* in its various connexions with the other branches of divinity, and with the general scheme of divine grace. But superficial preachers, who never lay open the gospel as one great, uniform, consistent design, never represent one doctrine of religion in its full and proper connexion. Hence they never convey much real instruction to their hearers, by their vague and indeterminate preaching. But those who declare the whole counsel of God, are always instructive. They truly enlighten the minds and enlarge the views of their hearers, by every sermon they preach. For, in every discourse, they further unfold some part of the great design of the Deity. And after their hearers have once become acquainted with the general scheme of the gospel, they will receive instruction with peculiar ease and avidity. Common people are capable of understanding the gospel, if it be plainly and fully exhibited. Their ignorance therefore, which is so often complained of, is more owing to a want of opportunity, than to a want of capacity or disposition to learn. Let ministers only declare the *whole* counsel of God, and it will soon appear, that their people are very ready and very able to understand the gospel.

Once more, ministers must declare not only the truth, but the whole truth in their preaching, if they mean to be *faithful* either to themselves, or to their

people. So Paul thought. "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He sincerely aimed to represent God, and Christ, and heaven and hell, and all beings, and all objects, in the very same light, in which he really expected they would finally appear, at the winding up of the glorious gospel. By this mode of preaching, he told his hearers the truth, and the whole truth, and so did all that lay in his power, to save them from ruin, and to raise them to happiness. This was real faithfulness to them, and to himself. And this accordingly gave him inward peace and satisfaction of mind, and made him feel that he had been an honest and faithful minister of Christ. If ministers then, wish to be pure from the blood of all men, and to gain the approbation of God and of their own minds, they must declare, with fidelity and plainness, the whole counsel of God. Nothing short of this can entitle them to the present *character* and future *rewards* of the faithful.

I now beg leave, according to a long established custom on these occasions, to apply this discourse to my fathers and brethren in the ministry.

REVEREND SIRS!

My subject suggests one distinguishing mark of ministerial fidelity. And it deeply concerns us to inquire and determine, whether we have this mark in our favor. Let us then seriously ask, and permit conscience to answer, such questions as these—Have we really intended to declare the whole counsel of God, without the least ambiguity or reserve? Have we honestly endeavored, as far as our opportunities and abilities would permit, to make our *people* know all that *we* know about the gospel, which comprises all the designs and

operations of the Deity? Some, we have reason to fear, never mean to let their people know their religious sentiments, from the day of their ordination to the day of their death. And their people never will know them, until the gospel shall disclose the secrets of all men before the judgment seat of Christ. There is reason to fear this from a fact, which, I believe, many wish to conceal, but which, I presume, none will dare to deny. The fact alluded to is this. The people are much more Calvinistic in their religious principles, than the ministers are. There is, perhaps, scarcely a congregation in New England, where the majority are not friendly to our shorter catechism, and the leading doctrines of the gospel, as they are explained and maintained by Calvinistic divines. But are there not many ministers who totally explode this scheme of doctrines, and embrace opinions which are absolutely inconsistent with any system of religion, which takes its origin from the *eternal purpose* or *decree* of God. And do not such ministers as these, make use of every art and subterfuge to conceal their sentiments? Do they not preach in a dark, ambiguous, desultory manner, lest their *characters* should be distinguished from other men's, and their *principles* from the true principles of the gospel?

Are we then, my fathers and brethren, are we of this number, who thus shun to appear in their true characters, and to become transparent to the view of the world? If we are honest men, we have nothing to fear from the light. There is a dignity in *transparency*, which universally commands esteem and respect. But there is a meanness, which wants a name, in a minister's flying to shelters or subterfuges, to hide himself from the public eye. Shall we then, my brethren, who are the *salt* of the earth, who are the *light* of the

world, and who hold the torch of divine trust to dispel the clouds and darkness of error from the paths of men; shall we put out our light, or hide it under a bushel? No! Let us trim our lamps, and make them shine, that those who are *blind* may see, and those who see may be *blind*.

Our subject next speaks to him, who is this day to commence a steward of the mysteries of God.

- DEAR SIR,

We have endeavored in this discourse, to display the nature and importance of a minister's duty, with a particular view to your benefit on this solemn occasion. And if the gospel has taken possession of your *own heart*, there is nothing which you more ardently wish, than to unfold its divine mysteries for the instruction and salvation of sinners. This important, this delightful service, God seems about to assign you. Such a distinguishing privilege demands your most grateful acceptance, and most faithful improvement. The work indeed is great. And it must appear great to you, if your mind is awake, and looks forward to the final issue of the gospel, which will eventually fix your own soul, and the souls of your hearers in a state of endless joy or endless woe. But having once put your hand to the plough, you must never look back. Your cause is the cause of God and of all holy beings, which therefore must never be deserted. You may expect to be called to great and constant exertions. You must read much, think much, pray much, watch much, deny yourself much, if you wish to possess that *knowledge* and *fortitude*, which will enable you to declare the whole counsel of God. This mode of preaching always tends to awaken the enmity and opposition of the human heart, and to raise the resentment and ob-

loquy of sinners against the faithful ministers of Christ. You may therefore lay your account, that some will become your enemies, because you tell them the truth. But let none of these things move you, neither count any object too dear to be sacrificed in the cause of truth. For, the value and importance of every created object, is to be estimated according to its tendency to accomplish the gospel scheme, which contains all that is truly valuable to you, or to any other intelligent being. You have nothing to lose therefore by promoting the gospel, which will effectually secure the present and future interests of all its friends. Only take good care of the gospel, and the gospel will take good care of you.

Be entreated then to preach with all possible plainness and freedom. Unbosom yourself to your people. Let them see your heart. Make them feel more or less in every sermon, the united influence and weight of the whole counsel of God. Aim your discourses directly at their hearts and consciences. And endeavor, if possible, to make them see and feel the gospel, just as they must all see and feel it, at the day of judgment. This is your wisdom as well as duty. For, please to remember, if you conceal the gospel, the gospel will not conceal you. If you neglect to declare the whole counsel of God, the whole counsel of God shall yet be declared; and among other dreadful secrets *your unfaithfulness* shall be declared before your people, and before the whole assembled universe. Hence says our Lord to his ministers, "There is nothing *covered*, that shall not be *revealed*; and *hid*, that shall not be *known*. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops." Your time is short, you must soon, at longest, take a final leave of the dear people of your

charge. If you are *unfaithful*, how can you bear to leave them? Your conscience will forbid you to say, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." And if you cannot bear to leave them, how can you bear to meet them before the supreme tribunal, where the gospel will appear infinitely different from what you represented, and from what they expected? But, on the other hand, if you plainly and faithfully declare the whole counsel of God, you will make the gospel appear in the same light, in which it will appear to you, to your people, and to all intelligences at the great and last day. And be assured that that day, however tremendous to others, shall be joyful to you; for that day shall fully *reveal* and completely *reward* your fidelity!

I have only to address one word to the church and people in this place.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

If the gospel involves all your interests for time and eternity: if it must sooner or later be fully known and sensibly felt by every immortal soul among you:—can you desire to have it concealed from your knowledge; can you wish to be deceived in a point of such infinite weight and magnitude? Let me therefore, earnestly intreat each of you to adopt the language of good old Eli to the young prophet Samuel, who was sent to him with a heavy message from heaven. "What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me; God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee."

SERMON VII.

Predched at the Ordination of the Rev ELIAS DUDLEY, to the Pastoral Care of the Church in Oxford, April 13, 1791.

I TIMOTHY iv, 15.

Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them.

THE apostle having given, in the course of this Epistle, a variety of instructions to Timothy, finally sums up the whole in the words I have read. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them." Which is as much as to say, "Though I have given you many and various warnings and directions respecting your office; yet all these may be comprised in this short and comprehensive injunction, Give thyself wholly to the ministry." Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text and the business of the present occasion, we shall endeavour to illustrate this general truth, that ministers must give themselves wholly to their work.

In order to set this subject in a plain and practical light, I shall consider *how* ministers must give themselves wholly to their work; and then suggest several reasons, *why* they must give themselves wholly to it.

The work of the ministry is a great and arduous work. This appears from the various appellations, which the Scripture gives to those who undertake it. Ministers are called laborers and soldiers, to denote the exertions and fatigue which attend their work. They are called overseers and watchmen, to intimate the care and concern which accompany their office. They are called shepherds, and pastors, and teachers,

and stewards, to signify the various duties of leading, of guiding, and instructing the people of their charge. A work which contains so many and so important branches of duty, must be a very difficult and laborious work; and of course, must require those who undertake it, to give themselves wholly to it. But *how* ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, is the point which falls first under consideration.

And here I shall begin with observing,

1. That ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving their *hearts* to it.

No man ever gives himself wholly to any business, to which his heart is opposed. No man therefore ever gives himself wholly to the ministry, while his heart disrelishes the duties and designs of that sacred employment. The minister then, who gives himself wholly to his work, loves the gospel and feels *heartily* engaged to promote its great and important designs. He pursues the ministry, "not of constraint, but willingly." Not because no other business happens to fall in his way, but because there is no other business in the world, to which his heart is so much attached. He loves his work. He enjoys a pleasure in discharging every branch of duty, which belongs to his office. Christ, as a preacher, gave himself wholly to his work. Accordingly, we find him pursuing it with pleasure and delight. He came weary and faint to Jacob's well; but yet he chose to feed and nourish the *souls* of others, rather than to feed and nourish his own body. For while his disciples went to procure refreshment, he sat down and taught the woman of Samaria, with saving success. And when they returned and invited him to eat, he replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

Paul likewise gave his *heart* so much to the ministry as to esteem it a great and distinguishing privilege. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, says he, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." His life was bound up in his work. This he intimates to the Thessalonians. "Brethren, we were *comforted* over you in all our affliction and distress, *by your faith*. For we now *live*, if *ye* stand fast in the Lord." And as his benevolent heart was filled with joy, at the prospect of men's being saved; so it was wounded with sorrow and deep distress, at the prospect of their being lost. Hence he says to the Jews, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." The truth and sincerity of this declaration appears from another still more solemn and striking. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great *heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart*. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh." Nor did he feel less tenderness and concern for those in Galatia, whom he addresses with more than paternal affection. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." Such are the feelings of those who give themselves wholly to the ministry. Their hearts are so absorbed in their work, that it becomes the source of their highest joys and deepest sorrows.

2. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving their *thoughts* to it.

This the apostle plainly suggests in the text. "Meditate upon these things." Men always meditate upon their supreme object of pursuit. That to which any person wholly devotes himself, naturally engrosses

all his thoughts and attention. His mind is perpetually recurring to it, and, with difficulty, is diverted from it. It follows him into all places and into all companies, and directs the whole course of his conduct. The husbandman, who gives himself wholly to his calling, employs his *thoughts* more than his hands, in his daily business. This lies upon his mind not only in the hours of labor, but in moments of leisure. He is perpetually thinking and contriving how to plan and perform his business, with the greatest ease and dispatch. He has his fields, his pastures, and meadows in habitual contemplation; and wracks his invention to discover the best modes of cultivation and improvement. He lays himself out to provide laborers and all necessary implements to carry on his work. In short, his business employs his thoughts when he lies down, and when he rises up; when he goes out, and when he comes in; when he is at home, and when he is abroad.

So the minister of the gospel should give all his thoughts and attention to his work. He should meditate upon the nature and importance of his business, as well as upon his own peculiar gifts and talents, in order to discover the best rules and modes of conduct for him to observe, in the discharge of his office. He should often reflect upon the circumstances, connexions and movements of his people, and endeavor to learn, as far as possible, the peculiar genius, disposition, character and capacity, of each individual. He should watch the most favorable seasons of giving them advice, instruction, consolation and reproof. He should attentively eye the hand of God, that the voice of his discourses may follow the voice of God in his providence. He should lay himself out in his work, and be always studying to furnish himself more

and more for every branch of his office. He should embrace every opportunity of acquainting himself with the most perfect and best approved models of preaching; and provide all the helps which he can possibly obtain, both from men and from books. In a word, his eyes, his ears, his heart should be always open to any thing, and to every thing which can either assist or encourage him in his sacred employment.

3. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving their *studies* to it.

The apostle exhorts Timothy "to give attendance to reading." This includes study and thinking, and every mode of intellectual improvement. Ministers should be men of reading and close application. They cannot carry their studies and researches too far, provided they neither injure their health, nor infringe upon the other branches of their duty. But they like all other men, should always read with a particular reference to their own profession. The farmer, the merchant, the politician, and the minister, may read the same books, and read them with equal advantage, if each will read with a direct view to his own particular calling. Ministers may read any book, they may study any subject, which can serve to furnish them for the duties of their office. This should be their invariable and ultimate object in reading both sacred and profane authors.

They are to read the scriptures, and examine every chapter, every verse, and every word, not merely to direct their own faith and practice; but to direct the faith and practice of others. They are to read the various system of divinity, not merely to know the various opinions of men; but to discover and maintain the truth in opposition to error. They are to read philosophy, not merely to shine in that particular science;

but to enlarge their views of the works and character of the great Jehovah. They are to read metaphysics, not merely to learn the art of sophistry; but to be able to meet the enemies of truth upon their own ground, and with their own weapons. They are to read history, not merely to know what has happened in the several ages of the world; but to discover the *hand* of God and the *heart* of man, in all the revolutions of time. They are to read politics, not merely to become politicians; but to be able to explain and inculcate the various duties of all ranks and classes of men. They are to read deep and well written tragedies, not merely to gratify their taste and consume their time; but to discover the secrets of human nature, and the nearest passages to the human heart. They are to read the most elegant writers in general, not merely to gain flowers to adorn their subjects; but to supply them with the best words and with the best images, to illustrate the sentiments which they wish to inculcate. These spoils taken from the enemies of truth, they may lawfully employ in the service of God; just as he employed the spoils of his enemies, to furnish his tabernacle and temple, and to clothe his priests. And indeed if they do give themselves wholly to their work, they *will* consecrate all their literary acquisitions and improvements to the work of the sanctuary.

4. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by devoting all their *time* to it

They *may* employ their whole time in their work, because it is a work which *may* be done, not only on the first and the last, but on every day of the week. In this respect, it is a peculiar employment. Other men are required to labor only six days in seven; but ministers are obliged to spend *all* their time in the discharge of their office. When God consecrat-

ed the tribe of Levi, to the priesthood, he consecrated all their time to his service. He discharged them from labor, from war, and from government, and required them to pursue their sacred work without interruption and without intermission. A minister's time is all consecrated and devoted time. He has none, therefore, to spend in idleness, in secular employments, or in any pursuits foreign from his own profession. Nor will he find the least occasion of using any of these methods of *consuming*, or rather, of *kill- ing* time, if he only *fulfils* the duties of his office.

Ministers, indeed, should be frugal of time. They should divide it properly, and devote each part to some particular branch of their duty. They should live by rule. They should set apart particular days to particular studies; and particular parts of days to particular duties; and uniformly pursue their stated method, as far as unforeseen duties and avocations will permit. Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Edwards, and other great and useful divines, divided, devoted, and employed all their time to the best advantage. Ministers cannot be said, therefore, to give themselves wholly to their work, unless they devote the *whole* of their time to it. Their divine Master was diligent and indefatigable in his work, and devoted all his time to the ministry. And to justify his conduct, made an observation which all his ministers have particular reason always to remember and regard. "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

5. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by giving all their *interests* to it.

The apostles and primitive ministers were obliged to do this literally. They would not have been the ministers of Christ, without literally following his in-

junction, to forsake all that they had. They did, therefore, actually take the spoiling of their goods joyfully, and give up all their temporal interests, for the sake of fulfilling the ministry, which they had received of the Lord Jesus. But though it seldom happens in these days, that ministers are called in providence, to sacrifice all their secular interests to the work of the ministry; yet doubtless some such cases may possibly happen, and whenever they do, it is still the duty of ministers to part with all for the sake of preaching the gospel.

Not to insist, however, on such extraordinary cases, I would go on to observe, that every minister is called, at least, to make all his worldly interests *subservient* to his holy and divine employment. He should plan all his secular affairs so as to render them the least embarrassing and the most useful to his main business. He should aim in all his worldly concerns, not to become rich in wealth; but to become rich in grace, rich in knowledge, rich in good works. His dress, his house, his furniture, his farm, should carry the marks of usefulness as his ultimate and supreme object. If other men are willing to sacrifice their wealth to their *honor*, or to their *pleasure*; surely ministers may be willing to devote their's to the duties of their office. Affluence is more detrimental to ministers, than to any other order of men. It directly tends to divert their thoughts, to interrupt their studies, to chill their devotions, to weaken their exertions, and to corrupt their hearts. They in particular, therefore, are charged "not to be greedy of filthy lucre." Money destroyed one of the apostles, and two of the primitive professors. And how many ministers and churches have been destroyed by it since, the corruptions of Rome, and of the whole Christian world, will

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abundantly testify. Ministers then must make their work their *ultimate*, and their interest only a *subordinate* end.

6. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by making their secret devotions *subservient* to it.

They should give themselves to reading, meditation, prayer, and self examination; and in all these secret devotions have a particular reference to their public office. They should read devotional parts of scripture, and other devotional books, in order to keep their hearts in a proper frame, to discharge the devout and solemn duties, which belong to their holy and sacred calling. The book of Psalms, the history of Christ and the apostles, and the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, are peculiarly suited to warm, to animate, and to solemnize the minds of ministers. These therefore, they should peruse often, and with great attention, in the hours of retirement. For the same purpose, they should read the *lives* of great and good men, who were eminent for activity and faithfulness in the service of God. Such examples will tacitly reprove their negligence, and sensibly awaken their resolution, fortitude, and zeal in the cause of Christ.

To reading they should join meditation. They should frequently and seriously reflect what it is to be ministers of the gospel. What it is to be intrusted with the charge of souls. What it is to have the eternal interests of men lodged in their hands. By thus reflecting upon the nature and importance of their work, they will naturally be led to consider its obligations, duties, difficulties, and future consequences. And these again will lead them to reflect upon their own conduct; their defects and

short-comings in duty; their guilt, weakness, and dependence; their constant need of grace, of strength, and of direction from the great Head of the Church.

By such meditations they should fill their mouths with arguments in prayer, that they may grow in grace, in wisdom, and prudence; that they may be assisted in choosing, preparing, and delivering their public discourses; and that success may attend all their ministerial labors. In a word, they should always bear their people upon their hearts in *secret*, as the Jewish high priest bore the names of the children of Israel upon his breast, when he went into "the *secret* place of the Most High."

And to all this they should add self examination. This is the great duty of ministers, who have none to examine them but themselves. And in this duty they should have a particular respect to their ministerial character and conduct. They should lay open their hearts before the bar of conscience, and inquire, whether their public discourses have flowed from love to God and love to men; whether they have declared the whole council of God; whether they have watched for souls as those who must give an account; whether they have taken pleasure and satisfaction in their work; whether they have properly endured the afflictions of the gospel; in short, whether, in the general course of their conduct, they have sought to please God, or to please man. Thus ministers should make all their secret devotions subservient to their public duties. And they may depend upon it, that their public duties will carry the marks of their secret devotions, and declare to the world, that "they have been with Jesus." This leads me to observe once more,

7. That ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, by *living agreeably* to it.

Their lives should resemble their sacred character, and be worthy of the imitation of the best of Christians. Accordingly the apostle exhorts them "to be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." As they are to go before others, so they should never take a step, which others may not take with safety and propriety. They should be more than free from *vice*, they should be *virtuous*. They should be more than *virtuous*, they should be *pious*. They should be more than *not* condemned of the world, they should *condemn* the world. Their lives should be a living law to all around them. There is a certain gravity, sobriety, solemnity, and circumspection, which always appears proper and beautiful in the character and deportment of a minister. This, Smith, in his Theory of Moral Sentiments, has taken particular notice of, and represented in a striking light. "We cannot expect, says he, the same sensibility to the gay pleasures and amusements of life in a *clergyman*, which we lay our account with an *officer*. The man whose occupation it is to keep the world in mind of that awful futurity which awaits them, who is to announce what may be the fatal consequences of every deviation from the rule of duty, and who is himself to *set the example* of the most perfect uniformity, is the messenger of tidings which cannot, in propriety, be delivered either with levity or indifference. His mind is continually occupied with what is too *grand* and *solemn*, to leave any room for the impressions of those frivolous objects, which fill up the attention of the dissipated and the gay. We readily feel therefore, that, independent of *custom*, there is a propriety in the *manners* which *custom* hath allotted to *this profession*; and that nothing can be more *suitable* to the character of

a *clergyman* than that *grave, austere, and abstracted severity*, which we are habituated to expect in his behavior.”

Having shown, in various respects *how* ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, I now proceed to suggest several reasons, *why* they must give themselves wholly to it.

1. And here the first reason that occurs is, that by giving themselves wholly to the ministry, they will make the duties of it more easy and pleasant.

Their work is truly great and laborious, which needs to be made as light and easy as possible. And though by giving themselves wholly to it, they will neither omit, nor curtail any of its duties and labors; yet they will render these very duties and labors more pleasant and delightful. Those who give themselves wholly to the ministry, make it their supreme object; and men always pursue their supreme object, with a certain degree of pleasure and satisfaction. To some men, labor is exceedingly disagreeable and irksome, but to others it is very pleasant and agreeable. The reason is, that some men give themselves wholly to their pleasures, and never labor only when absolute necessity calls. To such men their business is a burden. But to other men, who pursue their business as their chief concern, labor is agreeable and pleasant. So, to some ministers their work is their delight; but to others it is their greatest burden and aversion. Those who do not give themselves wholly to the ministry, consider their office as a toil and fatigue, and perform its various duties as a painful drudgery. They go into their study as into a prison, and never feel themselves at liberty, till they leave it and mix with the world. But those who give themselves wholly to their work, find a pleasure in reading, meditation, and

retirement. They feed their own minds, while they feed their people with knowledge and understanding; and pursue their own supreme happiness, while they guide and assist their people in pursuing theirs. Their burdens, if they have any, arise not from their business, but from those incidental cares and avocations, which divert them from it, or obstruct them in it. If ministers then wish to live a pleasant and agreeable life, let them give themselves wholly to their work, which will render their peculiar office their peculiar happiness.

2. Ministers should devote themselves wholly to the service of their people, because this is the wisest and best way to secure their love and respect.

We love to see a person heartily and zealously engaged for our good. This is human nature. The sick man esteems and values the physician, who devotes himself to his service, and stands by him day and night, to watch his every motion, and to extend his healing hand at every call. The client is charmed with his counsel, who exerts all his ingenuity, learning and eloquence to secure his property, or to save his life. So a people revere and respect a minister, who appears willing to spend and be spent, for their eternal welfare. They prefer a warm, lively, animated preacher, to one who is cold and unconcerned for the good of souls. Accordingly, the first thing which they most critically observe in the minister who is settled among them is, whether he appears to devote himself wholly to their service; or whether he appears to seek some different and sinister object. And therefore the first step which wisdom and prudence dictate to him is, to make it appear that he loves his people, and devotes himself wholly to their service. And as long as he invariably pursues their good, and makes

their happiness his uniform and supreme object, he will deeply impress upon their minds a most amiable idea of his person and character, which will naturally claim and secure their inward respect and esteem. It is true indeed, men are so corrupt and depraved, that they may imagine that a minister has become their enemy, because he tells them the truth; and even hate and oppose him, for the same things for which they once respected and admired him. Christ before he was a preacher, grew in favor with God and men; but afterwards he was sometimes applauded, and sometimes hated and opposed. And the apostle tells us, that he was hated and opposed by those, who once were so passionately fond of him, that they would have plucked out and given him their eyes. The same thing has often happened since, and is still to be expected. But yet it remains a truth, that the wisest and best method which a minister can possibly pursue, to gain the esteem and respect of his people, is to give himself wholly to their service.

3. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, because this will be the best security against the snares and temptations to which they are exposed.

As men, and especially as ministers, they are very much exposed to danger. For many wish to lead them into those practices, which will sully their character, destroy their example, weaken their hands, and discourage their hearts. They should never, therefore, allow themselves to be idle, for this will expose them to every temptation; but industry and activity in the service of God, will be a great and constant security. The industrious man, who gives himself to his proper business from morning to night, is out of the reach of vice and immorality. So the minister, who gives himself wholly to his work, is out of the way of

those snares and temptations, by which loose and idle ministers are often overcome and destroyed. Nor is this all. For those who give themselves wholly to the ministry, will have no taste for vain company, insipid conversation, fashionable amusements, and refined vices. They will carry about with them a constant and deep-rooted aversion from the *manners* and *spirit* of the world. And of this the world will be so fully convinced, that they will never dare to solicit their company in parties of pleasure, amusement, and vice. If ministers then *wish*, and they certainly ought to *wish*, to escape the temptations and pollutions of the world let them firmly resolve to give themselves wholly to their work. For this will be a strong and constant security.

4. Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, because this is the best way to become extensively useful.

Every industrious man, in every lawful calling, is a useful man. Industry makes the useful farmer, the useful mechanic, the useful physician, and the useful magistrate. And one principal reason why men are so often useless is, that they neglect their own profession, and divide and shift their attention among a multiplicity of objects and pursuits. If ministers then indulge themselves in ease, idleness, or dissipation, they may expect to be barren and unfruitful in the vineyard of Christ. But if they give themselves wholly to the ministry, and lay themselves out to fulfil it, they may expect to become able divines, good casuists, and successful preachers. Activity and faithfulness in the service of God, is always accompanied with that constant and ardent desire of *success*, which has a natural and moral tendency to obtain it. Those therefore who have pursued this course in the ministry, have commonly be-

come eminently serviceable in the church of Christ. We have many examples to illustrate and confirm these observations. Paul was remarkable for his labors, and as remarkable for his eminent usefulness and success. Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Baxter, and Mr. Edwards were great and useful divines. And these men, it is well known, were remarkably diligent, laborious, and faithful in the discharge of their office. If others then wish to be equally serviceable in promoting the cause of truth and the interests of religion; let them be equally diligent, laborious, and faithful in their sacred calling.

5 Ministers must give themselves wholly to their work, because they actually engage to do it.

When they take the pastoral watch and care of a particular people, they publicly and solemnly devote themselves to their service. They engage to be the *servants* of their people, and to employ all their time and strength, all their powers and abilities, in promoting their spiritual benefit. Hence says the apostle, speaking in the name of ministers, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves *your servants* for Jesus' sake." And again, he suggests the same idea to Timothy. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." A minister has no right to make the least reservation of his time, of his talents, of his heart or his hands, but is bound to devote his all to the ministry. If he is, therefore, either idle, or entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, he is guilty of violating his public and solemn engagements. We should all judge so in any other instance. If a hired servant neglects *our* business, and spends his time in *his own*, or

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in *idleness*, we charge him with a breach of fidelity. A minister then actually defrauds his people of their right, if he gives not himself wholly to their service. I speak not of cases of absolute necessity, which carry their own justification, and equally excuse the apostle Paul, and any other minister of the gospel, for working with his hands. But such cases excepted, every minister is bound by his own solemn vows, to devote himself wholly to the service of God and the good of his people. I must add,

6. That the *importance* of the ministry requires those who undertake it, to give themselves wholly to their office.

The importance of any business is to be estimated according to the magnitude of the objects which are connected with it or suspended upon it. The business of a physician is important, because the lives of men are virtually lodged in his hands. The business of an ambassador at a foreign court is important, because the interests of whole nations and kingdoms are suspended upon his conduct. So the business of a gospel minister is infinitely important, because the eternal interests of men are entrusted to his care. No other business of so much importance, either this side of eternity or beyond it, was ever committed to created beings. We know not, that the endless happiness or misery of immortal creatures ever was, or ever will be suspended upon each others conduct, in the invisible world. But here in the present state we find that such infinitely important objects are lodged, for a time, in the hands of ministers. There is not, therefore, any work in the universe, which belongs to creatures to perform, so weighty and important, as the work of the ministry. Men must live or die, be happy or miserable to all eternity, accordingly as ministers either fulfil or neglect the important trusts reposed in them.

And, it is for this reason, that they are so solemnly warned, in the sacred oracles, to be diligent and faithful in their work. All the divine warnings and exhortations directed to them, plainly convey the idea, that both their own, and their peoples' salvation, is suspended upon their diligence, fidelity, and watchfulness. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself holy to them," says the apostle to Timothy: and immediately adds, "take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine, continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both *save* thyself and them that *hear* thee." In the same strain God speaks to the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, when I bring a sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned: if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, *but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.* So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thine hand.* Nevertheless, if thou warn the

wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, *but thou hast delivered thy soul.*" These solemn warnings and admonitions, lay ministers under an absolute necessity of being laborious and faithful in their work. For, if they prove negligent, careless, and unfaithful, they and their people must lie down together in everlasting sorrow!

I have now finished what I have to say upon the nature and obligation of ministers giving themselves wholly to their work; and proceed to improve the subject.

1. We learn from what has been said, that if ministers do give themselves wholly to their work, they will make it *appear*. This is a conclusion which the apostle draws from the subject. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that *thy profiting may appear to all*; or as it might be rendered, that, "thy profiting may appear *in all*; that is, in all thy conduct, and in every branch of thy ministerial office." As it is more difficult for any man to conceal *his knowledge*, than *his ignorance*; so it is more difficult for a minister to conceal *his faithfulness*, than *his unfaithfulness*. If ministers give themselves wholly to their work they will certainly profit by it, and increase in knowledge, in piety, and usefulness. They will become more and more wise to win souls, and more and more engaged to do it. The industrious man *will* thrive; for we are told the "diligent hand maketh rich." A faithful, studious, prayerful minister *will* make advances in knowledge and holiness. His public labors *will* breathe the spirit of his private studies and devotions. And his devout and exemplary life *will* give weight and energy to his public addresses.

But the *means* he employs will more fully discover his *ultimate end*. View a man's daily conduct, and you will easily perceive his leading object. If you see him rise early, and late take rest; if you see him shun idle company and vain amusements; if you see him apply every part of his property to the best advantage; you will be fully convinced that he gives himself wholly to his business, and determines to be rich. So, if you see a minister, who rises early, and late takes rest; who loves his study and appears to be at home in it; who avoids vain conversation, and delights in that which is good to the use of edifying, and who appears to partake of the joys as well as of the afflictions of the gospel, you will naturally conclude that he gives himself wholly to his work. Such a minister's profiting will *appear* to all, and carry convincing evidence to every mind, that his work absorbs all his thoughts and attention, governs his views and pursuits, and affords him the highest pleasure and satisfaction in life.

2. We learn from what has been said, that if ministers do *not* give themselves wholly to their work, they will also make it *appear*. The *means*, as we have just observed, will discover the *end*. If a man is going to a certain place, he will naturally choose the road which will carry him thither. Or if he is seeking a certain *end*, he will naturally employ the *means*, which will put him in possession of his desired object. And it is by observing this inseparable connexion between means and ends, that we are able, in ten thousand instances, to discover the different *views*, and of consequence, to distinguish the different *characters* of men. By this criterion, we discover the knave, the miser, and the sluggard. And by the same criterion, you may discover the idle and unfaithful minister. If he gives

not himself to the ministry, he will give the ministry to himself. And the ministry it is well known, *may* be made a very pretty *sinecure*, that is, an office of ease, of wealth, and of honor, without employment. But if a man should serve himself of the ministry, and make it subservient to his own avaricious, worldly views, he would be very apt to make it appear, at home and abroad, in his own house, and in the house of God. For the means and the end are totally different, and will appear so to every discerning spectator. If a minister does not love to preach, if he does not love to study, if he does not love to promote the cause of Christ and the interests of religion, his general mode of conduct will serve to discover it. For, if he does not love these objects, he will certainly love and pursue others, to the neglect of the labors and duties of his proper business. His proper business he will pursue with coldness and indifference; his supreme object he will pursue with warmth and pleasure. *In* his proper business, he will appear *out* of his element; and *out* of his proper business, he will appear *in* his element. He will carry with him into all companies, into all places, and into all duties, visible marks of his leading object. For, he “cannot serve God and mammon;” and if he “gathers not with Christ, he will scatter abroad.”

3. We learn from what has been said, why the vineyard of Christ bears at this day, such a disagreeable and melancholy appearance. If we go into a field, which is all overgrown with thorns and nettles, and whose hedges, fences, and stone walls are broken down, we know by its appearance whose field it is; and pronounce without hesitation, that it belongs to the slothful man, who says, “yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.” So, if we go into the vineyard of Christ, and find where the

hedges and stone walls are broken down, and where briars and thorns are sprung up, we must naturally conclude, that *sluggards* have been there. And do we not find many such neglected and uncultivated places in the vineyard of Christ? Is it not very much overgrown with thorns and nettles? Are not its walls and hedges very much broken down? But to drop these metaphors, are not the terms of communion, and the modes of discipline, in many places, very different from those which Christ himself hath appointed? Are not those sacred ordinances frequently *divided*, which he hath absolutely *united*; and those peculiar privileges which he hath given to *his friends*, bestowed freely and without distinction, upon *his enemies*? Are not gross and fatal errors indulged, if not nourished and fostered in the bosom of some of our churches? Are not open vices and immoralities suffered to spread and prevail in many of our congregations, without being restrained, and what is still more melancholy and shocking, without being condemned and reprov'd!

Such are the disagreeable and gloomy appearances of the vineyard of Christ at this day. And are not these the fruits, that we should naturally expect from sloth and negligence? If ministers were more watchful, more diligent, more laborious, and more heartily and unreservedly devoted to their work, we might certainly expect better fruits would appear in the garden of the Lord. For, wherever we find better ministers, we find better fruits. I appeal to facts. Go into those parts of the vineyard of Christ, where ministers give themselves wholly to their work, and there you will find vice and immorality condemned and reprov'd, if not restrained; there you will find churches kept in repair; and there you will find a number of warm and lively Christians growing in *knowledge* and in *grace*.

We are obliged therefore to ascribe, in a great measure, though not altogether, the present wretched and guilty state of our churches and congregations, to the negligence and unfaithfulness of ministers.

4. We learn from what has been said, the great criminality of those who sustain the sacred office, but do not give themselves wholly to their work. An idle person in the lowest station of life, who clothes himself and his family in rags, and reduces them to poverty and wretchedness, is very criminal; and carries about with him visible marks of his negligence and guilt. But how much more inexcuseable and guilty are idle, negligent, unfaithful ministers, who render both themselves and their people in the highest sense, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! The barrenness of those churches which they ought to have cultivated and manured, and the leanness of those souls which they ought to have fed with knowledge and understanding, bear witness to their face, and charge them with aggravated guilt. But besides these fruits of their negligence, which are, at once, both the evidences and aggravations of their guilt; their own voluntary, public, and solemn vows and engagements must be brought into the account, to fill up the measure of their sins. The aggravations arising from both these sources will be fully displayed at the great and last day. Then the skirts of their garments shall be unfolded, and the blood of the souls of the poor innocents, who perished through their negligence, shall be brought to light; and at the same time, the solemn vows and engagements which they violated, shall be fully exhibited to their own view, and to the view of those whom they neglected, betrayed, and destroyed. These aggravations of guilt will appear to be peculiar

to those, who have been negligent and unfaithful in the ministry, and will sink them lower than the lowest of all other classes of men, in the gulph of perdition. Let us all, therefore, my brethren, now judge and condemn ourselves, that we may not be judged and condemned of the Lord. And while we mourn for our past negligence and unfaithfulness, let us resolve to give ourselves wholly to our work in time to come, and to watch for souls as those who must give account.

Permit me now to turn my discourse to him, who is waiting to be introduced into this part of the vineyard of Christ.

DEAR SIR,

You have reason to bow your knee in profound gratitude to the Father of mercies, who allows you to choose and enter upon the greatest and best work in the world. Gratitude therefore obliges you to give yourself wholly to the service of God. From this day of your public dedication, to the day of your decease, your time will be consecrated time; your talents consecrated talents; your interests consecrated interests. If you withhold or divert these from your sacred work, you will be guilty of sacrilege, but if you give them wholly to your office, you will make your profiting *appear* unto all. If then you wish to *appear* a faithful minister, be one. If you wish to be a *successful* minister, be a *faithful* one. And if you wish to go through your work with *ease*, and to finish it with *joy*, give yourself wholly to the duties of your office. You have but one object to pursue, and that is, your work. Let that have the supreme place in your heart. Let that have a governing influence upon your life. Let that bring every other object and concern into complete subordination.

You need not be concerned about riches or honors; for these, so far as they can be either necessary or beneficial to you, shall fall to your lot, if you seek first the kingdom of God and the good of your people. When God requires you to give yourself wholly to your work, he forbids you to take thought for the morrow. When he requires you to be wholly concerned about *his honor and interest*, he engages to take care of *you and of all your concerns*. But if you withhold your time, or your labors, or your heart from this people, you may expect that God will deny you his gracious smiles and presence; and teach you the folly and guilt of unfaithfulness, by those briars and thorns, which are the fruits of your own negligence. Be kind then to this people, speak good words to them, and devote yourself wholly to their service; and you will justly claim their sincere esteem, veneration and respect.

Lay out yourself to be a minister, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Enter into this vineyard of Christ, with a full determination to *labor*, and if possible, to repair the waste places. Manure and cultivate this garden of the Lord, and you may expect the dews of heaven to water it. Feed this flock of Christ with the sincere milk of the word, and you may expect that they will grow thereby. Display divine truth with a full blaze of evidence, and you may expect the mists of darkness and error will vanish.

How this people shall *appear*, in this world, at the day of judgment, and to all eternity, depends, under God, upon your conduct. Their eternal interests in the most important stage of their existence, are now for a while, to be lodged in your hands. It is therefore as important, that you should be laborious and faithful in your work, as it is, that you and they should be saved. Be intreated then, "to take heed

unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine, and continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both *save* thyself and them that *hear* thee."

The church and congregation in this place, will please to indulge me in a short, but free address, on this solemn occasion.

DEARLY BELOVED,

If you have been humble in asking, you will be grateful in receiving, one of the richest blessings which Christ has to bestow upon a people, a pastor after his own heart. Such a pastor, we believe is now waiting to take the care and charge of your souls. And if he should fulfil his great obligations to you; he will lay you under great obligations to him. If he should seek your future and highest good; he will oblige you to seek his present ease and comfort. If he should be laborious and faithful in his work; he will oblige you to assist, to encourage, and to support him in it. If he should seek to promote the purity of the church, the destruction of error, and the salvation of sinners; he will oblige you to seek and pursue the same desirable and important objects. And if he should plainly and faithfully preach the pure doctrines of the gospel; he will oblige you to receive and embrace them in meekness and love. In a word, if he should be a *good* minister; he will oblige you to be a *good* people.

But if he should fulfil *his* obligations to you; and you should violate *your* obligations to him; the consequence to *you* will be fatal. All his labors, all his self-denial, all his love and compassion, will only aggravate your present guilt and future destruction. God is about to try you. And a most tremendous trial it will be, if he puts a price into your hands to get wisdom, and you have no heart to it; but prefer folly to wisdom, and darkness to light. This is a solemn day

to you; and next to that day, when you must give an account how you have received and heard. Between this day and that, you will have a day of grace and space of repentance. And between this day and that, your pastor will have an opportunity of being a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to your souls forever. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation! Hear—and your souls shall live. Refuse—and your souls shall die! Amen.

SERMON VIII.

Delivered October 10, 1793, at the Ordination of the Reverend CALVIN CHADNOCK, to the Pastoral Care of the Third Church in Rochester.

JOB xi, 7.

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

THAT there is a first and supreme Cause, who is the creator and governor of the universe, is a plain and obvious truth, which forces itself upon every attentive mind: so that many have argued the existence of God, from the unanimous consent of all nations to this great and fundamental truth. But though we may easily conceive of the existence of the Deity, yet his nature and perfections surpass the comprehension of all minds but his own. Our eyes can perceive, without difficulty, the scattered rays of the sun; but if we fix them steadily upon the sun itself, we are immediately involved in darkness, by a profusion of light. So our general ideas of the Deity are clear and distinct; but if we take a more steady and particular survey of the divine mind, our mental sight is confused by the greatness and brightness of the object. We commonly, therefore, rest satisfied with more general and familiar views of the Supreme Being, unless some great event, some sudden change, or some pressing calamity, rouse our attention, and excite us to dive deeper into the divine nature and counsels. This was precisely the situation of Job. A great and sudden calamity had turned away his eyes from all second causes, and fixed his whole attention upon the supreme, first cause. He was astonished, that God should raise him so high, and in a moment, sink him so low. This led him to pry

into the mysteries of divine providence, and to censure the ways of Him, whose ways are past finding out. Zophar, his friend, had impatiently heard his unreasonable complaints; and at length put a question to him, which was exactly suited to silence all his objections. "*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*" This question carries in it the most strong and pointed assertion, that no created natures are able to comprehend the Supreme Being. The single point, therefore, which claims our present attention, is this:

THAT GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE BY HIS CREATURES.

This truth is too plain to need a labored proof. It rests upon the same evidence, upon which the truth of the divine existence depends. If God be eternal and self-existent, he must be incomprehensible. Every mind revolts from the idea, that creatures should be able to comprehend their creator, because this would imply that their powers and capacities are equal to his. I shall therefore only point out the various respects, in which God is incomprehensible by his creatures. And here I may observe,

1. *That God is incomprehensible in respect to the GROUND of his existence.*

Though God is the first of beings, and owes his existence to no cause out of himself, yet we are obliged to suppose, there is some *ground* or *reason* of his existing, rather than not existing. We cannot conceive of any existence, which has no ground or foundation. But the foundation of God's existence, is neither before, nor out of himself. For, if it were before himself, or out of himself, he could not be the first and self-existent Being. The *ground* or *reason*, then, of God's existence must be wholly within himself. There must

be something in the *nature* of the Divine Being, which renders his existence absolutely necessary. But what that something is, which is wholly within himself, and which renders his existence absolutely necessary, is above the comprehension of all created beings. It is not the divine will; it is not the divine power; it is not the divine wisdom; it is not, indeed, any divine attribute, but something which lies at the foundation of all the perfections of God, and which can be comprehended only by himself.

2. *God is incomprehensible in respect to many of his perfections.*

In some sense, indeed, all the perfections of God are unsearchable; for they are all unbounded in respect to creatures. Most of the divine perfections, however, are in the strictest sense, incomprehensible; and these deserve particular notice.

Eternity is one.—God is eternal.—He is said to *inhabit*, that is, properly and supremely to *possess* eternity. He never had a beginning. There never was a time when He did not exist. Now we can easily conceive of a *future*, but not of a *past* eternity. We can easily conceive, that God should continue to exist forever and ever; for we can conceive the same of ourselves and other created beings. But an eternity *a parte aute*, as some divines call it, that is, a beginningless eternity, surpasses the comprehension of all created intelligences. They know that *they* had a beginning. They know that all created objects had a beginning. Of this they have a clear conception. But that a being should always exist without any beginning, is what they will never be able to fathom, either in this world, or that which is to come.

The omnipresence of God is another incomprehensible perfection. That God is present *every where*.

both the light of nature and of divine revelation fully evinces. As all creatures live and move, and have their being in God; so it is certain to a demonstration, that his presence constantly fills all places throughout his vast dominions. But this immensity of the divine presence transcends the highest conceptions of created beings. They know with respect to themselves, that they move from place to place; that when they are in one place, they are not in another, and therefore that they cannot be in all places at once. But God is equally present with each of his creatures, and with all his creatures, at one and the same instant. This is incomprehensible on any supposition we can possibly make.

If we suppose his presence is properly *extended*; this looks like a plain absurdity. For extension implies figure, and figure implies matter, which we cannot reconcile with our ideas of a pure and perfect *spirit*. Or, if we suppose the presence of the Supreme spirit is *not extended*, and does *not occupy space*; yet this really surpasses our feeble conceptions. Though our spirits do not occupy space, yet their presence is limited, so that they are totally unable to perceive and operate equally at all places at once. Hence it is evident, that the most exalted creature has nothing in his *own* circumscribed nature, which can give him an adequate view of the divine omnipresence.

The power of God is as incomprehensible as his presence. We know from the perfection of the divine nature, as well as from the declaration of scripture, *that God can do every thing*. His power can meet with no resistance or obstruction. Who can stay his hand? His power is incomprehensibly great, both in its *nature* and *effects*. The effects of divine power are astonishing. The present created system is very extensive, but were creatures able to comprehend this,

yet we can easily conceive, that Almighty power is able to go on creating world after world, and system after system, within the bounds of unlimited space, until the number and magnitude of created objects should rise above the conception of men and angels. So that we cannot comprehend even the effects, which divine power is able to produce.

But the *nature* of divine power is still more unsearchable. It is of such a nature as to give positive existence, or to produce something when there was nothing. Created beings have power only to move, alter, change, or new-modify objects. They cannot create or produce existence, in a single instance. The production of a fly, or a worm, or the smallest insect, is as much above their power, as the creation of a world. *Creative power*, therefore, is utterly incomprehensible. Were it not a fact, we should be ready to say, that the Almighty could not produce something out of nothing. And Dr. CUDWORTH, in his intellectual system tells us, that this was the general opinion of the heathen philosophers. But the Bible gives us better information, and assures us, that this and all other worlds are the production of Omnipotent power. This, however, we cannot comprehend—“*For who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?*” Again,

No one can comprehend the knowledge of God. This is as high as heaven, and deeper than hell; the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. God knows the number of the stars, and can call them by their proper names. He knows the number of men, of angels, of all created objects. He knows all things that have been, that now are, that will be, or that might be. His knowledge takes in all objects within the compass of possibility. Such is the vast *extent* of divine knowledge; but the *nature* of it

is still more unsearchable. For, God knows all things by *intuition*, and of consequence, knows many things, which creatures never have known, and never will know. In particular, he intuitively knows *how* he exists, *how* he operates, and *how* all creatures live, and move, and have their being in Him. Such knowledge is wonderful, it is high; we cannot attain to it.

I might now mention the moral perfections of God, whose extent and degree surpass our limited views. For the *love* of God, which involves all his moral attributes, has produced, and will produce such great and lasting effects, as none of his creatures will be able to comprehend, to all eternity. But since the holiness of God and the holiness of the creature, the justice of God and the justice of the creature, the goodness of God and the goodness of the creature, the mercy of God and the mercy of the creature, are all of the same nature, and differ only in their extent and degree, I will not enlarge upon these divine excellencies, but proceed to observe,

3. *That God is incomprehensible in his great designs.*

None of the creatures of God can look into his mind, and see all his views and intentions as they lie there. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, and all his designs are profound secrets, until he is pleased to unfold them. And since he has not been pleased to disclose all his purposes either to men or angels, so none by searching can find out God. His counsels will, of necessity, remain incomprehensible, until his word or providence shall reveal them to his intelligent creatures. Men, and angels, and even Christ himself, have been unacquainted with *some* of the divine counsels, and perhaps they never will fully comprehend them *all*. For, though God will be perpetually reveal-

ing more and more of his secret purposes; yet we can no more conceive of their being *all* revealed, than we can conceive of eternal ages ceasing to roll. As God is incomprehensible in his designs, so in the next place,

4. *He is incomprehensible in his WORKS.*

Their nature, number, and magnitude stretch beyond the largest views of creatures. The best astronomer is unable to ascertain the number of the celestial bodies, or exactly measure their magnitudes, distances, and revolutions. The best naturalist is unable to discover the various species and properties of all sensitive natures. The best philosopher is unable to comprehend the structure and mechanism of the human body, or even that of the smallest insect. And the best metaphysician is unable to investigate the structure and operation of the human mind, or trace the intimate connexion between the soul and body, and their powerful influence upon each other. No man knows *how* he sees, or *how* he hears, or *how* he tastes, or *how* he smells. No man knows *how* second causes produce their effects; nor *how* the material system holds together, and hangs upon nothing. The works of the Lord are great, and above the comprehension of all his creatures.

I observe once more,

5. *That God is unsearchable in his providence.*

We know that whatever God *has* done, he always *intended* to do; but we do not know, at present, all the reasons of his conduct, nor all the consequences which will flow from it. God has caused ten thousand changes to pass over kingdoms, and nations, and private individuals, the reasons and consequences of which will never be fully known before the great and last day. And respecting *future* events, God has drawn over them an impenetrable veil. We know not what

even a day may bring forth. It is true, indeed, we know that *our* times, and the times of all other beings are in God's hands; but what those times shall be, neither we nor they can so much as conjecture. God's judgments are a great deep, and his ways are past finding out. Clouds and darkness will rest upon his providence, until they are dissipated by the clear light of eternity. "*Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?*"

Having briefly illustrated the general observation, that God is incomprehensible by his creatures, I proceed to improve and apply the subject.

1. *It appears from what has been said, that in a very important sense, God is truly infinite.*

To be incomprehensible is the same as to be infinite. It is as proper, therefore, to say that God is *infinitely* great, as to say that he is *incomprehensibly* great; to say that he is *infinitely* good, as to say that he is *incomprehensibly* good. In the same respect, in which God is incomprehensible, he is truly infinite. And we have shown, that he is incomprehensible in respect to *his creatures*, and therefore he is truly infinite in respect to *them*. But though God be incomprehensible in respect to his creatures, yet he is not incomprehensible in respect to himself, and therefore notwithstanding he is *infinite* in respect to his creatures, yet he is not *infinite* in respect to himself. Who will say, that God's present knowledge of himself is imperfect? Or who can imagine, that God will eternally *increase* in the knowledge of himself, and so never attain a complete comprehension of his own nature and perfections? But if this be not true, then what right have we to say, that God is *absolutely infinite*, that is, infinite with respect to himself? Is it not a plain contradiction in terms, to apply absolute infinity to a

material object? And why is it not as plain a contradiction in terms, to apply absolute infinity to an *immaterial one?* If we cannot say, without contradicting ourselves, that a line is infinitely long, or that a globe is infinitely great; how can we say, without contradicting ourselves, that a faculty is infinitely great, or that a quality is infinitely good? If the doctrine of absolute infinity will prove any thing, it will prove the grossest absurdities, in respect both to matter and mind. By this, however, I would not be understood to mean, that it is improper for ministers or others to ascribe infinity to God in their religious devotions; but only suggest, that we might, by observing the distinction between comparative and absolute infinity, prevent much obscurity, at least, in our reasonings about the great and incomprehensible Jehovah.

2 It appears from what has been said, that the incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Being, does by no means preclude our having clear and just conceptions of his true character.

His incomprehensibility is the same as his greatness. But does the greatness of any object prevent our having clear and just ideas of it? Because a mountain is larger than a small hill, can we not have as clear and just ideas of a mountain as of a small hill? Though our sight takes in the whole of a small hill, and not the whole of a mountain, yet what we do see of a mountain, we see as clearly as what we see of a small hill. Our ideas of material objects are not in the least obscured by their greatness. And this holds equally true in regard to mental or immaterial objects. Can we not as clearly perceive reason in a man, as in a child? In a philosopher, as in a peasant? In a Newton or a Bacon, as in those of much meaner capacities? Why then should we not as clearly per-

ceive power, wisdom, goodness, justice, or any other natural and moral excellence in the fountain, as in the streams? in God as in the creature? Where there is the most power, the most wisdom, and the most goodness, there these excellencies are the most easily and clearly seen. And since God possesses these in the highest degree, therefore they are to be seen in him in the clearest and fullest manner. We find much more difficulty in perceiving *small*, than *great* objects. But the nature, however, of no object depends upon its greatness, or smallness. Hence we are not to suppose, that the nature of the Supreme Being differs from the nature of other intelligent beings, merely because he is incomprehensibly great. Is incomprehensible greatness, smallness? Is incomprehensible perfection, imperfection? Is incomprehensible love, hatred? Is incomprehensible wisdom, folly? Is incomprehensible knowledge, ignorance? How then can the incomprehensibility of divine perfections, obscure our ideas of them? They are not the less, but the more plain and intelligible, for being incomprehensibly great.

This, however, is denied by many. Infidel writers have laid hold of the doctrine of the divine incomprehensibility, in order to throw a veil of obscurity over the divine character, and thereby destroy the first principles of natural as well as revealed religion. Hume, in his dialogues on natural religion, has exerted his "*all-unhinging subtilty*," to confound our ideas of the natural and moral perfections of the Deity. And the sole ground upon which he argues, is the incomprehensible nature of the divine attributes. By abusing this term, he insinuates, that there must be an obscurity and uncertainty in all our ideas and reasonings respecting the great, incomprehensible first cause. He insists that we cannot possibly learn his true character

from his works, simply because his nature is incomprehensible. And did *incomprehensible* mean the same as obscure or unintelligible, it would be difficult indeed to avoid this conclusion. But since the term has a different meaning, every argument drawn from it, against our having clear and just conceptions of the Deity, is totally fallacious and inconclusive.

We might naturally expect that infidels would wish to make one attribute of God maim another; and endeavor to construe his incomprehensibility into obscurity; but could we expect this from Christian divines? This, however, Christian divines have done. Dr. Brown in particular, supposes that God is incomprehensible, and from thence concludes, that there is no *analogy* between Him and other moral agents. Accordingly, upon this ground, he denies, that we can frame any just and clear ideas of the divine power, holiness, justice, or any other divine perfection.

But if this be true, it is easy to see, that we have no medium, by which we can make it appear, that God's character is amiable, his laws just, and his conduct right. And if we cannot make this appear, where is our obligation to love his character, obey his laws, and submit to his government; or, in other words, where is our obligation to religion? It is dangerous, in a high degree to employ the divine incomprehensibility, to obscure the divine character, and those essential truths, which flow from it.

3. *If God be incomprehensible by his creatures, we have no reason to deny our need of a divine revelation.*

This is denied by those, who deny the divine authority of the scriptures. They alledge, that reasonable creatures have no need of any other guide in religion and morality, than the plain, unadulterated light

of nature. They suppose, the works and providence of God afford such discoveries of his character and will, as render a supernatural revelation totally needless. They have therefore, attempted to lick into form a system of religion, which they would insinuate is dictated by the bare light of nature.

But is God incomprehensible? Can none of his creatures penetrate his mind, and discover his views and intentions? Is this true? And is this acknowledged to be true, by those who deny the divinity of the Bible? How, then, upon their own principles, can they deny the necessity of a divine revelation? If God made all things, he made all things for himself. And what ends he proposed in the creation of men and angels, they would never have discovered unless he had been pleased to inform them, by an immediate revelation. Could Adam, in his state of innocence, have known either his duty or his destination, without a revelation of his Maker's will and designs? Would he have had a right to use the fruits of the earth, the beasts of the field, or any of the common bounties of providence, without an express donation from the great Proprietor of all? If man, therefore, in his first and best estate, stood in need of a supernatural revelation from his Creator, how much more do we his guilty offspring, stand in need of some better discoveries of the will and gracious designs of our injured Sovereign, than we can possibly learn from his works and providence? The light of nature discovers no atonement for sin, and of consequence, no pardon for sinners. Socrates, and other sober heathens saw their need of a divine revelation; and this every person must see, who impartially attends to the character of God, and to the character and state of man. As creatures, and especially as creatures involved in depravity, ignorance,

and guilt, we stand in perishing need of a revelation from heaven.

To deny this revelation, therefore, because it is needless, instead of discovering superior wisdom and penetration, betrays the grossest ignorance of God and of human nature.

4. *If God is incomprehensible in his nature and perfections, then it is no objection against the divinity of the Bible, that it contains some incomprehensible mysteries.*

If God reveals himself, he must reveal himself as he is. His revelation, therefore, will naturally bear internal marks of his character, and contain some things mysterious and incomprehensible. The Bible contains no mysteries but such as respect the *mode* of the divine existence, and the *mode* of the divine operation. And these mysteries, it ought to be remembered, are *only revealed*, and not *explained*. It is one thing to *reveal* a mystery, and quite another, to *explain* it. To say that mysteries are *revealed*, implies no absurdity; though to say that mysteries are *explained*, implies a plain contradiction. But this contradiction cannot be fastened upon the Bible, which only reveals mysteries, and such mysteries too, as are very necessary and useful. For, it highly concerns us to *know*, that God both exists and operates in a mysterious manner, though *the knowledge* of this, will never enable us to comprehend the mysteries themselves. Hence the mysteries contained in the Bible, instead of weakening, serve to *establish* the credibility of its divine original.

5. *If God be incomprehensible, then it is very unreasonable to disbelieve any thing, which he has been pleased to reveal concerning himself, merely because we cannot comprehend it.*

Though we cannot comprehend God, yet God may comprehend himself; and, of consequence, may know
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many things concerning himself, which we could never have known, unless he had been pleased to *reveal* them. We are obliged, therefore, to believe those things which God has revealed, though we are not able to comprehend them.

I beg leave here, to instance in a few particulars, which some have denied, simply because they deemed them to be incomprehensible.

God has clearly revealed the *mode* of his own existence. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the plainest doctrines in the Bible. It is expressly asserted—*“There are three that bear record in Heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”* It is interwoven with one of the Christian sacraments, I mean the sacrament of baptism. We are required to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And it lies at the foundation of the gospel, and runs through the whole economy of redemption. This plain and important doctrine has been denied by many, because they could not comprehend it. But let me ask, can this be a good reason for disbelieving what God has plainly revealed? Why should they not disbelieve the existence of the Deity, because they cannot comprehend the *ground* of his existence? This they can no more explain, than the doctrine of the Trinity. For it is just as easy to conceive, that there should be a ground or reason of God’s existing in three persons, as of his existing at all. Nay, it is as easy to conceive, that God exists a Trinity in Unity, as to conceive, that he made all things out of nothing. But it is said, the doctrine of the Trinity implies a contradiction. I answer, it no more implies a contradiction, than the doctrine of a true and proper creation. Both are mysteries, and both equally incomprehensible. But if we only admit that God is incomprehensible, then we may safely be-

lieve, that God may *be*, and *do*, what is absolutely above our comprehension. If he has told us, that he made all things by the word of his power, we may believe it, because *he has said* it. And if he has told us, that he can say, I, Thou, and He, and mean only himself, we may believe it because *he has said* it. "*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.*"

Again, God has told us, *that his Son, the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* This God has told us, and this we may believe, though we cannot comprehend *how* the divine and human natures could be *personally* united.

Again, God has told us, that he has formed all his purposes from eternity, and this plain truth we are obliged to believe upon the divine testimony, though we know not what his purposes are. There is no mystery at all in God's forming purposes. It is as easy to conceive that God should form his own purposes, as that any other moral agent should form his. It is as easy to conceive, that God should form all his purposes from eternity, as that he should form them in time. And it is as easy to conceive, that God should reveal this truth as any other in the Bible. Where then is the mystery of the divine decrees? And where is the propriety of calling this, rather than any other divine truth in question?

Again, the inspired writers tell us, that the scheme which God formed from eternity is absolutely *perfect*. Solomon says, "*I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor any*

thing taken from it." The divine plan cannot be enlarged, diminished, nor, in the least respect, altered for the better; it is absolutely the best possible. Now since God has clearly revealed this truth, it is not presumption to believe it, but presumption to deny it.

Though we may imagine, there are ten thousand defects and imperfections in the divine scheme; yet we ought to believe what we are expressly told: "*God is the Rock, his work is perfect.*" The incomprehensible nature of the divine perfections are no objection against the perfection of the divine plan, but an argument in favor of it. Nothing can clear up the divine conduct but this great truth, that "*whatever is, is right.*"

6. *This subject shows us, that ministers ought to make it their great object in preaching to unfold the character and perfections of the Deity*

This is the object which lies nearest to the heart of God, and which he uniformly and constantly pursues in all his conduct. He made the heavens and the earth, that they might discover his nature and declare his glory. He governs all events, in the course of his providence, to make the inhabitants of the world to know, *that he is GOD*. In a word, he concerted the astonishing scheme of our redemption, through the sufferings and death of his Son, that the perfections of his nature might be unfolded before all the intelligent creation. This the apostle Paul tells us with the most grateful emotions—"*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God,*

according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." It was the original purpose of God, that the work of creation should be subservient to the work of redemption; and that the work of redemption should finally issue in the fullest display of his glorious perfections.

Now, this is the ultimate design of the gospel; and therefore this should be the ultimate design of ministers in preaching the gospel. The more they exhibit of the divine character and counsels, in their public discourses, the more they fall in with the designs of God, and the more they answer the end of their appointment. We might naturally conclude from Paul's Epistle to the Romans, as well as from his frequent appeals to his hearers, that he dwelt much upon the character of God in his preaching; but we have a more striking evidence of this from the discourse which he delivered at Athens, before a most learned and most venerable audience. "*Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing: seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things: and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be*

not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, and have our being." This discourse upon the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, foreknowledge, predetermination, universal benevolence and agency of God, Paul delivered, not to aged, full grown Christians, not even to babes in Christ, but to those who were totally ignorant of the first principles of the oracles of God. He could think of nothing more proper to exhibit before ignorant, perishing Pagans, than the true character and incomprehensible perfections of the Deity. And he tells us, that he meant to be a *profitable* preacher, and never kept back any thing which he thought would be *profitable* to his hearers. According to the opinion and practice of Paul, therefore, the most instructive, practical, and profitable preaching, is that which most clearly and fully displays the divine character. And it is easy to perceive, that this must of necessity be the case; for there is not one valuable and important *end* to be answered by preaching, but what the exhibition of God's character is directly suited to answer.

All religious errors and delusions originate from some false notions of God; and therefore a clear exhibition of the divine character, will destroy the hopes of those, who are placing their expectations of divine favor upon any false and sandy foundation. Let it be made to appear, that God is the supreme disposer of the *hearts* as well as actions of men, and where is the first principle of Arminianism? Let it be made to appear, that God is supremely amiable and excellent, and worthy to be loved for what he is in himself; and where is the first principle of Antinomianism? Or let it be made to appear, that God is incomprehensibly wise and good, and that he may have sufficient reasons in his own mind, for saving a part, and not the whole of mankind, and where is the first principle of Universalism?

Let the divine character be properly exhibited, and the nature, necessity and sufficiency of the atonement of Christ will appear, and the whole gospel scheme be unfolded.

Let the divine character be properly exhibited, and the human heart will be disclosed; for the bare view of the divine character, is instead of all other arguments, to convince sinners, that their hearts are enmity against God.

Let the divine character be opened, and the best motives to repentance will be exhibited. Though Job justified himself before men, yet when God by a series of solemn interrogations, gave him a clear view of his great and amiable character, he is melted into contrition and self-abasement. *"I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,"*

Let the divine character be exhibited, and saints will be edified. For the divine character has a transforming influence upon the hearts of Christians, and a powerful tendency to assimilate them to the divine likeness. *"We all,"* says the apostle speaking in the name of Christians, *"We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

All obligations to religious duties originate from the excellency and perfection of the divine Being, and therefore the clear exhibition of his character is best suited to lead men to the *practice* of religion. Hence the apostle exhibits this motive, to induce Christians to make an unreserved dedication of themselves to the service of God. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. which is your reasonable service."*

In a word, if ministers wish to set every creature and every object in its truest, noblest, and most important light: if they wish to form their people for the service and enjoyment of God in this world, and that which is to come, let them make it their main object in all their preaching, to unfold, in the clearest manner possible, the character and perfections of the incomprehensibly glorious and blessed God.

This leads me to apply my discourse to him, who is now to be set apart to the sacred work of the gospel ministry in this place.

DEAR SIR,

You are this day to commence a *steward* of the *mysteries* of God. These you are to *dispense*, and not to *conceal*. For, you very well know, that it is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful*. And faithfulness in a steward of the mysteries of God, principally consists in unlocking, unfolding, and, in the clearest manner, displaying, the whole character, and whole counsel of God. This is the point in which all faithful ministers are united, and in which they stand eminently distinguished from all unfaithful teachers. Among those who have been allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, some have been *faithful*, and some *unfaithful*, in every age of the Christian church. Some have appeared on the Lord's side, and some on man's side. Some have *justified* the ways of *God*, and *condemned* the ways of *men*; and some have *condemned* the ways of *God*, and *justified* the ways of *men*. Faithful ministers have spoken *for* God, but unfaithful ministers have spoken *against* him. How many thousand volumes have been written, and how many thousand sermons have been preached against the character, the perfections, and designs of the incom-

prehensibly great and glorious God? The mouths of this ungodly world have been always pouring forth their hard speeches against their Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. Ten thousand times more has been said against God, in our rebellious world, than against any other being in the universe.

If your heart glows with love to the greatest and best of beings, how will you delight to wipe off the aspersions which have been cast upon the bright and spotless character of the Deity?

Unto you is this grace given, that you should preach the unsearchable riches of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. Prudence prompted by gratitude, will therefore, never lead you to inquire, how you may, in the easiest manner *conceal* any part of the divine character, or divine will, but on the other hand, how you may in the clearest and happiest manner possible, *declare* the whole counsel of God.

The same moment, in which the gospel shall be committed to your trust, the souls of men will be committed to your trust. And you cannot fulfil one of these trusts without fulfilling the other; nor betray one of these trusts without betraying the other. Be entreated then to be faithful, and feed your people with the good knowledge of God.

The God whom you will serve in the gospel of his Son is the ever present, the all seeing and heart searching God, therefore so speak, not as pleasing *men*, but *God* which *trieth your heart*. Approve yourself to God, a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to every one a portion in due season. In a word, be thou faithful unto death, and God himself whom you serve, shall be your shield, and exceeding great reward.

I now turn my discourse to the church and people in this place.

MEN AND BRETHREN,

God, in his unsearchable providence, has been pleased to leave you long as a flock without a shepherd. You have been called to pass through many trying scenes, and to surmount great obstacles in the way of the re-settlement of a gospel minister. But now a brighter prospect is opening before you, and you are called to rejoice; but to rejoice with trembling. For this man, upon whom your hearts and hopes are fixed, may be set up, like his divine master, for the *fall*, as well as *rising* of many in this place. If he proves faithful, as we hope he will, the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed, and the real characters of all will be tried. Are you prepared for the trial? Do you wish to know whether you are friends or foes to that God, whose favor is life, and whose frowns are worse than death? This you *must* know, this you *will* know, sooner or later. For, God has determined that the inhabitants of heaven, of earth, and of all worlds, shall know how they *feel* towards his great and amiable character.

Be pleased, then, to open your minds to those divine mysteries, which your pastor, in faithfulness to God, and in friendship to you, shall clearly exhibit, from time to time, for your instruction, and godly edifying. Receive the truth in *love*, and the truth will make you free; and if the truth make you free, you will be free indeed. If you love God, God will love you, and come and make his abode with you. For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him. Let me entreat *each* individual, therefore, to accept the advice and consolation, which Eliphaz offered to Job.

“Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up; yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and cause his light to shine upon all thy ways.

To conclude, let us all remember this, that we *must* see God. God has laid a foundation to exhibit his whole character before the minds of intelligent beings. And can we suppose, that he is not able to carry into execution his great design? He has already made some of his creatures see the glory, and feel the weight of his character. In the other world, the eyes of all his creatures are always *open*, and their minds always *awake*. They rest not day nor night from seeing and feeling the presence and perfections of the Deity. This is the only ignorant and stupid part of the creation of God. And we shall not long remain in our present unfeeling, torpid state. Our eyes will soon be opened, never to be closed. Our minds will be awakened, never to sleep again. The present objects which now obscure our sight of God, and divert our attention from him, will soon be removed, and a flood of light will break in upon our astonished minds. Then it will be as impossible not to *see* God, as not to exist; and as impossible not to feel the weight of his character, as not to see it. But who that are enemies to God, can see him, and live? For our God is a consuming fire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Now is the only time for sinners to become reconciled to God, and secure his favor. Therefore, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Amen.

SERMON IX.

Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. ELI SMITH, to the Pastoral Care of the Church in Hollis, November 27, 1793.

ECCLESIASTES xii, 11.

The words of the wise are as goads.

SOLOMON was a man of superior wisdom, which he displayed in the beginning of his reign, as a Prince; and in the close of his reign, as a preacher. Having passed through a great variety of scenes and collected a large stock of useful knowledge, he was eminently qualified to preach upon the vanity of the world and the importance of religion with peculiar pungency. This distinguishing quality, which discovers the strength and clearness of his mind, and characterizes all his writings, justly entitles him to the highest rank among the sacred teachers. Accordingly, Ezra, or some other inspired writer, tell us, that he not only "taught the people knowledge," but taught them, with so much force and pungency, that "his words were as goads, or nails fastened" by those prophets, or "masters of assemblies" who received their sentiments and language from the immediate inspiration of the "chief shepherd and bishop of souls." Though none, who are destitute of the wisdom of Solomon, can expect to reach his supreme excellency in preaching; yet every wise minister will imitate his noble example, and endeavor to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. And to illustrate this general observation, I shall,

I. Show that every wise preacher will aim to impress the minds of his hearers, and,

II. Show how he will preach in order to attain this desirable object.

1. I am to show, that a wise preacher will aim to impress the minds of his hearers.

By a wise preacher, we mean one who resembles the royal preacher, in some of his most amiable and distinguishing qualities. Solomon was a man of genius, of learning, and of piety. He understood the nature and tendency of all sensible objects. He was thoroughly acquainted with human nature. He knew the feelings of all men, under all circumstances and conditions of life. He knew the various springs of human action, and the various avenues to the human heart. In a word, he knew every thing necessary to penetrate and impress the minds of both saints and sinners. These excellent ministerial qualifications, which adorned and distinguished the royal preacher, in some measure, adorn and distinguish all who are wise to win souls. They have the same kinds of knowledge, though not in the same degree. Hence, we may presume that all wise preachers will aim to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. But this will more fully appear, if we consider,

2. Every wise preacher knows that unless he impresses the minds of his hearers, he can do them no good by his preaching. Hearers must feel what they hear, or what they hear will be like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. That discourse, which fails of penetrating the mind, immediately vanishes, without producing any desirable or permanent effect. It is like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. The principal design of the preacher is lost upon the hearer, unless he makes the hearer feel the truth and weight of what he delivers. The wise preacher, therefore, always means to penetrate the

minds of those to whom he speaks. He no farther regards their *eyes* or their *ears*, than only by these avenues, to convey the truth to their *minds* where he means to make the deepest impression, and produce the greatest effects.

3. Every wise preacher knows, that his hearers will not feel the truth and importance of what he says, unless he makes them feel it. Hearers look upon it as the part of the preacher to make them feel. They mean to be *passive* in hearing, unless he makes them *active*. If he appear indifferent about their feeling, they think they may be equally indifferent about it. They never mean to invite him to speak, but intend that he shall invite them to hear. They never mean to *warm* his mind, but expect that he should warm theirs. This natural dulness and deadness of hearers, the wise preacher knows he must encounter and overcome, in his preaching. And, therefore, he is sensible that *he* must *move*, before *they* will *move*; that *he* must feel, before *they* will feel, that he must seek his end, before he can possibly attain it. Accordingly, he always endeavors, if possible, to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. This leads us to show,

II. How he will preach, in order to attain this desirable object.

When any person proposes a certain end, the end which he proposes, naturally suggests the proper means to accomplish it. This holds with respect to a wise preacher, who makes it his object to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. For,

1. This end will naturally lead him to use the most proper style in preaching. He will choose the best words, and place them in the best order, to enlighten the mind and affect the heart. When any person means to impress the mind of another, his design al-

ways dictates a natural style, which is the most intelligible and the most forcible. The general, who means to be heard and regarded, speaks the language of authority. And the beggar, who means to be heard and pitied, speaks the language of distress. They both speak in the words in which their thoughts and feeling are conceived; and, therefore, they both speak the spontaneous language of nature; which all understand and most sensibly feel.

The preacher, like every other person, always thinks in words; and the words, on which he thinks upon his subjects, are the words to be used in his discourses. Could our thoughts drop from our pens, or from our lips, in the very words, in which they first rise in our minds, we should write and speak in the most easy, natural, and forcible manner. We often lose the energy of our thoughts and feelings, by trying to express them in the language of art, instead of the language of nature. Why do we find it so difficult to describe our past feelings, in the view of a great, or terrible, or sublime object? The principal reason is, we have lost our feelings, and of consequence, the proper language to describe them. The prophets and apostles teach us the force of unpremeditated expressions. They took no thought what they should say or write; but received both their ideas and words from divine inspiration. Accordingly, we find no language so easy, so natural, so sublime, or so forcible as their's. Their words are as *goads*, quick and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword. When any person speaks as he thinks and feels, he speaks the language of nature, which is always understood and always felt. A bare exclamation will often convey more determinate ideas and make a deeper impression, than the most neat and well turned period. The wise preacher, therefore,

who means to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, will use a natural, plain, penetrating language, which *all* can understand, and which *all must* feel.

2. His design to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, will lead him to exhibit great and interesting truths. All truths, whether agreeable or disagreeable, affect and impress the mind, in proportion to their magnitude. The wise preacher, therefore, will always exhibit those truths, which are either great in themselves, or great in their connexions. The association of ideas is extremely intimate and extremely forcible. The most trivial object may be placed in such a connexion, and set in such a light, as to appear and feel very weighty and important. The flying of a sparrow, or the falling of an hair, considered as the object of the divine attention and government, becomes greatly interesting. The inspired writers mention some of the smallest and meanest objects in nature. They speak of worms, and flies, and frogs, and serpents; but they speak of them as the servants of God and ministers of his vengeance, which gives them real magnitude and importance. All the writings of Solomon abound with observations, on common and familiar objects, which are placed in a striking and interesting light. He represents all the scenes, concerns and objects of time, in such a near and inseparable connexion with death, judgment and eternity, that they all appear unspeakably interesting to the highest as well as to the lowest of mankind. This is the method which every wise preacher will employ, to impress the minds of his hearers. He will exhibit such truths, as, either by their own weight, or by their natural connexion, will find the nearest way to the human heart. He will bring much of the character, perfec-

tions, and designs of God into his public discourses. He will preach Christ in the greatness of his nature, and in the glory and grace of his mediatorial character and works. He will exhibit man in the dignity of his nature, and in the importance of his destination. And he will unfold the scenes of a general judgment, and of a boundless eternity, in their own native, awful solemnity. Now, the truth respecting every being, and every creature, and every object, in such a serious connexion, is infinitely important. The wise preacher, therefore, who has an instinctive discernment of the nature, and connexion, of all divine truths, whether great or small, will always preach something, which is weighty and interesting, and which will naturally lead to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers.

4. For the same purpose, he will explain divine truths and describe divine objects. A minister may preach *about* divine truths and *about* divine objects, without explaining the former, or describing the latter. But preaching *about* any truth, or any object, is cold and uninteresting. He may, perhaps, gratify the ear, or please the imagination, but it will never enlighten the understanding, awaken the conscience, or raise the affections. To make objects affecting, they must be *described*; and to make divine truths interesting, they must be *explained*. The wise preacher, therefore, will not barely preach *about* the perfections, *about* the commands, *about* the purposes, or *about* the agency of God; but he will *explain* these truths, and endeavor to make his hearers understand and feel them, in their nature, connexion, and importance. He will not barely preach *about* heaven and *about* hell; but he will *describe* the state of the *blessed*, and the state of the *damned*, in the most clear and striking contrast.

He will not barely preach *about* saints and *about* sinners; but he will *describe* the character of the saint, and the character of the sinner, and trace these two opposite characters in all their various appearances and attitudes. He will describe the feelings of the saint in light and darkness, in hope and fear, in joy and sorrow, in a growing and in a declining state. And with equal plainness, he will describe the feelings of the sinner in prosperity and adversity, under awakenings and convictions, and in the very act of turning to God, and embracing the gospel. He will tell every hearer how he *has* felt, and how he *still* feels. He will enter into every bosom, and search the most secret corners of every heart. And this will make his words as *goads*, or *nails*, which fasten and clinch upon every mind. The hearer always *feels* when the preacher hits him; and he always hits him, when he describes his character. Elijah often described Ahab, and Ahab felt the description; and therefore he said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" The Jews felt the preaching of Christ, which described their characters and pierced them to the heart. There is always a peculiar pungency in that preaching, which explains divine truths, describes divine objects, and distinguishes human characters.

5. The wise preacher, who intends to impress the minds of his hearers, will *arrange* divine truths, and *exhibit* divine objects *in such an order*, as to reach every power and faculty of the soul, in its proper turn. The understanding is the inlet to the other powers of the mind, no objects or truths can impress the mind, unless they are first *perceived* by the understanding. The wise preacher, therefore, will address the understanding before the conscience; and the conscience before the heart. This is the order of nature,

and this order must be observed, to make the deepest impression on the human mind. When the understanding is informed, and the conscience awakened, then the affections may be raised as high as possible. There is no danger of raising the affections too high, by the exhibition of truth, though there is nothing else that can raise them higher. The simple truth respecting God, and Christ, and heaven, and hell, will raise the love and gratitude, and joy of saints to the highest pitch. And the same simple truth respecting the same great and glorious objects, will raise the enmity, and fear, and distress of sinners to the highest degree. Instruction should always go before declamation. It can answer no valuable purpose, to inflame the passions, before light is thrown into the understanding and conscience; but rather serve on the other hand, to produce the most fatal effects. Many souls, no doubt, have been destroyed by this mode of preaching. To raise the fears, and then the hopes of sinners, without exhibiting a proper portion of divine truth, only serves to make them build upon the sand, and to fill them with a momentary joy which must end in everlasting sorrow. The wise preacher, who means to impress the minds of his hearers, will always apply his discourse according to their particular characters. What belongs to saints, he will apply to saints; and what belongs to sinners, he will apply to sinners. He will not leave it to his hearers to apply his discourses, but he will apply them himself, and in such a manner too, that each individual shall receive a proper portion of divine truth. He will not only make the general distinction between saints and sinners, but the particular distinction between the various individuals of each of these two classes of men. There are both saints and sinners of various characters and

conditions. There is nothing will affect a saint, like a particular application of divine truth to his own particular case. All truths will not equally apply to all saints. Some truths more properly apply to the negligent saint; some to the backsliding saint; some to the mourning saint; and some to the growing and rejoicing saint. And in order to impress the minds of saints, of such various characters and conditions, the preacher must apply divine truths according to their various and particular cases. On the other hand, in order to impress the minds of sinners, a particular application of divine truths to their particular characters, is equally necessary. Some truths must be applied to profane sinners; some to skeptical sinners; some to moral sinners; some to self-righteous sinners; and some to awakened and convinced sinners. The Bible abounds with particular applications to particular characters, and it is this which renders it so penetrating and convincing to every class of readers. Almost every promise and threatening is directed to a correspondent character. The saint is described, who is comforted; and the sinner is described, who is condemned. No saint can apply any scripture promise to himself, without finding in himself the scripture character, to which the promise is made. Who can apply the promise in the fifth of Matthew to himself, without knowing his own particular character? None but the *pure in heart* can apply the promise to such. None but those who mourn can apply the promise to such. None but the *meek* can apply the promise to such. None but those *who hunger and thirst after righteousness* can apply the promise to such. None but the *merciful* can apply the promise to such. And none but *peace-makers* can apply the promise to such. When these, or any

other promises in the Bible, are applied to their correspondent characters, saints will feel their force, and derive light and comfort from them; but when they are misapplied, they comfort those who ought to be made sad; and make sad those who ought to be comforted. So, on the other hand, a sinner will feel the force of no threatening, unless it corresponds to his own particular character. The threatening to the hypocrite comforts rather than convinces the profligate sinner; and the threatening to the profligate sinner comforts rather than convinces the moral and self-righteous sinner. In short, no sinner will feel the force of the preacher, until he applies that particular truth to him, which corresponds to his particular character. But when any truth is applied to any sinner which corresponds to his particular character, he will keenly feel its irresistible energy. When the preacher describes and condemns his particular course of sinning; or describes and destroys his particular ground of confidence, he will feel his words to be *goads*, and *nails*, and *spears* to his soul. No sinner can help feeling those truths, which condemn his character, and destroy his hopes. Whatever truth fastens guilt upon the sinner, destroys his hopes; and whatever destroys his hopes, destroys his foundation, and when his foundation is destroyed, he must fall. Felix trembled, when Paul applied the truth to his particular character. Paul himself lost all his hopes, by a particular application of a particular precept. The promising young man was filled with grief and despair, by the particular injunction of a particular duty. And three thousand souls, on the day of pentecost, were struck under deep conviction, by the particular application of divine truth to their particular characters. The wise preacher, therefore, who means

to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, will be very particular in the application of his discourses. He will handle the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, with skill and dexterity, and strike every hearer in the most tender and vulnerable part. This is the most difficult, but yet the most important point in preaching. Whoever attains this art, will be a powerful and pungent preacher. His words will be like *goads* and *nails*, which will wound if they do not heal; and which will destroy, if they do not save, every hearer.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. We learn from what has been said, the importance of ministers being *good* men. Piety is necessary, both to dispose and enable them to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. Men of piety know more about the human heart than others. They know the views, and desires, and hopes, and refuges of sinners, under all circumstances. This enables them to direct the sword of the spirit to their most tender and defenceless parts. They know how to strike at the foundation of their false hopes. They know their haunting places, and are able, by the proper exercise of spiritual weapons, to destroy their strong holds, bring down their high thoughts and lay them defenceless before God and their own consciences. And with respect to saints, they have a fellow feeling with them, and know how to comfort, quicken, animate, and direct them through all their outward and inward conflicts and enjoyments. This experimental acquaintance with the human heart, is the best qualification for a plain, searching, pungent preacher. And it is this only, which will dispose a man to preach plainly and faithfully. Many preachers we have reason to fear, daub with untempered mortar, and prophecy

smooth things, because they are afraid of offending their people, by a plain and pungent application of divine truth to their hearts and consciences. But supreme love to God, and a tender concern for the good of souls, takes away this fear of man, and emboldens a minister to exhibit and apply divine truths in the most plain and pungent manner.

2. We learn from what has been said, the importance of ministers giving themselves wholly to their work. If they mean to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers, they must exhibit, in the course of their preaching, a rich variety of divine truths. But they will soon lose a variety, and fall into a sameness in preaching, unless they constantly improve their minds, in the knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion, by reading, meditation and prayer. They must teach themselves, if they would teach their people. They must grow in knowledge, if they would feed their people with knowledge and understanding. They must warm their own hearts with divine truth, if they would warm the hearts of their hearers. They must converse much with invisible and divine objects, if they would impress the minds of their hearers with a clear and realizing sense of eternal realities. A preacher always carries his habitual views and feelings into the pulpit. If he neglects his proper business, and pursues the common concerns of life, he will lose that holy fire and pathos, which is absolutely necessary to penetrate and impress the minds of men.

3. We learn from what has been said, the manner in which a minister should appear and speak in the pulpit. His voice, his looks, his gestures, and his whole deportment, should be wholly governed by his ultimate end, which is to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers. This is an infallible guide. For

while he means to penetrate and impress the minds of his audience, he will necessarily avoid every unnatural tone, unmeaning expression, and insignificant action. While he means to be natural, he will be natural. While he means to be significant, he will be significant. While he means to impress, he will impress. While he aims at the understanding, he will penetrate the understanding. While he aims at the conscience, he will penetrate the conscience. While he aims at the heart, he will penetrate the heart. The preacher always discovers his ultimate aim to every discerning hearer. His tone, his air, his attitude is always correspondent to the impression, which he means to make. If he means to attract the eyes of the congregation, his deportment will proclaim it. If he means to please the imagination, and gain the esteem and applause of his hearers, his voice, his countenance, his language, and all his attitudes will discover it. Or if he means to promote the instruction, conviction, and edification of his people, he will practically tell them so, by the manner, as well as matter, of his preaching.

4. We learn from what has been said, that it is not very material whether a minister preaches with notes, or without. If he aims to impress the minds of his hearers, he may attain his end by either of these modes of preaching. If he writes and reads his sermons, he may have as good sentiments, as good language, and as good feelings, as if he preaches extempore, without study, or premeditation. And if his discourses are filled with important sentiments, which are arranged in proper order, expressed in proper terms, and delivered with proper feelings, they can never fail of being pungent. It is true, he may sometimes preach better, if he does not write and read his sermons, than if he does. But yet, it is equally true, that he may sometimes

preach not half so well without, as with writing and reading. Extempore discourses often have more heat, but less light, than written ones. It is difficult, on the whole, to determine, which of these modes of preaching has the most advantages and the fewest disadvantages. This must principally turn upon the peculiar taste of the hearers, and the peculiar talents of the preacher, who ought to be well acquainted with these two points, and to govern his conduct accordingly.

5. We learn from what has been said, the great absurdity of those ministers, who studiously avoid penetrating and impressing the minds of their hearers. Preachers in general are so well acquainted with human nature, and the great design of preaching, that they are capable of constructing and delivering their discourses, in such a manner, as can scarcely fail of reaching the hearts and consciences of men. But many seem to be afraid of producing this effect, and accordingly take pains to avoid it. They mean to please, rather than to penetrate the minds of their hearers. And to accomplish this absurd and pernicious purpose, they make use of various means. One is, to preach in a style above the comprehension of their hearers. This is a fault, from which the most plain and pungent preachers are not wholly free. No minister, perhaps, can always think of those words and phrases, which are level to the meanest capacity, and which ought always to be chosen, in explaining and inculcating the great and interesting truths of the gospel. One of the greatest masters in the English language, in his advice to a young clergyman, observes, that a plain and easy style which is intelligible to the lowest class of hearers, is proper for the pulpit and may be used before the most learned and polite assembly. But some preachers appear to choose a style.

which buries their ideas, and of course, conceals their meaning from the understanding of their hearers. This takes off the whole force and pungency of divine truth, and is a gross perversion of the great end of preaching. The words of the wise are as goads, but the words of the unwise are smoother than oil. Another way to prevent divine truth from making a too penetrating and painful impression upon the minds of men, is to deliver it with a certain easy, graceful negligence. This mode of speaking is extremely agreeable to people in general, because it flatters them with the idea that it is of very little importance, whether they believe, or disbelieve the doctrines of the gospel, or whether they perform, or neglect the duties of religion. And so long as the preacher conveys this idea, and by his own ease and negligence, indulges theirs, he completely gratifies their desire of *hearing*, and prevents their fear of *feeling*, divine truths. People love to *hear*, but they hate to *feel*; and therefore, they admire those ministers, who preach as though they preached not; and give them leave to hear as though they heard not. Accordingly, some preachers seem to be very fond of acquiring this mode of speaking, which will please their hearers, without disturbing their consciences. Another way which answers the same purpose, is, to preach smooth things and silently pass over the more penetrating and disagreeable truths of the gospel. Some ministers seem to take peculiar pains to avoid saying any thing about the character of God, the decrees of God, the sovereignty of God, the agency of God upon the hearts of men, the character of men by nature, and the *immediate* duty of all to yield unfeigned obedience, and unconditional submission to their great creator. They studiously avoid mentioning these truths, not because they are ignorant

of their nature and tendency, but because they wish not to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers. And lest their smooth style, and smooth delivery, and smooth sentiments, should not effectually prevent the painful feelings of their hearers, they wholly omit the application of their discourses. They take pains not to disfigure their sermons, by the obsolete modes and phrases, of doctrines, divisions, uses, or inferences. They throw their sentiments together in such a loose and desultory manner, that their discourses, neither require nor admit a particular application to particular characters. This totally prevents their hearers from perceiving the connexion, and feeling the force of the few truths, which they actually deliver. These are modes of preaching, which many employ, and which we presume, none can justify. Solomon and Christ, the Prophets and Apostles meant to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers, and by the manifestation of the truth, to commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. These are examples, which it is wise in preachers to follow, though it should give pain and even offence to their hearers.

6. If it be the wisdom and duty of ministers, to penetrate and impress the minds of their hearers, then they have no reason to complain of the most close and pungent preaching. This is disagreeable to human nature, and people are very apt to complain of it. Ahab king of Israel hated the plainness and pungency of the prophet Micaiah. And he spoke it out, "I hate him; for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil." Nor was he alone in disliking plain and pungent prophets. The people were of the same disposition, for which God severely reproves them by the mouth of Isaiah. "Go write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the

time to come forever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us *smooth* things, prophesy deceits." Human nature is still the same. People now are disposed to find fault with ministers for being too plain and pointed in preaching. There is not, perhaps, a single congregation in this land, who are all willing to have the great and essential truths of the gospel clearly explained to them, and strongly impressed upon them. There are many, in most places, who will either leave their minister, or cause their minister to leave them, rather than suffer him to penetrate and impress their minds by divine truth.

Such flying from *pungent* to *smooth* preachers is a dreadful thing. God represents it so in his own people. "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and *my people love to have it so.*" If ministers are right, in preaching plainly and pungently, then people are certainly wrong, in complaining of it. They act a most unreasonable as well as sinful part. Pungent preaching is for their own good, and they ought to desire it and seek after it. It is their highest interest to have their minister penetrate their hearts, and discover to them the true state of their souls. They always desire such plainness and fidelity in other men, whom they employ to promote their temporal good. They wish their attorney to examine their cause with care, discover every flaw, and tell them the plain naked truth. And they heartily desire the surgeon to probe their wounds to the bottom, and apply the most effectual remedies, though ever so painful and distressing to endure. Why then should they complain of their minister for dealing

plainly and faithfully with their souls? This is an absurdity in its own nature; an injury to their minister; and may be eternal destruction to themselves.

7. If it ought to be the aim of the minister to penetrate and impress the minds of his hearers, then there is blame somewhere, if their minds are not penetrated and impressed. Either the minister does not aim to impress their minds, or they mean to resist the impressions of divine truth. But if the minister really means to impress the minds of his people, it will be very difficult for them not to feel the force of his preaching. "The words of the wise are as *goads*." This means, at least, that the words of the wise preacher, will generally penetrate and impress the mind. It is true, hearers may be so inattentive and stupid, as not to understand the great truths of the gospel, when plainly and pungently delivered; and in that case, their minds will not be penetrated and impressed. But this rarely happens. A plain, pungent preacher will scarcely ever fail of making sensible impressions upon the minds of his people. The impressions, indeed, may be extremely different upon different persons.

Some may feel pleased, and others displeased. Some may feel happy, and others unhappy. Some may feel comforted, and others reprov'd and condemned. Some may feel their hopes enlivened, and others feel their hopes totally destroyed. If such impressions as these are not made upon the minds of hearers, it is generally owing to the want of pungent preaching. The blame, in the first instance, falls upon the minister. And he must be exceedingly criminal to preach so as to sooth and stupify, rather than to penetrate and impress the minds of his people. But, on the other hand, the blame will fall on the hearers, if they remain stupid and unfeeling under plain and pungent preach-

ing. This is a sin, which exposes those who are guilty of it, to the heaviest condemnation. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

Let me now apply the thoughts which have been suggested, to him for whom they were principally designed.

DEAR SIR,

You are this day, dedicating yourself to the sacred and important work of preaching the gospel. Preaching is to be your business. And the business of preaching is to penetrate and impress the minds of men, by the force of divine truth. Make this, therefore, your supreme object in all your discourses. Never keep back any thing which you verily believe will be profitable and penetrating. Shun not to exhibit and to apply the great truths of the gospel to the minds of your people. Let their aim and desire be what it may, in hearing, let it be your aim and desire, in preaching, to fasten truth upon their consciences. Spare no pains in preparing your discourses, and neglect no proper method, to make them pungent. The way is already paved for you. Your worthy and venerable colleague, has set you an example of great plainness and pungency in preaching. And his success enforces his example. You know, by your own experience, we trust, the natural stupidity, blindness and obstinacy of the human heart. And you know, that the word of God is mighty to bow and to subdue the hearts of men. This knowledge will both qualify and dispose you to preach in the most plain and pungent manner. Nothing but a desire to please, or a fear to offend, can prevent your being a plain, penetrating, searching preacher. But these powerful temptations to unfaithfulness, you must, you will constantly and obstinately

resist. You come into the field, in a favorable season, when it seems to be white already to the harvest. Be industrious and faithful, and you may expect a rich harvest of souls, who shall be your joy here and your rejoicing forever.

One word to this numerous assembly, will conclude my discourse. If the words of the wise and faithful ministers of Christ, be so powerful and penetrating as we have heard, how much more irresistible and insupportable will the words of Christ himself be at the great and last day? Then he will tell sinners all that they ever *heard*, as well as all they ever *did* in their lives. Then he will make them *hear* all the sermons, which they have neglected to *hear*, and make them *feel* all the truths, which they had refused to *feel*. And then he will give divine truth such an energy as to penetrate and impress their guilty consciences to all eternity. This will be a source of intolerable misery. For "the keen vibration of bright truth is hell." Let all, therefore, who have hitherto resisted the preached gospel, be entreated to hearken to it speedily, while it may be a savor of life unto life to their souls. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The gospel will sooner or later penetrate the hearts of sinners. If they resist the force of it in time, they must feel the weight of it in eternity. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Amen.

SERMON X.

Delivered at Salem, in New-Hampshire, January 4, 1797, at the Ordination of the Rev. JOHN SMITH, A. B. to the work of the ministry in that place

EZEKIEL ii, 8.

But thou son of man, hear what I say unto thee: Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house.

THE children of Israel were once holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. They served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua. But ever after that memorable period, they began to lose the spirit of religion, and become more and more corrupt, until they were carried into captivity, as a just punishment for their deep declension. In this deplorable situation, they continued to harden themselves in sin, and to pine away in their iniquities, until every appearance of spiritual life was gone. Then God was pleased to send Ezekiel to prophecy over the valley of dry bones, in order to raise them from spiritual death to spiritual life. And to prepare him for his arduous task, he forewarned him of his danger, and charged him to guard against it. “Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel. Be not afraid of them, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. *But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee: Be not thou rebellious like that rebel-*

ious house." This was the same as to say, *I know the degeneracy of the times. I know the corruption and obstinacy of the people. I know they will stop their ears and harden their hearts against divine truth. And I know, that for this purpose, they will use every method, by words and looks, to corrupt your heart, poison your sentiments, and destroy your influence. But I warn you to beware of men; and never suffer yourself to be corrupted by those, whom you are sent to reprove and reform.* This divine caution applies to all who are called to bear the messages of God to men; and naturally leads us, on this occasion, to shew,

I. That ministers are exposed to be corrupted by the people: And,

II. That it is their indispensable duty to guard against it.

I. Let us consider, that ministers are exposed to be corrupted by the people.

Though this be a very humiliating truth to ministers as well as people, yet let us attend to the evidence of it with seriousness and impartiality. And here I would observe,

I. That ministers *have been* corrupted by the people. This was the unhappy case of Aaron. While Moses was detained on the Mount, the people were uneasy, and came to Aaron, and desired him to make them an idol. Though he knew, that he had no right to comply with this unreasonable request, yet he finally yielded to the importunity of the people, and made them a golden god. Accordingly, when Moses returned and reprov'd him for his conduct, he made no other excuse than the pressing importunity of the people. "And Moses said unto Aaron, what did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin up-

on them?" This very question carries an implication that Aaron was corrupted. "And Aaron said, let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." This was a base insinuation to the dishonor of Moses, and an artful address to the vanity of Aaron, which was exactly suited to corrupt his heart, and draw him from the path of duty. The event answered the desire and expectation of those who are set on mischief; for Aaron was corrupted and became "rebellious like that rebellious house." The same thing happened to the sons and successors of Aaron; for we find that they were always corrupt, when the people were corrupt. There was a great degeneracy in the time of the judges, when every man did what was right in his own eyes; and that day of declension proved a day of temptation to the priests, who were carried away by the stream of corruption. When Asa came to the throne, we are told, that "for a long season Israel had been without the true God, and *without a teaching priest.*" A great number of the priests were actually put down, in the reign of Josiah, because they had fallen into the degeneracy of the times. And at the reformation, in Hezekiah's day, there was such a scarcity of uncorrupted priests, that the Levites were called in to assist them in the discharge of their office. Indeed, it was so common for the priests to be involved in the corruptions of the people that God generally reprov'd them both together. By Jeremiah he says, "a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so." By the same

prophet he says again, that he would remove Jerusalem from before his face, "because of all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, and the *priests*." By Ezekiel he says of Judea, "her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have shewed difference between the unclean and the clean." By Micah he says of the house of Israel, "the heads thereof judge for reward, and the *priests* thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money." By Zepheniah he says of the oppressing city, "she obeyed not the voice, she received not correction: she trusted not in the Lord, she drew not near her God: her princes within her are roaring lions, her judges are ravening wolves: her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her *priests* have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."

Now if the priests were always corrupt, *when* the people were corrupt, then it is natural to conclude, that they were, in some measure at least, corrupted by the people. But we are not left to mere conjecture in this case; for God himself complains of the people for being always disposed to corrupt their teachers. "I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, prophesy not." They meant to corrupt the friends of virtue, and the ministers of religion, on purpose to destroy the influence of their example, and the force of their instructions and

admonitions: and they very rarely failed of accomplishing their malignant purpose. The experience of ages, therefore, loudly proclaims, that ministers are exposed to be drawn from their duty, and involved in moral corruption, by the undue influence of the people.

2. The bare example of the people, in a day of declension, has a natural tendency to corrupt ministers. Moral corruption is contagious, and endangers all who are obliged to come within the sphere of its influence. When the people become cold and dull, and averse from every thing of a religious nature, ministers are apt to imbibe and manifest the same spirit. When the people become light and vain in their conversation, ministers are apt to countenance and imitate their levity. When the people grow rich and gay and luxurious, ministers are apt to fall into the same loose and corrupt habits. When the people indulge themselves in idleness, dissipation, and vain amusements, ministers are apt to be allured into their company, and become patrons and partakers of their sins. And when the people become loose in their sentiments, and will not endure sound doctrine, ministers are apt to conceal or pervert the great truths of the gospel, and preach smooth things, to secure the applause and friendship of the enemies of truth. The day of degeneracy is a day of danger to ministers. The prevailing spirit and practice of the times, naturally tend to cool their zeal, weaken their virtue, and injure both the matter and manner of their preaching. But though they are exposed to be corrupted by the bare example of the people, yet,

3. They are in much greater danger of being corrupted, by the positive endeavors and exertions of the people to draw them into sin. A corrupt people

feel themselves obliged to take this course, in order to resist the energy of plain and faithful preaching. They know the power of divine truth, the force of pious example, and the influence of godly ministers: and they feel unable to stand before these united means of conviction. To prevent, therefore, the pains of a wounded conscience, they endeavor, by various methods, to bring ministers over to their own side, and form them agreeably to their own taste. Some treat them with peculiar respect, and flatter their vanity, to make them more yielding and compliant. Some load them with kindness, and endeavor to draw them aside by the powerful cords of interest. Some invite them to their houses, and into their company, and urge them to small and seemingly harmless compliances, and so take advantage of their weakness. And some use more harsh and imperious methods, and attempt to *frighten* them from their virtue and integrity.

Such methods as these, we find the children of Israel often employed, to corrupt those who were sent to them as messengers of the Lord of Hosts. Sometimes they attacked their virtue and innocence, "by giving them wine to drink." Sometimes "they said to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Sometimes they threatened their prophets with the terror of their tongues: "come, said they, let us devise devices against Jeremiah, and let us smite him with the *tongue*, and let us not give heed to any of his words." Sometimes they employed their *frowning looks* as well as hard words, to deter their teachers from their duty, and make them rebellious like themselves. And sometimes "they commanded their proph-

ets, saying, prophesy not." This rough method Amaziah used to silence the prophet Amos. "Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more in Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." And the council at Jerusalem laid the same imperious prohibition upon the apostles. After mature deliberation, "they called them in, and *commanded* them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." Jews and Gentiles are the same by nature, and therefore our Lord taught his ministers to expect the same treatment from the Gentiles, which the prophets had received from the Jews. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." The conduct of both Jews and Gentiles towards the ministers of religion, is a demonstration of the natural disposition of mankind, to use every method in their power to corrupt the hearts and destroy the influence of those who are sent to instruct and reclaim them. We are all by this time convinced, I presume, that ministers are exposed to be corrupted by the people. But if they are exposed to this danger, then,

II. It is their indispensable duty to guard against it. *Son of man, hear what I say unto thee: be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house.*

It is the dictate of common sense, that every man ought to avoid every danger, which he knows, and which he is able to avoid. Ministers know the danger of being corrupted; and they are all able to guard against it. This appears from the conduct of many who have gone before them, in delivering the messages of God to men. The faithful prophets and priests, as

well as pious apostles, felt their exposedness to the frowns and flatteries of the world; but they nobly resisted every effort to allure or to awe them from their duty. The prophet Samuel, who was early called to deliver the messages of God to Israel, faithfully discharged his office, and maintained his innocence and integrity to the last. Though he lived in a day of declension, and the people were weary of the divine government; yet he would never yield to their corrupt inclinations, any further than God allowed him to gratify their wishes: so that he was able, just before his death, to make the most solemn appeal to their consciences, that he had walked uprightly before them all the days of his life. Elijah singly and nobly resisted the frowns of the people, the reproach of the prophets, and the wrath of the king. Jeremiah was surrounded by enemies, who threatened to defame his character, and to destroy his life, unless he would forbear to reprove them for their sins, and admonish them of their danger: but he bravely despised their threats, and faithfully discharged his duty. And the primitive preachers of the gospel displayed no less magnanimity and firmness, in the course of their ministry. When Peter and John were *commanded* not to preach in the name of Jesus, by the most dignified characters in the Jewish nation, they boldly replied, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." But Paul met with the most opposition; and accordingly manifested the most Christian fortitude and fidelity in preaching the gospel. "Do I," says he to the Galatians, "do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." He assures the Thessalonians, that he had

made it his maxim as a minister, to please God rather than men. "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts." The conduct of these faithful servants of God, gives us clear and striking evidence, that ministers are *able*, and therefore *ought*, to guard against all the peculiar dangers of their office. And to impress this plain and practical duty the more deeply on our minds, I would observe,

1. That God has expressly commanded ministers, to guard against the attempts of those who would corrupt their hearts, and draw them aside from the path of duty. His command to Ezekiel on this subject, is extremely pointed and solemn: "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel. Be not afraid of them, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a *rebellious* house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are *most rebellious*. But *thou* son of man, hear what I say unto thee: be not *thou* rebellious, like that rebellious house." Very similar to this, is the command which Christ gave to his apostles, and to all their successors in the ministry. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. *Beware of men.*" These commands from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, bind all the ministers of the gospel to guard against the peculiar dangers of their sacred office, and to repel every temptation to unfaithfulness. It is their indispensable duty, therefore, to view mankind in the light in which the great Searcher of hearts has represented them, and to be as

careful to avoid their corrupting influence, as they would be to avoid the jaws of a wolf, or the poison of a scorpion.

2. They will forfeit the divine presence and protection, if they suffer themselves to be corrupted; and therefore it is their indispensable duty to guard against it. While they continue faithful to God, and plainly deliver his messages to men, he has graciously promised to be with them, and to preserve them from the power of their enemies. Upon this condition, he promised to strengthen and support his prophet Ezekiel — “Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with *my words* unto them. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.” The same promise of support he gave to Jeremiah, on the same condition. “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the *priests* thereof, and against the *people* of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.” Christ also graciously promises to be with his ministers, so long as they strictly adhere to his precepts and appointments. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always.” These gracious promises are all *conditional*, and are

so explained by God himself. He says to Jeremiah, "thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them ALL that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces; lest *I confound thee before them.*" And this awful threatening, God tells the corrupt priests in the days of Malichi, he had actually executed upon them. "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people. according as ye have not kept *my ways.* but have been partial in the law." Now, ministers have *great* reason to desire the divine presence and protection; for if God be with them, who can be against them? And they have *as much* reason to fear his departure and displeasure; for if *God* be *against* them, *who* can be *for* them? This serious and weighty consideration ought to make them extremely careful, to regard *God* more than *men*; and never incur *his* displeasure, in order to gain the favor or to avoid the frowns, of their fellow worms.

3. If ministers suffer themselves to be corrupted by the people, it destroys their usefulness. If they imitate the spirit of the people, and feel as they feel; if they follow the example of the people, and conduct as they conduct; or if they condescend to preach smooth things to please the people; they will totally destroy their ministerial usefulness: for, as soon as the people perceive, that they regard *them* more than *God*, and will prostitute their consciences to gratify their unreasonable desires, they will despise their persons and neglect their preaching. Time-serving ministers generally have but few hearers. All men, whether good or bad, inwardly despise loose and unprincipled ministers, let their talents be what they may. And the same degree of criminality, which would be scarcely observable in other men, is sufficient to destroy the character and usefulness of those who sustain the sacred

office of the ministry. No men are so completely useless and contemptible, as those ministers who have lost all appearance of religion, and become visibly conformed to the spirit and manners of the world. For, as our Savior says, "they are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Hence the dignity of their character, and the importance of their office, lay ministers of the gospel under solemn obligations to keep themselves unspotted from the world, and to preach the preaching which God bids them, whether their people will hear, or whether they will forbear.

I must observe once more,

4. If ministers suffer themselves to be carried down the stream of corruption, they become not only *useless*, but *destructive* to the people. Corrupt ministers are always corrupters. The whole tendency of their practice and preaching is, to corrupt and destroy the souls of their people. Though they have lost the power of doing good, yet they retain the power of doing evil. They can do more than other men, to pull down the kingdom of Christ, and build up the kingdom of satan. And as they are more capable, so they are more disposed, than other men, to stifle the spirit of religion, oppose the doctrines of the gospel, and strengthen the hearts and hands of the wicked. This is the character which God gives of the corrupt teachers in Israel. He says, "Shemaiah taught rebellion against the Lord." He says, the prophets of Samaria and Jerusalem "made Israel to *err*, strengthened the hands of *evil doers*, and *caused profaneness to go forth into all the land*." When the people have formed their ministers after their own hearts, and

made them rebellious like themselves, their ministers will then fit them fast for destruction. So God declares to Israel, by his faithful prophet Hosea: "There shall be like people, like priest: and I will *punish* them for their ways." And our Lord says, "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Thus ministers will destroy both their own souls and the souls of their people, if they suffer themselves to be corrupted by them. And can there be a more solemn and awful consideration than this, to constrain them to abstain from all appearance of evil; to guard against all the dangers of their office; and to discharge all the important duties of it with fidelity and zeal! This is our indispensable and infinitely important duty.

Having illustrated the danger and duty of ministers, I now proceed to make a few *reflections*, which naturally grow out of the subject.

1. It is now a very dangerous day to ministers, in this young and flourishing republic. The people have fallen into a great and general declension. As they have increased, so they have sinned. They have lost their original piety and virtue, and become extremely loose both in practice and in principle. Every species of moral corruption has spread through every part of our nation, and seized all ranks and classes of men. Arminianism, universalism, and deism, have more or less infected all our towns and parishes; and led multitudes to renounce those duties and doctrines of religion, in which they were early educated by their pious parents and faithful ministers. This day of declension among the people, is a day of great danger to the preachers of the gospel. While iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold, even the most faithful ministers of the gospel are in danger of falling into the degeneracy of the times. This is very evident from

what has been said; and still more evident from the conduct of those who sustain the sacred character. Many ministers have already begun to degenerate with a degenerate people. Some have lost that spirit of devotion, that strictness of life, and that purity of sentiment, which was once so conspicuous in the preachers of the gospel. And some have begun to yield to the corrupt humors and unreasonable desires of the people, in points of serious and weighty importance. Some yield to the *vicious*; and neglect to condemn and reprove their fashionable vices. Some yield to the *heterodox*; and neglect to condemn and expose their corrupt sentiments. Some yield to moral sinners; and neglect to preach those doctrines of the gospel, which are so disagreeable to their carnal hearts. And some condescend even to dispense with the laws of Christ, and admit those to enjoy the ordinances of the gospel, who are visibly destitute of the scriptural qualifications. These are striking instances of ministers yielding to the corruptions of the times, contrary to the dictates of their minds. And such instances as these are very numerous, and to be found all over the land. How many ministers neither preach nor practice according to their own sentiments, through fear of offending, and through desire of pleasing, the people? This conduct weakens the hands of faithful ministers, and strengthens the hands of those who wish to corrupt them. The present prospect is, that those who are the light of the world, will lose their lustre; and those who are the salt of the earth, will lose their savor; and there will be like people, like priest. Trying times for ministers are probably coming. And let us all, who think we stand, take heed lest we fall.

2. Ministers need, at this day, to be well qualified for their office. Though religion has decayed, yet

knowledge has increased. There are men of letters, or at least men of information, in every religious society. The people in general are much more capable now, than they were formerly, of judging of the talents and qualifications of ministers. And as they are more critical in discerning, so they are more severe in censuring, every ministerial defect or imperfection. The corruption of the times appears in nothing more visibly, than in the united opposition of the people to *sacred* things, and to *sacred* persons. They seem determined to bring down ministers, and make reprisals upon them, for their having so long possessed the public esteem and confidence. Those, therefore, who enter into the ministry, at such a day as this, need to be well qualified for their great and arduous work. If they assume the sacred office, without any consistent scheme of religious sentiments, or any considerable stock of theological knowledge, they will very probably injure the cause which they ought to defend and promote. For people have lost their former implicit faith in the opinions of ministers, and pay no respect to their bare assertions. They demand evidence for every thing which their teachers call upon them to believe and practice. And this renders it necessary for ministers to be mighty in the scriptures, and expert in reasoning upon divine subjects. They ought to be able to meet deists, universalists, and all gainsayers, upon their own ground, and expose the fallacy and weakness of their boasted arguments. There is reason to believe, that the late rapid increase of error and infidelity in this land, is partly owing to the ignorance of ministers, who have never formed any clear and consistent scheme of divinity in their own minds. They have suffered error and infidelity to take root in their own congregations, through a sense of their own in-

sufficiency to maintain and defend the truth. And this has led infidels and others, to represent the clergy as a weak, ignorant, superstitious set of men. Hence it highly concerns the ministers of the gospel, at this day, to wipe off such aspersions from their order, by possessing and displaying that knowledge, which may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. It is presumption for any man, to undertake to preach the gospel, without being able to prove the inspiration of the scriptures, and to defend the important doctrines which the Bible contains. This is what people now justly expect; and if they are disappointed, it will injure both them and those who profess to be their religious instructors.

But *prudence*, as well as knowledge, is a necessary qualification for a minister. He needs this, to enable him to exhibit divine truth in the most profitable manner, and to escape those snares which the enemies of truth will always endeavor to lay for him. Our Lord was a *prudent* preacher. His prudence, however, did not consist in taking the safest methods to conceal disagreeable doctrines; but in delivering disagreeable doctrines at a proper time, and in proper expressions. How often did his enemies attempt to entangle him in his talk? And how often did he confound and silence them? There are many, at this day, who feel the same opposition to the ministers of the gospel, that the Jews felt towards Christ; and therefore they need to be wise and prudent, as he was, in order to avoid the same snares and dangers, which he, by his prudence, avoided. Accordingly he has expressly enjoined it upon them, "to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

But ministers of the gospel, at this day of declension, need large measures of grace, as well as of knowledge

and prudence. They need to be crucified to the world, and the world to them, by the cross of Christ. They ought to be willing to take up their cross daily, and endure the afflictions of the gospel. They ought to seek the honor which cometh from God, and renounce that which cometh from men. They ought to savor the things which be of God, and not those which be of men. They ought to love God, and Christ, and the souls of men, so much, as to be willing to be poor and despised, and abused by men, in the faithful discharge of their duty. They ought, in a word, to be so holy, and harmless, and pure, and heavenly minded, as to be proof against all the frowns and flatteries of those who wish to weaken their hands, discourage their hearts, and destroy their influence. If those who enter upon the ministry are possessed of these superior qualifications, they may hope, through the divine goodness, to war a good warfare, to keep the faith, and endure unto the end, so as to receive that crown of righteousness which is reserved for those who are faithful unto death. But if any presume to run before they are sent, and to preach before they are qualified, they have reason to expect that they shall one day fall into the corruption of the times, and become a reproach to the sacred order, and a stumbling to those whom they ought to have reprov'd and reclaim'd.

3. It is the duty of all good men, at this day especially, to aid and assist the ministers of the gospel in the discharge of their office. No men have greater difficulties to encounter than ministers, and therefore, no men stand in more need of assistance than they. They are pleading the cause of all good men, against the united opposition of all bad men. Good men, therefore, ought to do all in their power to counte-

nance and assist them. And in compassion to ministers, God has been pleased to lay his special commands upon all good men to help them. The duties which good men owe to ministers, are plainly pointed out, and strongly enjoined, in the word of God. I will read a number of plain passages to this purpose. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and *they should seek the law at his mouth*: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." "We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and *esteem them very highly in love for their work sake*." "Remember them that have the rule over you; who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." "Brethren, pray for us" "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that believe not." "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; and *that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men*." These precepts require good men, in particular, to *hear* their ministers, to *revere* their ministers, to *esteem* their ministers, and to *pray* for their ministers. It is high time, for all real Christians, to awake from their stupor, and by their prayers and exertions, to aid the ministers of the gospel in their difficult and important work. If Christian professors would unite with Christian ministers, in the common cause of Christianity, we might reasonably hope that religion would gain ground, and vice and infidelity would every where fall before it.

But it is time to conclude the discourse, with such addresses as are usual on such an occasion as this. And, in the first place, I turn to him, who is about to take the pastoral care of this people.

DEAR SIR,

You are entering upon a work of great difficulty and danger. You will fare better than any who have gone before you in the ministry, if you should not meet with any who wish and endeavor to draw you from the path of duty. The people, to whom you are going to minister, we presume are as well disposed towards the gospel, and towards the preachers of it, as religious societies in general. But the corruptions of the times have reached this as well as other places. You are, therefore, entering upon the work of the ministry at a very dangerous period. And though we hope you are really friendly to God and to his cause, yet the seeds of rebellion are not entirely destroyed in your own heart. There is something still within you, which exposes you to be moved from your steadfastness. Moral corruption spreads its poison very insensibly, and often gains the possession of the heart before the man is aware. You cannot, therefore, be too watchful against its pernicious influence. To defeat the designs of those, who may wish to weaken your hands and heart in the cause of God, you cannot take a more direct and effectual method, than to become "*an ensample to the flock.*" It is the proper business of ministers to *set*, and not to *follow*, example. Instead of suffering yourself to be formed to the spirit and manners of others, make it your constant aim and endeavor to form others to the spirit of the gospel and the life of religion. If your people perceive this to be your steady and governing principle of

action, they will have but little *hope*, and of consequence but little *courage*, to make the attempt of corrupting either your heart, your life, or your preaching. If you appear to regard God more than man, and the good of your people more than their censure or applause, they will feel a power in your preaching, and a force in your example, which they can neither gainsay nor resist; especially if you discover, at the same time, a readiness to please, and even to oblige them, in all things which are consistent with the duties of your office. Conscience is always on the side of the faithful minister, and against every rebellious child of Adam: And it is this, which gives every minister, who speaks for God, and with his words, the ascendancy over the most hardened and obstinate sinners. Only fear God, and make his word the standard of your preaching, and you need not fear to deliver the most disagreeable truths to your people, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they will feel that there is a man of God among them.

A good soldier esteems it an honor to be called to the post of danger. And if you are a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you will esteem it an honor to plead his cause in a day of declension. It is a cause which will certainly prevail somewhere; and if you do your duty, you may humbly hope that it will prevail in this place. But, should you be so unhappy as to find religion decaying among your own people, and among those around you; let it not damp your spirit, but awaken you to be more fervent in your devotions, more indefatigable in your studies, more zealous in your preaching, and more holy and exemplary in your living. The united exertions of the enemies of religion, ought to rouse the united exertions of those who are set for the defence of the gospel, to put

check upon the growing spirit of error and irreligion, and we hope you will not be wanting, in your desires and endeavors, to awaken stupid sinners to a sense of their danger and duty.

There can be no neutrers in the cause of Christ. He that is not *for* him, must be *against* him; and he that gathereth not with him, must scatter abroad. You must be conformed either to Christ or to the world. You must either preach rebellion against God, or bear your public testimony against it, both in preaching and in practice. On this day of your solemn consecration to the sacred office, you are solemnly called upon to choose whom you will serve, whether Christ or his enemies. Be entreated to make a wise choice, and never depart from it, because the consequences will be infinitely important. So our Lord hath taught you, in the most striking language: "Who then (says he) is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Son of man, *hear* what your Lord saith unto you, and be not thou rebellious, like such a rebellious servant: but be thou faithful unto death, and the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give you a crown of life, which shall never fade away.

The church and congregation in this place, will now indulge me in a free and friendly address to them, on this solemn occasion.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

Behold the man, whom you have so unanimously chosen to take the pastoral care of your souls. Receive him as a messenger of the Lord of Hosts, and seek the law at his mouth. Esteem him highly in love for his work sake. Consider him as a minister as well as a man, and pay respect to the minister in the man. Cease not to pray for him, and to join with him in building up the Redeemer's kingdom. In this, and in this alone, you may reasonably desire him to be one with you: and in this, and in this alone, will he be willing to join with you, if he is a faithful servant of God. Never desire him to regard you more than God; and never become his enemies because he tells you the truth. This will be distressing to him, and destructive to yourselves. He cannot serve you any longer than he serves God. If you should be so unwise as to desire him to conform to your unreasonable wishes, and so successful as to bring him to a conformity, you will injure both him and yourselves. It appears from what has been said, however, that the people are extremely prone to corrupt their ministers: and this affords ground to fear, that this people, who have been so remarkably unanimous in the choice of him, who is now to be set over them in the Lord, may nevertheless become disposed to weaken his hands and discourage his heart, in the service of their souls. Should you endeavor to do this, and succeed in it, how dreadful will be your situation, when you come to see, at the last day, that you have grieved the heart and destroyed the influence of one, who desired, and

endeavored to promote, your eternal good! But, on the other hand, what can afford you greater joy, than to be presented before the universe, as friends to God, and to them who were workers together with him in building up his kingdom? You and your pastor are both in danger. He is in danger from you, and you are in danger from him. The connexion which may be this day formed between you, will be infinitely interesting to you all. We beseech you, brethren and friends, to take heed how you *hear* your minister, how you *feel* towards him, and how you *treat* him. He can do but very little without you. He needs your love, your prayers, and your assistance. He is called, like young Samuel, to bear the messages of God to you, in a day of great declension. And if it be his heart's desire and prayer to God, that you may be saved; let it be your heart's desire and prayer to God, that he may be both faithful and successful. And if you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, you shall receive a prophet's reward. Amen.

SERMON XI.

Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. JOSEPH EMERSON, to the Pastoral Care of the Third Congregational Church in Beverly, September 21, 1803.

EPHESIANS iii, 10, 11.

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE Jews were the seed of Abraham, to whom the promises of the Messiah were made; and from this circumstance they were led to imagine that salvation was confined to them, in distinction from all other nations. This was their prevailing opinion, both before and after the crucifixion of Christ. Nor were the apostles themselves, at first, altogether divested of this national prejudice. But Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was early favored with more enlightened and enlarged views of the gospel. He knew that it comprised the whole counsel of God; that it was intended for the benefit of all nations; and that it would, in its final operation, give the brightest display of the divine attributes to all intelligent beings. This sublime idea of the gospel inspired him with gratitude to Christ, for giving him the peculiar privilege of unfolding the great scheme of salvation to all men, whether Jews or Gentiles: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this *grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world

hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places *might be known by the church* the manifold wisdom of God, *according to the eternal purpose* which he purposed *in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

These last words, in this connexion, naturally lead us to inquire, who are meant by the church; when God formed his purpose of redeeming the church; and why he formed this gracious design.

I. Let us consider who are meant by the church.

Paul sometimes uses this appellation to denote a single society of Christians; but he more commonly uses the term to denote the whole number of the elect, or all who shall finally be sanctified and saved. This portion of mankind he considers as composing the church universal, which is a spiritual body, of which Christ is the spiritual head. To this purpose he speaks in the first chapter of this Epistle. He says, "God hath set Christ at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to *the church*, which is his body." In this comprehensive sense the apostle uses the term church in the text. He means to signify by it the whole church of the first-born in heaven, or all who shall be set up as monuments to display the riches of divine grace to the whole intelligent creation.

Let us next inquire,

II. When the Deity formed his purpose of redeeming the church from among men.

God was under no natural necessity of forming this or any other purpose. His nature did not irre-

sistibly constrain him either to create or to redeem the world. It depended solely upon his will, whether he should bring angels and men into existence; whether he should make them in his own mortal image; whether he should suffer any of them to fall into sin; and whether, if any of them should fall into sin, he would save the whole or only a part of the guilty, through the sufferings and death of a mediator. In a word, God was perfectly free and voluntary in forming the whole scheme of redemption. Hence it is called "his purpose, his counsel, and the good pleasure of his will." But still it is a question, *when* he formed this benevolent purpose, whether in time, or in eternity. The text tells us it was in eternity: "According to the *eternal* purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." All the elect are said "to have been chosen in Christ *before* the foundation of the world." Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And St. John tells us, "he saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the *everlasting gospel* to preach unto them that dwell on the earth." These are plain declarations that the gospel scheme of salvation was formed in eternity; which perfectly accords with every just idea of the divine character. God was self-existent, independent, and absolutely perfect, from eternity. He was infinitely able to form his whole plan of operation, before he began to operate; and no good reason could possibly exist for his neglecting, a single moment, to fix all future events. Indeed, his own moral rectitude laid him under moral obligation to form the glorious scheme of redemption, from the early days of eternity. But here, perhaps, some may be ready to doubt, whether it be proper to distinguish the divine purpose from the divine nature; or whether actual willing, choosing and determining

may be ascribed to the Deity, because these exercises seem to imply some degree of deliberation and suspense. The answer is, though imperfect creatures often deliberate and suspend their judgment, before they choose or determine, yet God, who is absolutely perfect, could never have occasion for deliberation or suspense. As he possessed, from eternity, every divine perfection, so he had, from eternity, an intuitive view of all possible beings, objects, and events, which enabled him to form the best possible scheme of things, as early as his own existence. We can as easily conceive of an eternal purpose, as of an eternal power, wisdom or goodness. We can as easily conceive of eternal motion as eternal rest. We can as easily conceive of God's determining from eternity, as of his existing from eternity. And if we only admit the truth of his existing from eternity, we must necessarily admit the truth of his decreeing from eternity to redeem the church through the atonement of Christ. Any other supposition must carry the idea of imperfection and mutability in Him who is without variability or shadow of turning. The way is now prepared to inquire,

III. Why God was graciously pleased to devise and adopt, from eternity, the great scheme of man's redemption. To this inquiry the apostle gives a general answer in the text. He says, it was "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, *by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.*" Moved by infinite benevolence, the Deity determined to make himself known through the medium of his works; and, among all possible works, he saw the work of redemption to be the best adapted to answer this glorious and important purpose. He knew that his creatures could not see the natural and

moral excellency of his nature, unless he actually displayed himself in his works. It was *their imperfection*, therefore, which rendered any exhibitions of his glory necessary. Could they have looked directly into *his* mind, as he can into *theirs*, there would have been no occasion for the creation of the heavens and the earth, or for the existence of natural or moral evil, or for the incarnation and sufferings of Christ, or for any of the visible scenes and retributions of eternity. All the ends of creation might have been completely answered, by the bare existence of rational, holy and immortal creatures, had such creatures been capable of seeing all the perfections of God, without the medium of his works. But though the imperfection of created beings was the general reason why God chose to act himself out before their eyes, yet it may be still further inquired, why he chose to act himself out *in the work of redemption*. In answer to this, the following observations may perhaps afford some light and satisfaction.

1. God chose the work of redemption because it was the only one in which he could display *all* his perfections before the minds of his intelligent creatures. He might have created different objects, and fixed upon different orders and series of events; but none of these could have unfolded his *whole* character. This will be evident, if we only consider the various modes of operation which he might have chosen and pursued.

He might have formed just such a material system as now exists. He might have formed angels and men holy and happy, and preserved them from sin and misery forever. This is certainly a supposable case, because the same divine influence, which first formed them in the divine image, could have preserved that image through every period of their existence. And

had God treated angels and men in this manner, he would have displayed great goodness to the inhabitants of heaven and earth, and established a state of things almost infinitely different from what has actually taken place. But such a mode of divine operation would not have discovered either the *justice* or *grace* of God; because perfectly innocent creatures could not have been proper objects of either *vindictive justice* or *pardoning mercy*.

Again: God might have preserved both angels and men in a state of holiness and happiness, *for a certain season*, and then subjected only a few individuals to endless sin and misery. This mode of conduct would have displayed divine benevolence to the holy and happy part of the moral system, and *divine sovereignty* and *justice* to the sinful and miserable part. But still this order of things would have left *forgiving grace* entirely undiscovered.

Once more: we may suppose that God might have preserved angels and men in a holy and happy state, *for ages and ages*, and then *annihilated* the whole moral creation. This, like the last mentioned series of events, would have forever concealed from the view of creatures the *sovereign grace* of God, in forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.

These three schemes of divine operation are the only ones, which could have been devised, different from the scheme of redemption revealed in the gospel. And since neither of these could have displayed *all* the perfections of God, this was a good reason why he should prefer the work of redemption to all other ways of making himself known. In this way, he can cause "*his grace* to reign through righteousness unto eternal life," in them that are saved; and, at the same time, manifest *his justice* in the everlasting punishment of

the finally impenitent and incorrigible. And as this was the only possible way of displaying *all* his perfections, so he determined, from eternity, to exhibit his *whole* character to all intelligent beings in the face of Jesus Christ.

2. Another reason why God devised and adopted the work of redemption, was, because there was no other way by which he could so *clearly and fully* manifest *any* of his perfections. We have just observed, that there was no other way by which he could discover all his perfections; but we now further observe, that there was no other by which he could display *any* of his perfections in their highest beauty and glory. The other methods of manifesting himself, which have been mentioned, would have given created beings some apprehension of some of his natural and moral attributes; but the method of redeeming love displays *them all in the clearest and strongest light*. To illustrate this general idea, let us begin with the attribute of divine *wisdom*, which the apostle particularly mentions in the text. He says, it was the *intent* of God in redeeming the church, to make known his *manifold wisdom* to all the principalities and powers in the heavenly world. And what other method could have been so well adapted to display this divine attribute in all its glory? The plan of redemption is the *deepest design* that could be formed, and the most surpassing all created wisdom. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." The united wisdom of angels and men could never have discovered the way of reconciling *justice* and *mercy* in the pardon of sinners, by the incarnation and death of the divine Redeemer. Besides, the way of saving sinners through the atonement of Christ, displays not only the *deepest*, but the most *manifold*,

wisdom. It is the most complicated scheme conceivable. Though God had created as many worlds as there are sands on the sea-shore, and made as many species of creatures as he has made individuals; yet he could not have displayed such *manifold* wisdom in the formation and government of such a system, as he has displayed in raising up the church out of the ruins of the apostasy. This scheme combines and contrasts the most opposite things in nature, and brings them all into subserviency to one great and ultimate end. It makes sin promote holiness, misery promote happiness, darkness promote light, confusion promote order, and the greatest discord promote the most intimate and inviolable union. To adapt all these things in order, in weight, and in measure, to each other, so as to produce the greatest quantum of holiness and happiness in the universe, displays the greatest depth and extent of divine wisdom, and must finally constrain all intelligent and holy beings to cry out, in raptures of admiration and gratitude, "O the *depth* of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

The *power* of God might, indeed, have been seen in the creation, preservation and government of perfectly holy and obedient creatures; but this divine attribute is more illustriously displayed in carrying on the work of redemption. In this work, the *exceeding greatness* of God's power is exerted, in subduing the hearts of sinners, and in maintaining his throne and authority in the hearts of believers. Nor is this all; for all the powers of darkness are combined against the members of the church militant, and it requires the continual exertion of God's omnipotence to restrain and conquer all his and their enemies. So that the power of God is much more visibly displayed, in earth and in hell, in governing his *rebellious creatures*, than

it could have been in reigning over *entirely dutiful and loyal subjects*. Again:

God gives the brightest display of his *goodness*, as well as of his power and wisdom, in the work of redemption. This, many are slow of heart to believe. They imagine God would have discovered more goodness, in preserving angels and men in a state of perpetual holiness and happiness, than he has done by suffering sin and misery to enter into the world, and saving only a part of mankind from endless ruin, through the death and mediation of Christ. For, though the plan of redemption, which involves sin and misery, may raise the general happiness of the universe to a great and glorious height, yet they still apprehend that God might have formed a system without natural or moral evil, which would have more fully displayed his infinite benevolence. They ask, might not God, by creating more worlds, and more intelligent creatures, with more enlarged powers and faculties, have produced much more happiness than can result from the work of redemption? Another question will fully answer this. Did infinite wisdom and goodness discern, and choose the best plan possible? If this be answered in the affirmative, the unavoidable consequence is, that the plan of redemption is the very best plan, to promote the highest good of the universe. And it must of necessity produce this effect, because it most fully and clearly displays the whole of the divine character, which is absolutely necessary to the highest felicity of God and all holy beings. Hence the scheme of redemption will finally display the goodness of God to the best advantage, by making it appear to all intelligences that he has raised the happiness of the universe to a higher degree than it was possible to raise it in any other way.

Furthermore, God's *holiness*, or hatred of sin, is set in the most amiable and striking light in the work of redemption. He would have manifested the purity of his nature, had he doomed all the human race, as he did the fallen angels, to hopeless ruin: but the sufferings and death of Christ, in the room of sinners, have given a brighter display of his vindictive justice, than could have been given by any punishment inflicted upon the guilty. All intelligent beings must look to the cross of Christ to discover the strongest expressions of God's displeasure against sin. There divine justice appears in its perfect purity, and free from all mixture of partiality or malevolence. "God set forth his Son, as a propitiation for sin, that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him that believeth." And Christ *proclaimed his righteousness* in actions which spoke louder than words, and which gave the highest testimony to the whole universe, that he perfectly *hates* sin, whilst he *forgives* the penitent and believing sinner. It is also the nature and tendency of the gospel to raise up vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. The gift of a Savior, the offers of mercy, the means used to bring them to repentance, the strivings of the Spirit, together with the patience and forbearance of God, give the impenitent an opportunity of filling up the measure of their guilt, and of preparing themselves for the most signal displays of divine justice, in their future and eternal punishment. So that the amiable and awful attribute of *divine justice* will be far more clearly displayed through the medium of the gospel, than it could have been through any other medium.

The same may be said of the *sovereignty* of God. It is true, the whole chain of created existence, from the highest to the lowest link, discovers divine sove-

eighty. There is a visible superiority and inferiority among all the creatures of God, from the first angel down to the meanest insect. And this diversity in the powers and capacities of intelligent and unintelligent beings, discovers the sovereignty of their great Creator. But still his sovereignty appears in a far more interesting light, in doing what he will with his own, and disposing of the several grades of created natures according to his own absolute pleasure. How often and how clearly has he displayed his sovereignty, in carrying on the work of redemption! He has provided a Savior for fallen men, and left fallen angels to perish, without remedy. He has sent the gospel to one nation and not to another. He has bestowed his special grace upon one person and not upon another. He has had compassion, on whom he would have compassion, and whom he would he has hardened. He has decreed the characters and conditions of all moral agents, from eternity. And he will dispose of all exactly according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. When the great work of redemption is finished, it will give an astonishing display of divine sovereignty towards every created being in the universe.

We have already observed that the work of redemption discovers the *grace* of God, and we must here add that it displays his grace in the brightest colors. To devise the scheme of salvation was a stretch of grace, to which the thoughts of finite creatures could never have soared, had it not been discovered in the face of Christ; but the means to accomplish this gracious purpose are still more astonishing. God knew it could not be effected without the most extraordinary exertions and the most extraordinary sacrifices. He knew he must sacrifice the holiness and happiness of myri-

ads of angels and men, and, what was infinitely more than all this, that he must sacrifice on the cross his dearly beloved Son, who was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The scheme of redemption is so constructed, that not only the effects wrought, but the means used, conspire to display the height and depth, the length and breadth, of divine grace. Had God pardoned *all* the guilty, without the death of a substitute, he would have displayed *real* grace. Had he pardoned a *part* of the guilty, through the death of a mere creature, he would have displayed *sovereign* grace. But in his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, he displays not only *sovereign* grace, but *sovereign* grace in the most *sovereign* manner, and at the highest possible expense. The infinite pains he has taken to sanctify and save the church, will forever display the *exceeding riches* of his grace to principalities and powers, as well as to the distinguished monuments of his sovereign mercy. Thus it appears, that the work of redemption displays not only *the manifold wisdom* of God, but all his other perfections, *in a more clear and illustrious manner* than they could have been displayed through any other medium. And this was a weighty reason why God formed his eternal purpose of redeeming the sinful children of men through the death and mediation of the Lord of glory. But,

3. There was another important reason why God determined to make himself known by the work of redemption. He saw it was necessary, not only to display *all* his perfections, and to display them *all* in the *clearest* manner; but also to *prepare* the minds of all moral beings to view them with the greatest *attention* and *sensibility*. He meant not only to give them an opportunity to *see* himself but to awaken their *attention*, and *fix it upon his great and amiable charac-*

fer. And nothing could be better adapted to this end than to place them in a situation which would render all the displays of his glory highly *interesting to themselves*. Accordingly he devised and adopted the work of redemption, which will eventually place every moral being in a situation to view all the divine perfections in the most *interesting* light. It has placed all accountable creatures in a state of probation, which is of all situations the most critical and important; because it suspends their future and eternal interests upon their conduct, during a short if not an uncertain period. It has also connected good and bad angels with good and bad men, and made them all instrumental in forming each other's characters, and preparing each other for their final condition. And when the work of redemption is finished, it will fix them all in such different and interesting circumstances, that they can never see nor contemplate each other, *without seeing God*, and *feeling* the whole weight of his infinite perfections. Where will the elect angels be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the *sovereignty* of God in making them such holy and happy creatures? Where will the non-elect angels be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the *sovereignty* of God in the whole course of his conduct towards them, both in heaven and in hell? Where will the church of the first-born be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the *sovereignty* of God in forming them vessels of *mercy*, and making them kings and priests, through the blood of the Lamb? And where will lost men be able to turn their eyes, without being struck with the *sovereignty* of God, in giving them existence, offering them mercy, and leaving them to perish in their sins forever? Neither the happy nor the miserable will be able to fix their attention upon any created or uncreated object, without a

lively sense of the *manifold wisdom*, the *sovereign grace* and *arcful justice* of God. While the inhabitants of heaven behold the smoke of the torments of the damned, they will view all the divine attributes with joyful admiration; and while the spirits in prison realize the raptures of joy and praise in the mansions of the blessed, *they will painfully feel* the full weight of all the perfections of the Deity. In a word, the winding up of the gospel scheme of salvation will turn the *attention* of all created beings upon God himself, and constrain them to *see* and *feel* his character, *with the highest sensibility*, to all eternity. Thus we see some wise and holy reasons, why God formed his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; or why he chose to make himself known to principalities and powers and all other intelligent creatures, through the medium of Christ, in the work of redemption.

It now remains to improve the subject.

1. If God freely chose from eternity to make himself known by the work of redemption; then we may safely conclude, that this work was not devised for the purpose of mending or repairing the moral system. The Sublapsarians suppose that God originally intended to make the moral creation perfectly holy and happy; but the defection of Lucifer and the apostasy of Adam defeated his first and best design. In this unhappy case, therefore, to repair, as much as possible, the injuries done to the moral system, he devised the scheme of raising up from the ruins of the apostasy, a pure and holy church, to display the riches of his grace towards the vessels of mercy. But if what has been said be true, there is no foundation for such an opinion as this, which is a plain impeachment of the divine character. It appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that God comprehended in his eternal pur-

pose, all the sin and misery, as well as all the holiness and happiness, which ever have, or ever will come into existence; so that the apostasy of both angels and men was one essential part of the scheme of redemption. God saw it was absolutely necessary that both moral and natural evils should exist, in order to open the way for the most complete manifestation of his own glory, and, therefore, comprised these evils in his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hence he has never had the least occasion to revise, correct or amend his original design, or to repair any absolute injury done to his perfect system. Every thing in creation and providence has taken place just as he always intended, and not a single event has ever happened to mar his character, or disconcert his first designs. One event has always followed another in the very order and connexion which he established from eternity, and one event will still follow another in that order and connexion, until the great and complicated work of redemption is brought to its final consummation, and the whole universe is filled with the brightest displays of the divine glory.

2. If God formed the scheme of salvation from eternity, then to deny the doctrine of the divine decrees, is to rob him of all his glory in the work of redemption. The apostle calls this work, "the *glorious gospel* of the blessed God." And if he devised this wise and benevolent design, then all the glory of it justly belongs to him. It is the dictate of reason, to ascribe the merit or glory of any important undertaking to the agent who formed the wise and useful design. If, therefore, before the foundation of the world, or the existence of any created being, God himself concerted, adjusted and adopted the whole plan of sal-

vation, the whole glory of it is all his own. The infinite merit of forming a scheme infinitely better than any other being could have formed, is to be wholly ascribed to his boundless wisdom and benevolence. But to deny his eternal decrees is to rob him of all this glory, and to bring the highest reproach upon his character. Should one person be saved, whom he did not intend should be saved; should one person be lost, whom he did not intend should be lost; should one pain be endured, which he did not intend should be endured; should one sin be committed, which he did not intend should be committed; or, in a word, should one event finally take place, which he did not intend should take place; it would demonstrate the *imperfection* of his nature. And the least natural or moral imperfection in the Deity would divest him of all his glory, and render him an object unworthy of the trust and confidence of created beings. For, if God could, either intentionally or unintentionally, either *cause* or *suffer* any event to take place, detrimental to the highest good of the universe, no intelligent creature could have the least security of his happiness, or even of his existence. To deny, therefore, that God comprehended and determined all things that ever have existed, or ever shall exist, is to rob him of all his glory, to subvert the whole scheme of redemption, and to sap the foundation of all happiness in the universe. If there can be any fundamental error, it is the denial of the doctrine of the divine decrees.

3. If it was the supreme purpose of God, in concerting the work of redemption, to make the brightest display of himself; then the ministers of the gospel ought to exhibit all the doctrines contained in it, in the most plain and intelligible manner. It is the great design of preaching to unfold the glorious scheme of salvation.

Paul viewed his office in this light, and made it his main object to unfold as fully as possible the whole plan of redemption. He says he meant "*to make all men see* what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." The gospel was wrapt up in types and figures for many ages; but when the veil of the temple was rent at the crucifixion of Christ, the shadows of the Mosaic dispensation vanished, and the mystery of the gospel was clearly disclosed. And this mystery the apostle meant to explain so fully and clearly, that all who heard him preach, not only *might*, but *must*, understand the great scheme of redemption. In consequence of this, he could appeal to his hearers, that he had faithfully discharged his office: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He supposed, the more fully and clearly he preached all the doctrines of the gospel, the more fully and clearly the glory of God would be displayed. This opinion is founded in the very nature and design of the gospel. For if the whole scheme of salvation is calculated to display the glory of God, then every part of it, in its proper connexion, must have a natural tendency to promote the same desirable purpose. It is, therefore, the most direct way to promote the glory of God, to preach every doctrine of the gospel as plainly as possible. If the whole scheme of the gospel was the best that could be devised; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he alone devised it. If it was necessary, in order to carry this scheme into execution, to introduce sin and misery into the moral system; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he designedly introduced these evils for this wise and be-

nevolent purpose. If it was best that all moral beings should be placed in a state of trial, in which they might have an opportunity to establish or to lose their original rectitude; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he did designedly place them in such a critical and dangerous situation. If it was best that the first man should be the public head of his posterity; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he did suspend the moral character of the whole human race upon the conduct of Adam in paradise. If it was best that only a part of mankind should be saved; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he determined that only a part should be saved. If it was best that a part of mankind should be finally lost; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he determined a part should finally be lost. In a word, if it was best that the work of redemption should be accomplished; then it must reflect honor upon God, to make it appear that he made all the means necessary to accomplish it absolutely certain, by his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is utterly impossible to believe that the gospel was devised on purpose to give intelligent creatures the most clear and just conceptions of God, and yet believe that the preaching of the gospel plainly, has a tendency to lead mankind into false conceptions of the divine character. The truth is, that preaching the gospel partially never fails of leading hearers into error. They must form wrong ideas of God, and of the doctrines of the gospel, if the most important parts of the work of redemption are either concealed, or denied. If, therefore, ministers of the gospel wish to glorify God, if they wish to enlighten and convert sinners, if they wish to edify and comfort believers; if they wish to suppress

dangerous errors, if they wish to check the progress of infidelity, and promote the great interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, let them declare the whole counsel of God, and unfold, as clearly and fully as possible, the great scheme of redemption. This is their indispensable duty, and in the faithful discharge of this duty they will find a great present satisfaction, and a great future reward.

4. If it be the great design of the work of redemption, to display the glory of God; then it is a peculiar privilege to be allowed to preach this everlasting gospel to a sinful and perishing world. The apostle Paul entertained a lively and grateful sense of the favor of God, in giving him this desirable employment: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." At another time, speaking of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to his trust, he breaks out in this grateful language; "and I *thank* Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." The ministerial office is a good office, and affords the best advantages to those who faithfully discharge it, to attain all that is worthy to be desired in the present life. It gives them a peculiar opportunity of acquiring the largest portion of divine knowledge. All good ministers, have a high relish for divine knowledge, and desire to dive into the deep things of God, and to enlarge their minds with clear and extensive views of his character, his designs, and works. Deep and critical researches into the great work of redemption, never fail to gratify this pure desire after pure knowledge. Studious and pious divines enter the widest field of mental improvement. They move in

a higher sphere than mathematicians and astronomers, or natural and moral philosophers. These study the science of *means*, but divines soar to a higher region, and study the science of *moral ends*, which is the highest science in nature. The unsearchable riches of Christ afford materials for the most noble and agreeable discoveries. These are the objects which now employ the attention of principalities and powers in heavenly places, and will employ *their* attention, and the attention of all holy creatures, to endless ages. The ministers of the gospel may be considered as the lowest order in the highest school in the universe. The knowledge of all other arts and sciences shall fail, but the divine science which they are pursuing shall last forever, and their progress in it shall be like the rising sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

But the improvement of the heart is more desirable than the improvement of the understanding; and the ministerial office is highly favorable to the growth of grace. While pious ministers are feeding their people with the sincere milk of the word, they enjoy the best opportunity of increasing their holiness, as well as knowledge. Divine truth has a direct tendency to nourish and strengthen every holy and benevolent affection. Hence our Savior said to his Father, in his last prayer for his disciples, "sanctify them through *thy* truth: *thy* word is truth." While ministers are pursuing their proper business, their minds are sensibly employed about the most important truths and the most glorious and amiable objects. They are naturally led to contemplate God as forming the great scheme of redemption, as entering upon the execution of it, at the creation of angels and men, as pursuing it, in the course of providence, ever since to the present day, and as still carry-

ing it on to the second coming of Christ; when all its glorious fruits and effects shall fully appear, and be perfectly enjoyed by all holy beings, without interruption and without end. While musing on such boundless and interesting scenes, they will feel the fire of devotion kindling in their breasts, and find their holy calling enlarging and comforting their holy hearts, and preparing them for the enjoyment of all the good which shall flow from the work of redemption.

These opportunities of growing in knowledge and in grace are mere personal advantages; but the ministerial office affords another, which is much more valuable and important, and that is the opportunity of doing the greatest good that can be done by created agents. To ministers in particular is this grace given, that they should serve God in the gospel of his Son, and be employed as instruments in forming vessels of mercy, and qualifying them to be members of the church of the first-born, who will be the most amiable creatures in the universe, and above all others serve to display the glory of God in the sight of principalities and powers in heavenly places. And what greater service can be done for God and man, than to fit immortal souls to display his glory and enjoy his favor forever?

Permit me now to apply this subject to the Pastor elect.

DEAR SIR,

Let your heart rise in gratitude to God, who is about to grant you the great privilege of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is the most desirable work in which you can be engaged. It is to unfold the mystery which has been hidden for ages from the greatest part of mankind, and which displays all the

perfections of the Deity in the most amiable light. If I should tell you, that precious and perishing souls were about to be committed to your care and instruction, I should remind you of a serious and pertinent truth; but this subject holds up to your view a greater and more solemn truth, that the glorious gospel is to be committed to your trust, in which not only you and your people, but God, and Christ, and all moral beings, will be forever deeply interested. This trust, solemn and important as it is, we have too much reason to fear, has often been betrayed by those to whom it has been committed. And are you in no danger of betraying it? May you not conceal or corrupt those truths which you ought to explain and inculcate? And, instead of employing all your learning and ingenuity in unfolding the great scheme of redemption, may you not exert all your abilities to make men ignorant of the glorious gospel of the blessed God? But if you *understand* the gospel you will be *able*, and if you *love* the gospel you will be *disposed*, to *keep the faith*, amidst all the errors and delusions which may prevail through the land. You will not only teach the pure doctrines of the gospel, but contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. You will not forget, that you are set for the defence of the gospel, and must be responsible to him whom you profess to serve, for the corruptions of Christianity which you either propagate, or do not endeavor to the utmost of your power to expose and restrain. If you preach the same gospel which Paul preached, and in the same manner, you may expect to find some who will become your enemies because you tell them the truth. But if you are faithful, you will find a sufficient shield and support in the gospel itself, which, in its final operation, will secure the interests of the universe, and

your own interests among the rest. Seek first the kingdom of God, and you have the promise of Christ, that all things necessary shall be added. Go on your way rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, which shall be fully displayed by that gospel you preach. You have nothing to fear but unfaithfulness, which alone can rob you of your future and eternal reward. Only take heed to yourself, and to your doctrines, and you shall both save yourself and them that hear you, and be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus.

This Church and Congregation are about to receive a minister, from whom they have reason to expect a faithful discharge of his duty. And if he does plainly and faithfully unfold the great scheme of salvation, they will derive great good, or great evil, from his ministry. The gospel will make impressions on their minds, which never can be erased, and which will prove a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death. Those who sit under the best preaching, are of all persons in the most hazardous situation. While the kingdom of God is brought nigh unto them from sabbath to sabbath, they must either enter in, or reject the counsel of God against themselves. But nothing can aggravate their guilt so fast, or raise it to so high a degree, as rejecting the counsel of God; because this is opposing the whole scheme of redemption, and all the designs and works of God, as well as all the good of the universe. How can those escape who neglect so great salvation? To oppose the gospel is to rush on certain and awful destruction. So says divine truth himself: "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

SERMON XII.

Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. EDWARDS WHIPPLE, to the Pastoral Care of the First Congregational Church in Charlton, January 25, 1804.

I CORINTHIANS iii, 2.

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: For hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

THE apostle Paul, in passing through Greece, came to Corinth, where he found a Jewish synagogue, and in which he preached for several sabbaths, endeavoring to convince the Jews, that Jesus was the Christ. But after they openly and violently opposed the gospel, he turned to the Gentiles, and preached among them a year and six months. During this time, he was so successful in his work, as to gather a large and flourishing church. But after he left this happy society of Christians, they fell into great animosities and contentions about the preachers and the doctrines of the gospel. To heal these difficulties, and reunite them in affection and sentiment, appears to be his principal design in this epistle. He addresses them on the subject of peace and harmony, with peculiar tenderness and pathos. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." And to convince them of the peculiar propriety of his giving them this exhortation, he afterwards observes, that he had endeavored to prevent all religious controversies among them, by preaching no other than the most plain and profit-

able doctrines of the gospel. "I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Truth is the same to the mind, that food is to the body. Food nourishes and strengthens the body; and truth nourishes and strengthens the mind. There is a propriety, therefore, in the apostle's making use of milk and meat, which are different species of food, as metaphors to represent different sorts of truth, which he preached at different times, to those who were under different circumstances. By his feeding the Corinthians with *milk* instead of *meat*, we are to understand, that he taught them such doctrines as were best adapted to their peculiar character and condition, instead of others, which he might have taught them, but which they were then unable to receive and improve to their spiritual benefit. This is the plain and obvious sense of the text; which naturally leads us on the present occasion, to inquire,

I. What doctrines the apostle did preach to the Corinthians.

II. Why he calls the doctrines which he preached to the Corinthians milk.

III. Why he preached these, rather than any other doctrines, to that people.

1. Let us inquire what doctrines the apostle did preach to the Corinthians.

In teaching any art or science, it is necessary to begin with its most essential and fundamental principles. The same mode of instruction seems proper in preaching the gospel to those who never heard it. And since this was the case with the Corinthians, we may justly suppose, that the apostle would adapt his preaching to their peculiar state; and, in the first place, teach them the nature and design of the gospel, which would ne-

cessarily lead him to unfold the great and leading doctrines of Christianity. This supposition we find confirmed by his own declarations. "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you *the testimony of God*. For I determined to know nothing among you *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*." And in another place he says, "according to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master-builder *I have laid the foundation*." These passages afford a strong presumptive evidence, that the apostle taught the most essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel to the Corinthians. But we shall find more ample evidence of this, if we now examine the contents of his two Epistles to that people.

The moral depravity of human nature lies at the foundation of the gospel. If all men were not involved in moral corruption and guilt, they would not need that salvation, which the gospel reveals and offers. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The apostle could not preach the gospel intelligibly to the Corinthians, without teaching them the doctrine of moral depravity. Accordingly we find him bringing this doctrine into view in order to illustrate the redeeming love of Christ. These are his words: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, *then were all dead*." He means dead in trespasses and sins, which is complete moral depravity. And in the chapter preceding the text, he describes the entire depravity of the heart, by its leading influence upon the understanding. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." These are plain instances of the apostle's

teaching the Corinthians the total depravity of human nature.

This sentiment is intimately connected with that of the renovation of the heart, by the special influence of the divine Spirit. For if natural men are entirely destitute of holiness and wholly under the dominion of sin, then their hearts must be renewed before they can become heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Our Savior says, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" The reason he assigns is, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" The necessity of regeneration arises entirely from the total corruption of the human heart. The apostle therefore, having taught the Corinthians the doctrine of total depravity, equally taught them the doctrine of regeneration by the special operation of the Deity. "God, says he, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness *hath shined in our hearts*, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He exhibits the same sentiment in another form. "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is *God*." By this expression he meant to teach the Corinthians that they could not be prepared for heaven, unless they were formed into the divine image, by the special operation of the divine Spirit.

The immediate effect of regeneration is pure, disinterested love. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The Spirit in his special operation upon the heart, conforms it to the moral image of God. God is love. Regeneration consists in shedding abroad the love of God in the heart which was before entirely destitute of true benevolence. This holy love, which is the fruit of the Spirit, is the essence of all true religion. So the apostle taught the Corinthians, in the most plain and pointed language. "Though I speak

with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I have become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And in farther describing the peculiar qualities of this holy love, he says, "*charity seeketh not her own.*" By this it appears, that he inculcated upon the Corinthians the doctrine of *disinterested* benevolence, as essentially different from every selfish affection, and as absolutely necessary to the performance of any thing, that is truly acceptable in the sight of God.

Saving faith naturally flows from love. We read "faith worketh by love, and with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Love to God produces love to Christ, and love to Christ is the very essence of that faith, which is connected with eternal life. Accordingly the apostle exhorted the Corinthians not only to become reconciled to God, but also immediately to embrace Jesus Christ, as the only ground of pardon and salvation. He speaks as though it were his principal object in preaching, to urge the immediate duty of saving faith. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for

us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in him*. We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." The grace of God here as in many other places, means the gospel, which the apostle tenderly and solemnly urges the Corinthians immediately to embrace. For he closes his exhortation with these words. "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation."

After men have become reconciled to God, and received Christ by faith, they still need the spirit of promise to carry on a work of sanctification in their hearts. Sanctification is the same as continued regeneration, and the same divine influence, which at first reconciles the heart to God, is constantly necessary to keep it in a state of reconciliation. This sentiment the apostle taught the believers at Corinth. "We all *with open face* beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord *are changed into the same image*, from glory to glory, *even as by the Spirit of the Lord*," He does, indeed, represent believers as well as unbelievers as constantly dependent upon the divine agency, in all their internal exercises as well as external actions. "Not that we are *sufficient* of ourselves to *think* any thing *as of ourselves*; but *our sufficiency is of God*." He could not have asserted the doctrine of divine agency in human actions in plainer or stronger terms.

The doctrine of the final perseverance of saints is an infallible consequence of the divine agency in their sanctification. If it be true, that God does begin and carry on a work of grace in the hearts of all true believers, then they will certainly endure unto the end, and secure the salvation of their souls. Upon this ground, the apostle assures the Corinthian believers that they should eventually reach the kingdom of heaven. He

says, "now he who *establisheth* us with you in Christ, *is* God: who hath also *sealed* us, and given the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts." He afterwards observes to the same persons, "*we know*, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, *we have* a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We are confident therefore, and willing rather to be *absent from the body*, and to be *present with the Lord*." Here it is evident, that the apostle taught the Corinthians, that all real saints shall persevere in holiness, and finally enjoy eternal life.

As God begins and carries on a good work in whom he pleases; so divine sovereignty is an essential doctrine of the gospel. This, therefore, is another sentiment, which the apostle plainly preached to the Corinthians. He says in a few verses below the text, 'I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God gave the increase*. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but *God that giveth the increase*." In the second Epistle, he sets the amiable and awful sovereignty of God in a more striking light. "Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish." These expressions put it beyond a doubt, that the apostle preached the doctrine of divine sovereignty in its full latitude, and taught the Corinthians to believe, that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and causes whom he will to perish.

The doctrine of personal election is a principal branch of divine sovereignty, which the apostle also taught the saints at Corinth. In his first Epistle he addresses them as the chosen vessels of mercy, "ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men

after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but *God hath chosen* the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and *God hath chosen* the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The apostle considered the doctrine of election, as having a happy tendency, to give mankind high and becoming thoughts of God, and low and debasing thoughts of themselves; and therefore did not omit such a useful and practical subject in the course of his preaching. The doctrine of election naturally carries our thoughts back to the early days of eternity, when the glorious scheme of the gospel was concerted and adopted by the ever blessed Trinity. This plainly revealed, though in some respects profoundly mysterious doctrine, the apostle abundantly taught the Corinthians. He brings it into view at the beginning and end of both his Epistles; but especially in his benediction at the close of the last. "The grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Ghost* be with you all." In this short and comprehensive sentence, the divinity, personality and equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are clearly and distinctly exhibited, and the practical use and importance of this great truth plainly taught. Thus we find from the two letters, which the apostle wrote to the Corinthians, that he publicly and plainly taught them the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of disinterested love, the doctrine of saving faith, the doctrine of divine agency in human actions, the doctrine of the final perseverance of saints, the doctrine of divine sovereignty in the conversion of sinners, the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, and the doctrine of three equally divine persons in the only living and true God.

Let us now inquire,

II. Why he called these doctrines milk.

“I have fed you with *milk*, and not with *meat*.” This certainly refers to the doctrines, which he had preached to the Corinthians, and which have been ascertained under the preceding particular. And we find in his Epistle to the Hebrews, that he used the same metaphor of milk, to represent those peculiar and essential doctrines of the gospel. “When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be *the first principles* of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of *milk*, and not of *strong meat*. For every one that useth *milk* is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But *strong meat* belongeth to them of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” This passage throws light upon the metaphor in the text, and leads us to observe,

1. The doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians, may properly be called milk, because they are easy to be understood.

Milk is much easier to digest than meat. Meat is for men, but milk is for babes. Those of the weakest constitution can bear this light and easy food. So the first principles of the oracles of God are plain and level to the lowest capacity. It requires attention, rather than deep penetration, to understand the doctrines of grace, which naturally arise from the mutual relation between God and his sinful creatures. Let men only realize, that they are the creatures of God, that they have broken his laws, that they have incurred his displeasure, and that they are in his hands, as the clay is in the hands of the potter, and these very doctrines, which the apostle calls milk, will naturally occur to

their minds, and be easily understood. It is very easy for any sinners, when they are constrained to look into their own hearts, to understand the doctrine of total depravity; the necessity of regeneration, the sovereignty of God in having mercy on whom he will have mercy, and all the other doctrines of the gospel, which are inseparably connected with these. Even a youth, who has spent his whole time in vanity, as soon as he falls under conviction, feels that he is an enemy to God, that he deserves to perish, that God has a right to save or destroy him, and that he can have no ground of hope but in the doctrine of election which assures him, that God can and will save some. There are no truths in the Bible more level to every capacity, than the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, which were designed to give saving knowledge to the weakest, meanest, and vilest of mankind. Hence the apostle says to the Corinthians in the beginning of this first Epistle, "It pleased God *by the foolishness of preaching* to save them that believe." And among that number he says, "there were not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble." The common people heard and understood Christ's preaching, while the wise and learned called his doctrines hard sayings. The fundamental doctrines of the gospel approve themselves to the understanding and conscience of every person who will attend to them. Paul tells the Corinthians to whom he preached these doctrines, that he had, "by the manifestation of the truth commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The assembly of divines, who composed the shorter catechism, were men of superior knowledge and wisdom, and they supposed that the same doctrines, which Paul preached to the Corinthians, were proper to be taught to children and youth, as well as to others of riper years. and better

capacities. Indeed, it appears from the experience of ages that all who are capable of knowing their guilty and perishing condition by nature, are equally capable of understanding the doctrines which Christ and the apostles preached. They are as easy to be understood by the weakest mind, as milk is to be digested by the weakest stomach.

2. The apostle might properly call the doctrines which he preached to the Corinthians milk, because they are highly pleasing to the pious heart.

Milk is not only easy to the stomach, but agreeable to the palate. The scripture represents milk and honey as the richest dainties in nature. What is sweeter than honey, or what is more grateful to the taste than milk? So the doctrines of grace are delicious to those, "who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good." The apostle Peter represents all Christians, "as new-born babes who desire the sincere milk of the word." The sincere believers at Corinth admired the doctrines of grace, and were highly pleased with the apostle for preaching such precious truths, of which he reminds them in his second Epistle. "*We write none other things unto you than what you read and acknowledge, and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end, as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" All true saints have drunk into one spirit, and agree in relishing the pure doctrines of grace. They are never better pleased, than while they hear the doctrines of total depravity, special grace, divine sovereignty, and disinterested love, clearly explained and illustrated. They are often so gratified under the preaching of these distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, that they naturally express their high satisfaction in the language of the text, and emphatically say, "we have been fed."

3. The doctrines, which Paul preached to the Corinthians, may be properly called milk, because they are nourishing as well as pleasing to the children of God.

It is the nature of milk to promote the health and growth of the human body; and it is equally the nature of divine truth to improve the heart as well as the understanding of true believers. The converts at Corinth made swift advances in knowledge and holiness, while they were fed and nourished by the doctrines according to godliness. This the apostle saw with pleasure, and gratefully acknowledged in his first Epistle. "I thank God always on your behalf, for the grace of God, which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are *enriched* by him, in *utterance* and in *all knowledge*, so that ye come behind in *no gift*." The doctrines of grace, which are the first principles of Christianity, never fail to nourish, and strengthen, and purify the hearts of real Christians. While they are fed by such precious truths, they will rapidly grow in love, in faith, in joy, and in every holy affection. But if they are denied this food, and fed only with dry, speculative, moral truths, they will languish and decline in their Christian course. Nothing can keep alive holy affections in their hearts but the exhibition of holy objects. The doctrines which most fully lay open the human heart, and most clearly display the divine character and designs, are the best suited to promote their edification and comfort. While they sit under such pure, evangelical preaching, they will taste the good word of God. feel the powers of the world to come, realize the glorious scenes of eternity, and find themselves daily preparing for that full blaze of light, which will break in upon their minds when they shall be absent from the body, and

present with the Lord. These observations may suffice to illustrate the propriety of the metaphor in the text, and to justify the apostle in saying, that he had fed the Corinthians with milk, in preaching nothing but the most plain, the most agreeable, and the most edifying doctrines of the gospel.

We come now to the last thing proposed,

III. To inquire why the apostle preached such plain and practical doctrines to the Corinthians rather than any others.

To this he gives a general answer in the text. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." Here he declares, that he meant to adapt his preaching to the peculiar state of the Corinthians. And if we consider their internal and external state, we shall easily perceive, that both required the apostle to insist entirely upon the plain and primary doctrines of the gospel.

1. Their internal state required such plain preaching. They were Gentiles, who had never been favored with the knowledge of divine revelation. And though they had become celebrated for human learning, and had made great improvements in the arts and sciences, yet they were totally ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel. The apostle told them, that it was the design of preaching to teach them that which they had never discovered by the bare light of nature. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The minds of the Corinthians being in such a state of total darkness and ignorance, respecting God and divine things, it became the apostle to teach them, step by step, the primary truths of the gospel. He could not preach

Jesus Christ and him crucified clearly and intelligibly to them, without unfolding the great scheme of redemption, which originated in the eternal purpose of God to sanctify and save sinners, through the sufferings and death of the Son his love. So that he was under a necessity of feeding them with milk, and not with meat, or of teaching them only the plain and fundamental principles of Christianity, which their minds were able to bear.

2. Their external as well as internal state required the same mode of preaching. Corinth was a place of learning and of learned men, who studied vain philosophy, and employed it as a weapon to destroy Christianity. The heathen philosophers were fond of maintaining their own religious opinions, in opposition to the pure truths of the gospel, and endeavored to persuade the followers of Christ to renounce their new religion, and return back to their former superstition and delusions. Nor were they altogether unsuccessful in their attempts to corrupt the professors of Christianity; for we are told, that they did in fact overthrow the faith of some. Sensible of the dangerous situation of the believers at Corinth, the apostle labored to establish them in the Christian faith, and effectually guard them against those who lay in wait to deceive. On this account, he found it necessary to give them line upon line, and precept upon precept, and continually inculcate the most essential and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. These afford the strongest *internal* evidence of the truth and divinity of divine revelation, and carry greater conviction to the minds of common Christians than prophecies or miracles, or any other mere *external* proofs of Christianity. By declaring the whole counsel of God, and clearly unfolding the nature, design, and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, the apostle

took the best method to guard the believers at Corinth against the most plausible and subtle arguments of infidels. Those unlearned Christians were able to understand the *internal* evidences of Christianity, but they had neither learning nor abilities, to compare sacred and profane history, and to discern the connexion between divine predictions and the events, by which they were visibly fulfilled. Thus it appears, that both the internal and external state of the Corinthians required the apostle to preach only such plain and important doctrines, as were the best suited to establish them in the faith, and guard them against the enemies of the gospel.

It is now time to improve and apply the subject.

1. If the metaphor of *milk* has been properly explained, then we may easily conjecture what is to be understood by the metaphor of *meat*. If by *milk* the apostle means the more plain and important doctrines of the gospel, it seems to be natural to suppose, that by *meat* he means some other sentiments less plain, and less necessary to be known by common Christians. He was thoroughly acquainted with the higher as well as lower branches of Christianity. He was able to teach the dark and difficult, as well as the plain and easy doctrines of divine revelation. And though he has not told us in the text, nor any where else, what were the dark and difficult points of doctrine, which he represents under the metaphor of *meat*, and which he did not think proper to preach to the people of Corinth; yet we may safely conclude, that they were such as respected the following subjects.

First, the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation.

These he well understood, as appears by his Epistle to the Hebrews, in which he clearly explains their

true meaning and design. But we can hardly suppose, that he would teach the men of Corinth these dark things, because they were not prepared to understand them. They had not enjoyed the Old Testament, which had a peculiar relation to the Jews, with whose customs, and manners, and modes of religion, they had been very little acquainted, and to which they were no longer required to conform.

The apostle, therefore, might very properly pass over the Mosaic rites and ceremonies in his preaching to the Corinthians.

So he might, secondly, the types and predictions, in the Old Testament, respecting the character and coming of the promised Messiah. It would have been very difficult to explain these things intelligibly to a people, who were destitute of the writings of Moses and the prophets. Nor was it very necessary, seeing Christ had actually come in the flesh, had suffered and died and rose from the dead, and had introduced the gospel dispensation. It is, however, easy to perceive, that the types and prophecies concerning Christ, which the Jews in general did not understand, would have been strong meat to the Gentiles, who had never enjoyed their religious advantages. These subjects therefore, were among the number of those, which the Corinthians could not bear, and which the apostle would not preach to such young converts to Christianity.

And to these may be added, thirdly, the predictions in the New Testament, concerning the great apostasy in the Christian church, the rise and fall of the man of sin, the calling in of the Jews, the spread of the gospel in the millennium, and the state of things from that day to the end of the world. We know the apostle sometimes wrote and preached upon these

high points to which St. Peter alludes in his second Epistle. "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you. As also in his Epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things *hard* to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also, the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." We will not now affirm, that the subjects, which we have mentioned, were the only subjects which the apostle calls *strong meat*; but we will presume to say, that all the subjects which we have mentioned are more difficult to explain and comprehend, than the doctrines which he taught the Corinthians, and which he calls *milk*.

2. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians have been greatly misrepresented. He represents them as *milk*, but others represent them as *meat*. He represents them as easy to be understood; but others represent them as dark and mysterious. He represents them as agreeable to the pious heart; but others represent them as odious and detestable to every friend of piety and virtue. He represents them as enlightening and edifying to all true believers; but others represent them as discouraging and perplexing to the followers of Christ. There is reason to believe, that these misrepresentations of the apostle's preaching have done a great deal of mischief in the Christian world. How many ministers have quoted his own words against himself, and employed the metaphors in the text to justify themselves, not only in neglecting to preach the doctrines, which he preached to the Corinthians, but in opposing and stigmatizing those doctrines? And how many people have been strongly prejudiced against the doctrines which Paul preached to

the Corinthians, by hearing them represented, by their public teachers, as meat, as strong meat too strong for any Christians in the world to bear? Can these dangerous misrepresentations be altogether owing to ignorance? Has it not been made to appear, that Paul did preach to the Corinthians the doctrine of total depravity, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of disinterested love, the doctrine of divine agency in human actions, the doctrine of personal election to eternal life, and the doctrine of the sacred Trinity. And has it not been made to appear, that Paul called these very doctrines *milk*, and not *strong meat*? What ground is there, then to suppose that his words in the text are so generally misrepresented, through a misapprehension of their plain and obvious meaning? There is too much reason to fear, that many who have really understood, have designedly misrepresented the peculiar and important doctrines of the gospel, which Paul preached to the Corinthians, by calling them *meat* instead of *milk*. It is extremely natural for those who hate the pure doctrines of Christianity, either to misunderstand them, or misrepresent them; but both the deceivers and deceived in this case, are highly criminal in the sight of God, and unless they receive and obey the truth, they must certainly perish.

3. This subject affords an infallible criterion, by which to determine who are the *plainest* preachers in point of sentiment. Paul tells us, that he fed the Corinthians with milk, and not with meat, while he preached the most essential and important doctrines of Christianity. Those therefore, who preach the same doctrines which Paul preached and called milk, are in reality the plainest preachers, and the easiest to be understood by every class of hearers. They are easier to be understood than those, who preach upon the

historical parts of scripture. They are easier to be understood than those, who preach upon the *prophetic* parts of scripture. They are easier to be understood than those, who preach upon the *biographical* parts of scripture. They are easier to be understood than those, who preach upon the *typical* parts of scripture. And they are much easier to be understood than those, who deliver sentiments in direct opposition to the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians. There have always been some ever since the days of the apostle, who have preached against the doctrines, which he preached. Some have preached against one, some against another, and some against every doctrine which he preached. And it appears from the most authentic history of the church, that the preachers of this description were the first to introduce metaphysics and vain philosophy into the pulpit. The Socinians, Arians, Pelagians, and other sectaries, who early opposed the pure and simple doctrines, which Christ and the apostles taught, were obliged to have recourse to logical, metaphysical, and philosophical subtleties, in their own defence. And it is still the case, that those who preach against the doctrine of the trinity, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of divine sovereignty, the doctrine of divine agency, and the doctrine of total depravity, are constrained either to renounce reasoning altogether, or else to reason in the most intricate, obscure, unintelligible manner. There never was, and there never can be any false scheme of religion so easy to explain and understand, as that true scheme of religion which Paul taught the Corinthians. Those, therefore, who preach the very same doctrines which Paul preached, must be, of all others, the plainest preachers in point of sentiment. They preach agreeably to both scripture and reason, while

all others have to oppose both scripture and reason, which must necessarily involve them in darkness and confusion. Upon this point we may properly appeal to common observation and experience. Go into the congregations, who stately hear those, who teach doctrines different from, if not opposite to the doctrines, which Paul preached, and will you find, that such congregations better understand their minister's sentiments, or are better acquainted with any scheme of religion, than those congregations, who sit under ministers, who preach the same doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians? Hearers are proper judges of plain preachers. and let the opinion of hearers be taken upon this point, and undoubtedly nine in ten will confidently say, that they could never understand any preachers so easily and fully, as those who preached the very same doctrines, which Paul preached and called *milk*. These doctrines always were and always will be plain and intelligible to all classes of mankind; and it is only the objections, which are made to these plain and fundamental principles of Christianity, that are really dark and hard to be understood.

4. If the foregoing observations are just, then there is no reason to think, that any people are unable to bear the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians. Many preachers seem to imagine, that their people are not able to bear the doctrine of total depravity, or the doctrine of regeneration, or the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of divine agency, or the doctrine of the Trinity; and for this reason, suppose it is a point of prudence to pass over these subjects in silence, in their public discourses. But this is a great mistake. There is not a congregation in the world, who are unable to bear the doctrines which Paul preached to the Corinthians. Any people who are

able to bear any preaching, are able to bear the pure, simple, essential doctrines of the gospel. These are milk and not strong meat. These are the plainest doctrines, which can be preached or heard. Though Paul knew that the Corinthians were not able to bear some divine truths, yet he knew that they were able to bear the doctrines, which he actually preached. And it is absurd to suppose, that there are any congregations at this day, who are not able to bear the same truths, which the Corinthians were able to bear, who had enjoyed no other than the dim light of nature. The truth is, that people have always been *unwilling*, but not *unable* to bear the disagreeable truths of the gospel. The plainest truths are the most disagreeable to the depraved heart; and this is the real reason, why people complain, that they cannot understand them. Their inability to bear the peculiar doctrines of Christ, lies in their *heart*, and *not in their understanding*. So Christ himself told his hearers, who complained of his hard sayings. "Why do ye not *understand my speech*. Even because ye cannot *hear my word*." Again he demanded, "if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." The people at this day are just as *able*, and just as *unwilling* to bear the plain and reproofing doctrines of the gospel, as they were in Christ's and the apostle's day. There is no conceivable reason, therefore, why the ministers of the gospel should not preach precisely the same doctrines to every people, at this day, which Christ and the apostles preached in their day. But,

5. It appears from what has been said, that now is a proper time for ministers to feed their people with milk, and not with meat. Our churches and congregations in general are in a situation very similar to

that of the Corinthians. Though they are increasing rapidly in human knowledge, yet they are declining fast in the knowledge of divine things, and need to be taught again, and again, the first principles of the oracles of God. It is a gross mistake, that people are generally well indoctrinated in religious sentiments. The truth is, notwithstanding all their religious advantages, they are generally very ignorant of the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. This may be partly owing to the negligence of private and public instructors, but perhaps more to the dissipation and licentiousness, which is every where spreading and prevailing. How many are there in all our congregations, who know nothing but the name of the Christian religion, and need to be taught the plainest doctrines of it? Besides, the land is full of deceivers, who are zealously engaged to subvert every principle of morality and religion, and to propagate Atheism, Deism, and every species of infidelity. It is the age of blind reason and vain philosophy. These engines are industriously employed to corrupt the sentiments and hearts of old and young, and to lead them into strong and fatal delusions. It highly concerns the ministers of Christ, at this day, to make a bold and firm stand against ignorance, infidelity, and vice. And the peculiar weapons of their warfare, are the pure, primary, and essential doctrines of the gospel. These weapons have been mighty to destroy the strong holds, of the enemies of truth. And there is abundant reason to believe, that if the preachers of the gospel would unitedly employ these weapons in defence of it, they would effectually check the rapid progress of destructive errors, and revive the sinking cause of Christ. It is impossible for any man in the world to *understand* the gospel, and yet disbelieve it. If ministers, therefore,

would universally preach so, as to make their people really understand the gospel, there would not be a single person who could become an infidel. It now depends, under God, upon ministers to save their people from the errors and destruction of this untoward generation, by feeding them with milk, and not with meat.

May these thoughts sink deeply into his heart, who is about to take the charge of the flock of Christ in this place.

DEAR SIR,

If you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and have been fed with the sincere milk of the word, you will feed your people with knowledge and understanding. You will love to preach those precious truths to others, which you have found pleasing and profitable to yourself. You will believe, that your people are able to bear the doctrines, which are the best adapted to awaken and convince sinners, and to quicken, comfort, and edify saints. You will believe, that your people ought to be satisfied if you feed them with the same doctrine with which the apostle fed the Corinthians. You will believe, that if they do complain of such doctrines, you ought to regard God rather than man, and preach the truth, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is true, you will feel the propriety and importance of *prudence* in preaching, but your prudence will consist, not in concealing the doctrines of grace, but in holding them up in the clearest, strongest, and most consistent light. The gospel carries its own evidence with it, and if you represent its peculiar doctrines in their proper order, harmony, and connexion,

they will approve themselves to every man's conscience. Though all men naturally hate the doctrines of the cross, yet their reason and conscience are always on the side of divine truth. Address these powers and faculties of the soul, before you attempt to move the passions. Rightly divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion in due season. Always aim to instruct your people upon every subject which you handle in public. But if you would instruct them, you must instruct yourself. Give yourself to reading, meditation, and prayer. Study the Bible and your own heart, and you will be able, through the whole course of your ministry, to bring forth out of your treasury things new as well as old. In a word, remember, that you watch for souls as one who must give account, and if you are only faithful to God and to your people, you will be a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

Brethren and friends of this church and congregation, permit me to ask you on this solemn and interesting occasion, whether you are as well united in the gospel, as you are in the man whom you have called to preach it? Do you desire to be fed with the sincere milk of the word? Are you willing to receive the same precious truths, which the primitive Christians gladly received from the lips of the apostle? If these are your desires and feelings, there is a promising prospect before you. Your pastor will preach with pleasure, and you will hear with no less pleasure and delight. The more he unfolds the gospel, the better you will be pleased with his preaching, and instead of becoming his enemies, because he tells you the truth, you will sincerely and ardently love him for his work sake.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” If you only receive the truth in love, your peace and harmony will increase, and the union between you and your pastor will strengthen, and you will be happily preparing to be each other’s joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

Delivered June 19, 1805, at the Ordination of the Rev. STEPHEN CHAPIN, to the Pastoral Care of the Church and People in Hillsborough.

ACTS XX, 21.

Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

AS the apostle Paul was returning from Macedonia to Jerusalem, he came to Miletus, from whence he sent and called the elders of the church of Ephesus. When they had come together, he delivered a discourse, which was directly calculated to assist and animate them in the work of the gospel ministry. And among other things, he called their attention to *his manner of preaching*, while he formerly resided among them. "Ye know, says he, how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As these words were originally designed to administer instruction to the ministers of Christ, they naturally lead us, on the present occasion, to consider how the apostle Paul preached the gospel, and the propriety of his mode of preaching.

I. Let us consider how the apostle Paul preached the gospel. Though he sometimes preached to the Jews and sometimes to the Gentiles, and though he sometimes preached on one subject and sometimes on another; yet, amidst all this variety, there was a certain uniformity in his preaching, which deserves particular notice.

1. He always made a point of *explaining* the gospel. To preach is to instruct, and to instruct on any subject, it is generally if not always necessary to explain it. Much of the force and perspicuity of preaching consists in explaining the gospel, and making men see the real design of God, in the method he has taken to save sinful and perishing creatures. Here Jews and Gentiles, all men of all descriptions, stand in peculiar need of instruction. The apostle, therefore, determined to know nothing in his preaching save Jesus Christ and him crucified. He knew that it would be preposterous to call upon men to embrace the gospel before he had explained it to them in a clear and intelligible manner. And it appears from the whole history of his ministerial labors, that he excelled all the other apostles, in unfolding the meaning, the harmony, and the connexion of the first principles of Christianity. Just as he was about to take his final leave of those whom he addressed in the text, he called upon them to bear testimony to his fidelity in explaining to them the gospel of divine grace. "And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." To declare all the counsel of God is to explain the great plan of redemption, which was concerted before the foundation of the world, and which comprises all the designs and operations of the Deity. Hence the apostle viewed it a privilege as well as a duty, to explain the gospel to all his hearers. In the third chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians he says, "unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, *is this grace given*, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearch-

able riches of Christ, and to make all men see, what is the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." By this declaration it appears, that the apostle meant to explain the gospel so plainly and fully, that all his hearers might see God, and Christ, and angels, and saints, and sinners, and all created objects, in that relation and connexion, which they bear to each other in the work of redemption. Whether he preached to the Jews or to the Gentiles, to the learned or to the unlearned, he made it a primary object in his public discourses, to unfold the nature, design, and final consequences of the gospel, without the least ambiguity or reserve.

2. After he had explained the gospel to his hearers, he next taught them what it was to embrace it. "He testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance and faith both flow from pure, disinterested love, but are exercised towards different objects. In repentance, the sinner fixes his eye and his heart upon God, whose character he has hated, whose law he has broken, and whose displeasure he has incurred. He loathes and abhors himself for all his transgressions, accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and cordially approves of that justice which condemns him. In faith, the sinner fixes his eye and his heart upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and loves him for loving righteousness and hating iniquity, for condemning sin in the flesh, and for doing that, which renders it consistent with all the perfections of God, to

pardon and save the penitent. This saving faith naturally follows repentance, but can never go before it; because love to Christ necessarily pre-supposes self-abasement and self-abhorrence for sin. Accordingly the apostle, after the example of Christ, places repentance before faith. This is the natural order of these two gracious affections, and they are always exercised in this order, by all who cordially embrace the gospel. And since he knew, that none could derive any saving benefit from the gospel without complying with the terms of life; he did for this reason describe those gracious exercises of heart, which are the essence of repentance and faith, and which are absolutely necessary to obtain pardon and acceptance with God, through the atonement of Christ.

3. The apostle made it his universal practice in preaching, not only to explain the gospel to his hearers, and teach them what it was to comply with it, but urged them to repent and believe immediately. He says in the text, that "he testified both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." As soon as he had taught sinners the nature, design, and terms of the gospel he exhorted them to embrace it without the least delay. He concluded his discourse to the stupid and ignorant Athenians, with a solemn exhortation to repentance. He told them, that God had winked at their former ignorance, but now commanded them to repent immediately. To the Corinthians he said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." He held the same imperative language to the Ephesians.

In addressing the sinner he said, "awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give

thee light." The apostle Paul not only instructed, but exhorted his hearers. He addressed not only the understandings, but the consciences of sinners. He always meant to fasten upon their minds a sense of their immediate obligation to renounce their enmity to God, and become reconciled to him upon the terms of the gospel. Though he very well knew the moral weakness and impotence of sinners, arising from the native depravity of their hearts, yet he solemnly testified, that it was their immediate and indispensable duty to exercise repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This was his constant, uniform practice in preaching the gospel to those, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

Let us now consider,

II. The propriety of the apostle's urging sinners to embrace the gospel immediately. He undoubtedly saw the propriety of this mode of preaching; and perhaps, we shall all see the propriety of it, if we candidly and impartially attend to what may be offered in favor of his exhorting the impenitent and unbelieving to an immediate compliance with the gospel.

1. There was a propriety in the apostle's mode of preaching, because sinners are capable of embracing the gospel as soon as they understand it. They possess all the powers and faculties, which are necessary to constitute them free, moral agents. They are capable of knowing God and hating him; and of knowing Christ and hating him. Hence says our Savior to the unbelieving Jews, "ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Though the moral depravity of sinners has weakened their intellectual powers; yet it has by no means destroyed them. All their moral corruption lies in the heart, and consists in loving themselves supremely; and though this selfishness dis-

poses them to say unto God, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" yet when their attention is awakened, they are capable of seeing the perfections of God displayed in his works, and of understanding his will revealed in his word. They have therefore, precisely the same natural capacity to *embrace* the gospel as to *understand* it. And upon this ground, the apostle did, with great propriety, "testify both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Though Jews and Gentiles were all under sin, yet they were all capable of loving God and believing in Christ, as soon as the apostle had explained the gospel, and plainly taught them the terms of salvation. At the same moment, that he conveyed the true knowledge of the gospel to their understanding, they felt a conviction in their own minds of the propriety of his exhorting them to believe it immediately. This warranted him to say, that "by manifestation of the truth, he had commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The bare knowledge of truth always creates an immediate obligation to feel and act agreeably to it. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." All men act upon this principle in their common conduct. The legislator first instructs, and then commands the subject. The officer first instructs, and then commands the soldier. The parent first instructs, and then commands the child. The master first instructs, and then commands the servant. After any person has instructed another in duty, there is a propriety in his exhorting him to an immediate compliance. This holds in regard to religious instruction, as well as to any other. There was, therefore, a plain propriety in the apostle's calling

upon all to whom he preached the truth, to receive it in love immediately.

2. Paul preached agreeably to the directions which Christ had, from time to time, given to his ministers. Mark tells us, that when Christ called the twelve apostles, and sent them forth by two and two, to preach the gospel, he said unto them, "in what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent." By this commission Christ authorized the twelve apostles to call upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel, the very *first time* they heard it, upon pain of their future and aggravated destruction. Soon after this, Christ gave a commission, of precisely the same import, to seventy more, whom he sent forth to preach the gospel in his name. And just before his ascension to heaven, he gave a general commission to his apostles and to all their successors in the gospel ministry to the end of time, in these memorable words: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." These repeated directions of the great head of the church laid the apostle under indispensable obligation to testify both to the Jews and Gentiles, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. It was a part of his ministerial duty, to urge sinners to give an immediate and cordial reception to the gospel which he preached by divine authority. He would have been unfaithful,

to Christ and to the souls of men, if he had neglected to warn sinners to flee immediately from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. He had no warrant from Christ, to preach the gospel without inculcating the immediate duty of repentance and faith. There is no more room, therefore, to call in question the propriety of his mode of preaching, than to call in question the propriety of his obeying that divine authority, by which he preached.

3. The example of all the sacred instructors, who went before the apostle Paul, illustrates and confirms the propriety of his mode of preaching. He addressed sinners in the same manner in which the ancient prophets addressed them. They called upon the disobedient and rebellious, to repent and return to God immediately. Let us attentively consider their mode of addressing sinners.

Isaiah the evangelical prophet having, in the first chapter of his prophecy, described the ingratitude and stupidity of the openly vicious and profligate, exhorts them to immediate repentance and reformation. "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well." Similar to this is his exhortation in the fifty fifth chapter. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The prophet Jeremiah was commanded to address the backsliders in Israel in this pointed language, "Return, ye backsliding children, saith the Lord. Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart." Here sinners are solemnly exhorted to *change their hearts*, and return to God immediately.

The prophet Ezekiel exhorted those who were pining away in their iniquity to *change their hearts* as well as *their lives*, as the only way to escape eternal death. "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and *make you a new heart and a new spirit*: for why will ye die, O house of Israel."

The prophet Joel called upon sinners in a time of danger and distress, "to turn unto the Lord with *all their hearts*, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and to *rend their hearts* and not *their garments*."

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and the greatest of all the prophets, urged sinners to repent immediately and believe in him, who was to come. We read, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, *repent ye*: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And when he saw many of the pharisees and sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for *repentance*."

Our Savior, who soon succeeded his forerunner as a preacher, exhorted sinners, as one having authority, to repent and believe the gospel immediately. This appears from the account which Mark gives of his public ministry. "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying; the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent ye, and believe the gospel*." This was his usual mode of addressing sinners in his public and private discourses. As "he was walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother,

casting a net into the sea. And he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." He required all whom he called to follow him, to obey his call without the least delay. When one begged time to go and bury his father, he gave him this short negative answer: "Let the dead bury their dead." And when another desired leave to bid his friends farewell, he refused to grant his request. In his sermon on the mount, he exhorted sinners to change their hearts, and immediately become holy and benevolent as their father in heaven. And he severely condemned the scribes and pharisees, who taught a different doctrine. "Wo unto you! for ye pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, ye make *clean* the *outside* of the cup, and of the platter, but within are full of extortion and excess. Cleanse *first that which is within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

Such was Christ's mode of preaching, which his first apostles uniformly followed. While Peter was preaching to the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and unto the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter gave them the only proper direction in their solemn situation. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the

name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." The next public discourse, which he delivered to the people who saw him cure the lame man at the gate of the temple, he concluded with this exhortation: "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*" And when he saw Simon the sorcerer in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, he paid no regard to his moral impotence, but with great solemnity, said, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps, or rather, so that, the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. James, another apostle, followed the example and direction of Christ, in preaching the gospel to sinners, and urged them to immediate repentance, humiliation and submission. "Submit yourselves to God. Draw nigh to him, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and *purify your hearts, ye double minded.* Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

We have now said enough, and perhaps more than enough, to convince every candid mind, that the prophets, John the Baptist, Christ, and his first apostles, preached to sinners in precisely the same manner, and uniformly exhorted them to immediate repentance and reconciliation to God. The plain and natural conclusion is, that there was a perfect propriety in the apostle Paul's mode of preaching. He stands completely justified, by the voice of reason, by the best examples, and by the highest authority, in "testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

This subject now suggests some things of serious importance to those who *preach*, and to those who *hear* the gospel.

1. If there was a propriety in the apostle's mode of preaching; then all his successors in the ministry should follow his example in explaining the gospel as clearly as possible to their hearers. He did not preach merely *about* the gospel, or merely *agreeably* to the gospel, but he preached *the gospel itself*. He laid open the gospel scheme of salvation, in all its branches, from its first rise in the divine mind to its final consummation. He shunned not to declare all the counsel of God, but took every opportunity in public and private, to teach the Jews and Gentiles the essential doctrines of the gospel, in the most plain and profitable manner. He supposed, that the Jews, notwithstanding they had the oracles of God in their hands, stood in need of being instructed in the knowledge of the gospel, as well as the Gentiles, who had been destitute of divine revelation. And viewing all his hearers in this light, he meant to explain the gospel so plainly, and fully, that both the learned and unlearned might understand it. In this important part of preaching, he has set an example, which is still worthy of universal imitation. But ministers, at this day, are extremely apt to imagine, that their hearers are sufficiently acquainted with the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and, for this reason, often neglect to explain them. This is a very great defect in the present mode of preaching, and a very great departure from the apostolic practice. The deplorable consequence is, that multitudes, in a gospel land, live and die totally unacquainted with the first principles of the oracles of God. It is not enough for the professed ministers of Christ and successors of the apostle, to preach merely *about* the gospel, and *about* its leading sentiments, and only inculcate some of its *moral* duties; they ought to spend more time, and take more care, to preach *the*

pure gospel itself, and make men understand it, in its true import and extensive meaning.

2. If there was a propriety in the apostle's exhorting sinners to embrace the gospel immediately; then the gospel itself is perfectly consistent with his mode of preaching. The apostle had a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the gospel, and was able to explain all its doctrines according to truth. He could not have declared all the counsel of God, unless he had really understood the whole scheme of redemption. But he did declare all the counsel of God, and after he had explained the great and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, he urged both Jews and Gentiles to embrace them immediately with all their hearts. He saw and he made sinners see, that all the doctrines of the gospel were entirely consistent with his urging them to repent and believe immediately.

In particular, he saw that the true doctrine concerning the *extent* of Christ's atonement, was consistent with his mode of preaching. Some have supposed, that Christ did not make atonement for all mankind, but only for the elect, and, upon this ground, have supposed there is no propriety in calling upon sinners in general to embrace the gospel. It is true, this inference fairly follows from the false notion of particular redemption. But the apostle, who better understood the extent of Christ's atonement, represented it as extending to the whole human race. He taught, that "Christ tasted death for every man." He taught, that he died for all, that they who live, should not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." He taught, that he died for some, who shall finally perish. In a word, he believed and taught the universal extent of Christ's atonement for sinners; and in this view of it, he saw it to be

consistent with his calling upon all men every where to repent and believe the gospel, upon the very first offer of salvation.

He further saw, that the true doctrine concerning the *total depravity of sinners*, was consistent with his mode of preaching. Some suppose, that total depravity consists in the *mere want* of a good taste, or a good disposition, or a holy principle. And some suppose, that total depravity consists in a positive bad taste, or bad disposition, or sinful principle. But whether it consists in a want of a good principle, or in a positive bad principle, they suppose, that while sinners are really under the dominion of total depravity, there is no propriety in calling upon them to repent and believe the gospel, because they are under a *natural* inability to exercise repentance and faith. Here it must be allowed, that if the total depravity of sinners does consist either in the *want* of a good principle, or in a positive bad principle, they are really under a *natural* inability to repent and believe the gospel, and so long as this natural inability remains, there is no propriety at all, in urging them to exercise repentance, or faith, or love, or any other gracious affection. But the apostle had a very different idea of the moral depravity of sinners. He supposed it consisted neither in a want of a good principle, nor in a positive bad principle; but altogether in free, voluntary exercises of *self-love*. Accordingly he represented them as being "lovers of their own selves," and as having "a carnal mind, which was enmity against God." And in this view of the total depravity of sinners, he saw a perfect propriety, in calling upon them to hate sin, to love holiness, and heartily embrace the gospel.

Add to this he saw that the true doctrine concerning *regeneration*, was consistent with his mode of

preaching. All men form their idea of regeneration according to their idea of total depravity. Those who suppose, that total depravity consists either in a want of a good principle or in a positive bad principle, of consequence suppose, that regeneration consists in the implantation of a new holy principle, in which the subject is wholly passive. They consider regeneration as a *physical* rather than a *moral* change; and suppose, that when sinners are regenerated by the divine Spirit, they have a new holy principle given them, which is prior to, and the foundation of, all their future exercises of holiness. Hence they naturally conclude, that sinners are totally *passive* in regeneration, and that previously to their receiving a new principle of holiness, they are under the same kind of inability to exercise any holy affection, that a blind man is to see, or a deaf man to hear, or a dead man to move. And upon this ground, they deny the propriety of urging sinners to immediate repentance and faith. But though the apostle believed the total depravity of sinners, and the special influence of the Spirit in changing their hearts; yet he had no idea, that they were *passive* in regeneration, or that this saving change consisted in the implantation of a holy or gracious principle. He represented God as renewing sinners, "by shedding abroad his love in their hearts;" or "by working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He represented the "fruit of the Spirit to be *love*," not the principle of love; "to be *joy*," not the principle of joy; "to be *faith*," not the principle of faith. He represented sinners to be *active*, and not *passive*, while under the *renewing*, as well as *sanctifying* influence of the divine Spirit. Hence he clearly discerned the propriety of his urging sinners "to awake and arise from spiritual death, to put off the old man and put on the new, and immediately walk in newness of life."

Now, if neither the true doctrine concerning the *extent* of Christ's atonement, nor the true doctrine concerning *total depravity*, nor the true doctrine concerning *regeneration*, was inconsistent with the apostle's mode of preaching, can we conceive of any other true doctrine of the gospel, that is inconsistent with urging sinners to repent and believe immediately? The propriety of the apostle's mode of preaching demonstrates, that there is not a single doctrine concerning God; or concerning Christ, or concerning the divine Spirit, or concerning the human heart, that is contained in the gospel of Christ, which is inconsistent with exhorting sinners to embrace the Savior as soon as they know his character.

3. If there was a propriety in the apostle's urging sinners to embrace the gospel immediately; then all his successors in the ministry ought to follow his example in this important respect. No good reason can be assigned for departing from the apostolic mode of preaching. Paul derived his authority to preach the gospel from the commission of Christ; and his successors derive their authority to preach the gospel from the same commission. Paul preached the gospel to those who were dead in trespasses and sins; and his successors have to preach it to persons of the same character. Paul preached the gospel agreeably to the example of the prophets, of John the Baptist, of Christ, and of the other apostles who had gone before him in the ministry; and his successors are bound to follow the example of the same inspired preachers. All the ministers of the gospel, therefore, are under every possible obligation, to adhere strictly to the apostolic mode of preaching. If they search the scriptures through, if they examine human nature ever so much, and if they compare all the doctrines of the gospel together,

they cannot discover a single reason, why they should deviate from the practice of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles. All these preachers urged sinners to turn from sin to holiness, to repent of all their transgressions, and immediately become reconciled to God in the way he has appointed. And this is still the only proper way, of preaching the gospel to sinners, who are capable of understanding and embracing it, notwithstanding their total opposition to the terms of life. It is easy for ministers to preach the gospel to sinners, while they follow the apostle's mode of preaching; but as soon as they depart from it, they find themselves plunged in darkness and difficulty. They know not what to say to the enemies of God, while they neglect to urge them to become reconciled to him. They feel the absurdity of exhorting them to remain impenitent, unbelieving, and rebellious; but they must do this, either directly or indirectly, while they neglect to urge them to embrace the gospel. Hence arises the question which is so much agitated at this day among the preachers of the gospel, What must they say to sinners? what duties must they urge upon them? what directions must they give them? Few ministers find any difficulty in preaching to saints, who love God and cordially embrace the gospel; but many seem to be at a loss how to preach to sinners, who hate God and every duty which he has required in his word. But if they would adopt the apostolic mode of preaching, they would find it as easy to preach to *sinners*, as to saints. Paul knew how to preach to sinners of all characters and conditions. He "testified to them repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And let his successors in the ministry only follow his example, and all their difficulties and disputes about the proper mode of addressing sinners will entirely cease.

4. If there was a propriety in the apostle's mode of preaching, then there is no propriety in blaming ministers for conforming to it. They ought to take him for their guide in preaching, and endeavor to explain and enforce the gospel in the same manner that he did. But those who hate God are always disposed to complain of his ambassadors for calling upon them to love him. For this, they complained of the prophets. For this, they complained of John the Baptist. For this, they complained of Christ. And for this, they often complained of the apostles. Many became enemies to Paul, for calling upon them to repent and believe the gospel. Nor has the offence of the cross yet ceased. People in general are still disposed to complain of ministers for preaching exactly as the apostle preached; that is, for urging them to repent and believe the gospel immediately. They wish to be indulged in the neglect of this duty, and to be directed to something which they can do, while they retain all the depravity of their hearts. If ministers will depart from the apostolic mode of preaching, and inculcate only morality, and the mere external duties of reading and praying, seeking and striving, they will highly applaud them. But if ministers plainly testify repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and condemn all the doings of sinners previously to their turning from sin to holiness, multitudes will murmur and complain of them, and absurdly say, that they urge no duty upon sinners. Many seem to imagine, that if sinners are exhorted to no duty previously to embracing the gospel, they are exhorted to no duty at all; and, upon this ground, they complain of those preachers, who do not exhort sinners to any duty prior to repentance and faith. But they ought to consider, that by blaming such preachers, they re-

preach the prophets, Christ, and all the apostles, who exhorted sinners to nothing short of true repentance and a cordial reconciliation to God, upon the terms of the gospel. Let people only read the commission which Christ gave to his ministers, and examine the practice of all the inspired teachers, and they will find themselves fighting against the whole Bible, while they are condemning ministers for obeying the authority of Christ, and following the example of all the teachers immediately sent from God. But,

5. It clearly appears from all that has been said in this discourse, that ministers are justly to be blamed, if they neglect to follow the apostolic mode of preaching. This neglect must be owing either to a misunderstanding of the gospel, or to a desire to please man rather than Christ. Some may undoubtedly neglect to urge sinners to an immediate compliance with the gospel, because they really believe, that sinners are totally unable to receive the truth in love. But this must be owing to their misunderstanding the gospel, which they mean to preach. If they really understood the gospel as the apostle Paul understood it, they would see it to be entirely consistent with their urging sinners to embrace it immediately, upon pain of everlasting destruction. They would see the propriety of preaching to sinners, as Christ directed all his ministers to preach, in his last commission to them. And they would not hesitate to say to every sinner, after they had explained the gospel to him, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." But if any are so ignorant of the gospel, as not to see the propriety of preaching it in this manner, they are certainly to be blamed for not properly searching and understanding the scrip-

tures, which clearly reveal the gospel of the grace of God. Though their ignorance may extenuate, yet it cannot extinguish their criminality in neglecting to exhort sinners to do their first and most important duty.

But there is no excuse for those who understand the gospel, and yet neglect to urge sinners to an immediate compliance with it. They can have no other motive for their neglect, but to avoid the censure and secure the applause of their hearers. They choose to please men, rather than to be the servants of Christ. It is absolutely certain, however, that they will finally fail of obtaining their end. For God will blame them, Christ will blame them, the prophets and apostles will blame them, awakened sinners will blame them, and their own consciences will condemn them, for their criminal neglect. Their criminality will be in some proportion to the fatal tendency of their anti-scriptural and anti-apostolical mode of preaching. It is calculated to justify, stupify, and destroy sinners. The neglecting to urge sinners to repent and believe immediately, is practically saying, that they have a right in the sight of God, to remain impenitent and unbelieving. It is really justifying them in all their selfishness of heart, and total opposition to the whole scheme of redemption. And to justify them in their state of alienation from God is to stupify and harden their hearts, and make them feel safe, while they are every day exposed to be cut down in their sins, and put beyond the reach of divine mercy. There is nothing more hardening and destructive to sinners, than accommodating the gospel itself to their corrupt hearts. The preaching that does this, is far more dangerous, than no preaching all. It is directly calculated to justify, stupify, and destroy precious and immortal souls. The true de-

sign of preaching the gospel to sinners, is to make them realize their guilt, their danger, and their duty. But neglecting to urge them to immediate repentance and faith directly tends to stifle all sense of guilt, of danger, and of duty, in their minds, and make them sit down on their lees, and say in their hearts, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Thousands are at this day, undoubtedly, experiencing those stupefying effects of unfaithful preaching. How aggravated then must be the guilt of those ministers, who knowingly disobey the authority of Christ, disregard his example, and pervert his gospel to the eternal destruction of the precious souls, for whom he suffered and died on the cross.

The discourse now turns to the Pastor elect, for whom it is more especially designed.

You are, my young friend, about to enter upon the work of the gospel ministry, which will be highly interesting both to yourself, and to those committed to your pastoral charge. It will be one principal branch of your ministerial duty to preach the gospel to sinners. And you ought to esteem it a peculiar favor, that so many prophets and apostles, as well as Christ himself, have gone before you, and set you a perfect example of evangelical preaching. If you neglect to follow these infallible guides, it must be owing entirely to your seeking to please men, rather than God. To this powerful temptation you will most certainly be exposed. It is a day of deep declension, in which the true apostolic mode of preaching the gospel has become in many places, very unfashionable and very unpopular. If you preach the same truths that Paul preached, and urge them in the same manner, you may expect that they will awaken the displeasure, if not the opposition of some of your hearers. It concerns

you, to gird up the loins of your mind, and sincerely resolve to testify repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, in all your public discourses. And here, perhaps, you will keep your resolution. But you will have occasion to preach to sinners in private, and from house to house. And here your resolution will be put to a severer trial. You will be in peculiar danger of departing from the apostle's example, and of contradicting your public discourses, by directing awakened sinners to do something short of immediate repentance and faith. They will tell you, that they cannot change their own hearts, that faith is the gift of God, that it is absurd to require them to repent and believe immediately. They will anxiously desire you to lower the terms of the gospel to their impotence, and tell them what to do in order to get a new heart, and become true penitents. To answer their questions, and to silence their objections against an immediate compliance with the gospel, will require the exercise of all your wisdom and integrity. But you will always bear it in mind, that you have the Bible and their own consciences on the side of truth, and nothing to combat but their selfish and partial feelings. Be not afraid, therefore, to tell them the truth, and the whole truth, respecting the gospel and the plague of their own hearts. Show them that all their excuses for impenitence and unbelief flow from enmity to God, and reflect dishonor upon his character and all his overtures of mercy. Though this mode of treating them may make them, like the young man in the gospel, go away sorrowful; yet if ever they become reconciled to God, they will thank you for your plainness and fidelity. Never give any directions to sinners which they may comply with, and yet remain impenitent; but so preach to them in public, and so

converse with them in private, that if they understand and love your instructions, they shall certainly be saved. Be a faithful minister of Christ, and you may depend upon his promised presence and assistance, which will enable you to perform every ministerial duty, and endure every ministerial trial. Take heed unto yourself, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost may make you an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Declare unto your people all the counsel of God, with a tender and compassionate concern for their future and everlasting good; and then you may, in the close of your ministry, whether it shall be longer or shorter, call upon them to testify this consoling truth in your favor, that "you are pure from the blood of all men." May you and your people prepare for such a happy parting, that you may have a more joyful meeting beyond the grave, and be each other's joy and crown of rejoicing in the kingdom of glory. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. GAIVS CONANT, to the Pastoral Care of the Congregational Church in Paxton, February 17, 1808.

ACTS xxvi, 25.

But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

PAUL was a chosen vessel to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, who had never been favored with the light of divine revelation. He was amply furnished, by nature and grace, for this great and arduous undertaking. Being a man of argument as well as of eloquence, he was qualified to address the understandings and consciences as well as hearts, of his hearers, by displaying divine truths in the most clear and consistent light. It is said of him, in distinction from all the other apostles, that he *reasoned* in his preaching. He was often obliged to encounter the learning and sophistry of Pagan priests and philosophers, in his private discourses. But at length he was called to make a more public and studied defence of himself and of his religion, in the presence of two Roman rulers. The words I have read are a part of his able and animated apology before Festus and king Agrippa. In this defence, he first draws his own character both before and after he embraced the gospel; and then labors to make it appear, that he had acted a proper part, in embracing Christianity, which was perfectly agreeable to the dictates of his own reason, enlightened and enlarged by the writings of Moses and the prophets. After mentioning his former opposition to Christ and his followers, his surprising conversion in his way to Da-

mascus, and his commission from Christ to preach the gospel, he proceeds to say, "whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: but shewed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help from God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." Here Festus abruptly interrupted him in his plea, and said with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Paul meekly and firmly replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Though I have seen a heavenly vision, and conversed with the divine Redeemer himself; yet I am entirely free from enthusiasm or religious madness. I was once as much opposed to the religion of Christ, as you are; but I have been rationally convinced of its truth and divinity. I do not wish to display my learning or eloquence upon this subject, for I am persuaded it will bear the most thorough and critical examination of the soundest understanding. This seems to be the spirit of the apostle's declaration in the text; which naturally suggests this important inquiry: whether Christianity be a religion agreeable to reason.

To give light and satisfaction to the mind upon this subject, which lies at the foundation of all our future and eternal hopes, it is necessary to consider, in the

first place, what we are to understand by the Christian religion; in the next place, what we are to understand by reason; and in the last place, what ground there is to believe that Christianity is agreeable to reason.

I. We are to consider what we are to understand by the Christian religion.

The religion, properly called Christian, essentially differs from the religion of Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and Deists, and contains a system of divine truths, which centre in Christ who came into the world to save sinners. It comprehends not only the doctrines and duties, which are said to be taught by Christ in the course of his ministry, but all those things which are said to be taught by the inspired writers of the Old and New Testament. According to this general description of Christianity, it is easy to perceive, that there are two things which deserve a more particular consideration.

1. That Christianity is a *revealed* religion, and draws its origin from a higher source, than the bare light of nature. It is not of man, but of God. "I certify you, brethren, says the apostle, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ." In an other Epistle he asserts, "All scripture is given by *inspiration* of God." The apostle Peter also speaks the same language upon this subject. "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost*." Christianity is no human discovery, but a religion which comes to us, through the medium of divine inspiration. Though it contains some things, which were known by the light of nature; yet they were not known in their relation to Christ, and to the work of redemption. So that, strictly

speaking, Christianity is altogether a *revealed* religion. Besides,

2. This revealed religion is designed for none but sinful and guilty creatures. In this respect, it totally differs from that *natural* religion which is sufficient for innocent creatures, who have never disobeyed their maker, nor incurred his displeasure. It always has been and always will be sufficient for the holy angels, to worship God agreeably to the natural dictates of their enlarged understandings and benevolent hearts; and the same natural religion was sufficient for Adam, so long as he retained his primitive purity and innocence. But as soon as he involved himself and his posterity in sin and guilt, *natural* religion could no longer be of any avail to him, or to them. Their relation to God, and his relation to them, was materially altered. Instead of their being his dutiful servants, they were his rebellious subjects; and instead of his being their reconciled Father, he was their offended Sovereign and supreme Judge; so that upon his part, no friendly intercourse could possibly exist, through the medium of mere natural religion. After this, no other religion could recover the forfeited favor of God, but that which was *revealed*, and which was adapted to their guilty and perishing condition. And such is the nature and design of Christianity, according to the representations of scripture. Christ gives this just and comprehensive description of it. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And agreeably to this he told the world, "I am not come to call the *righteous*, but *sinner*s to repentance." Paul likewise in his defence before Agrippa declares, that Christ sent him to preach his religion, which was designed, "to open the eyes of

*sinner*s, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive *forgiveness of sins*, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." Christianity is the religion, which God has devised and revealed to men, for their recovery from their fallen and perishing state; and it is completely adapted in all its parts, to answer this most gracious and important design. Having shown what Christianity is, in distinction from all other religions, which have ever been devised or practised in the world; I proceed in the next place,

II. To consider what we are to understand by reason, in this discourse upon the reasonableness of Christianity.

Reason is one of the most common words in our language; and in common cases is well understood and properly used. But when it is employed in relation to Christianity, as it often is, there is no word more abused or misapplied. This renders it necessary, in treating upon the present subject, to explain the term with precision and accuracy. Some make a distinction between reason, and reasoning. By reason they mean the power of perceiving the agreement or disagreement of ideas in plain propositions. By reasoning, they mean the power of arranging ideas, so as to infer or demonstrate one truth from another. But, without pretending to determine, whether there be any foundation for this distinction, I proceed to say, that, by reason, in this discourse, I mean that power, faculty, or capacity of the mind, by which we are able to discern the agreement and disagreement of ideas, to form them into distinct propositions, and to draw just conclusions from them. Now, this capacity may be greatly strengthened and improved by exercise. This appears from the different improvements, which have

been made, in almost every branch of human knowledge. What a wide difference appears between civilized and uncivilized nations, in regard to the arts and sciences. This difference is principally owing to the different cultivation of the reasoning powers. It is hard to conceive to what extent reason may be improved by exercise. How many truths did Newton investigate from this plain proposition, "that all matter tends to rest, and cannot move without a mover?" And how many truths have mankind in general derived from another proposition equally plain, "that our senses are to be trusted?" We all know, by what we see in others, and what we find in ourselves, that every intellectual faculty may be greatly improved by exercise. But it is of more importance to observe, that reason may be *assisted*, as well as *cultivated*. The bodily eye can be assisted by glasses. Let a person look through a microscope, and he can discern things extremely small; or let him look through a telescope, and he can discover objects immensely distant. But, if the natural eye may be assisted by glasses, why may not the mental eye be equally assisted by divine revelation? Suppose God should reveal to a certain astronomer the exact magnitude of the sun, and its precise distance from the earth, would it not greatly assist him in making many new and important discoveries in astronomy? So, if God has revealed certain truths respecting the works of creation, providence, and redemption, must we not suppose, that this revelation may greatly assist mankind in their reasonings upon natural, moral, and religious subjects? By reason, therefore, in relation to Christianity, we are to understand the natural power, faculty, or capacity of discerning and investigating truth, as *improved* by exercise, and *assisted* by divine revelation. It is now time to consider,

III. What ground there is to believe, that Christianity is a religion agreeable to reason. Here we are not to inquire, whether Christianity be *discoverable* by reason, because we have seen, that it comes to us under the profession and sanction of divine revelation. The only inquiry is, whether Christianity, as it is *revealed* in the gospel, be a religion agreeable to reason. Upon this I would observe,

1. It is agreeable to reason, that Christianity, which is designed for the recovery of sinners from their lost and guilty state, should be a *revealed* religion. Unassisted reason, in its most improved state, could never discover a religion, which could restore sinners to the forfeited favor of God. When the angels, who kept their first estate, saw the defection and revolt of their fellow angels, they could not and did not discover any religion which could rescue them from deserved destruction; but gave them up as irrecoverably lost. They knew, it was the duty of those rebels to repent and submit to their offended Sovereign; but they could not see how repentance and submission could restore them to the divine favor. So when they saw the apostasy of the human race, they could not devise any religion, which was adapted to their deplorable state, and which would have the least tendency to prevent their everlasting ruin. Nor could Adam himself. This appears from his shunning the divine presence, in complete despair. He undoubtedly roused up all his reasoning powers, but the most vigorous exercise of these could only strip him of all hope from his righteous Lawgiver. He could know and feel, that he ought to repent and submit to his supreme Judge; but he could not see how his supreme Judge could consistently pardon and save him, on the ground of mere repentance and submission. And ever since his first offence, none of

his posterity have been able to see, that repentance and submission are any proper ground of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. If there be any religion, therefore, in this fallen world, which is completely adapted to save fallen creatures, it must have originated in the divine mind, and come to us by a divine revelation. And since Christianity is adapted to this purpose, and comes to us in this way, it is so far perfectly agreeable to reason. This naturally leads us to observe,

2. That Christianity brings with it such evidence of this divine origin, as might be reasonably expected. It belongs to the province of reason to judge, whether the credentials of a pretended revelation are sufficient to support it. Christianity would not be a reasonable religion, if it did not exhibit proper testimonials of its divine original. But in this respect, it is certainly agreeable to reason. It brings with it two kinds of evidence, which are the most infallible and irresistible. These are *miracles* and *prophecies*. Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, wrought many miracles, to confirm their divine mission, and the truth of all their doctrines and declarations. Those miracles extorted the belief of both friends and enemies. The magicians acknowledged the finger of God in the miracles of Moses; and the Scribes and Pharisees acknowledged that Christ did many miracles. This is the highest kind of evidence, that reason can discover or demand in favor of Christianity, and a higher testimony than has ever been given in favor of any false religion. When Mahomet was called upon to work miracles in testimony of his pretended revelations, he refused to make the attempt, lest he should discover his impotence and falsehood. But those who wrote the sacred Book, which contains the Christian religion,

clearly exhibited this supernatural testimony in their favor. Besides, they confirmed their divine authority by *prophecies* as well as *miracles*. Their predictions of many great and interesting events, have been fulfilled, and are still fulfilling before the eyes of the world. Have not the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman monarchies, risen and fallen, as they foretold? Has not Christ come, and suffered, and died, and risen again according to the scriptures? Has not Jerusalem been destroyed, and the Jews dispersed, agreeably to the predictions of Christ? Has not the man of sin appeared and acted in the manner, which Daniel and Paul foresaw and foretold? And are not the seed of Jacob and the posterity of Ishmael, by their situation and conduct, visibly fulfilling what was predicted of them, several thousand years ago? This fulfilment of prophecy, like a miracle, is a divine testimony in favor of Christianity, which is superior to any other testimony that could be given. The Christian religion is perfectly agreeable to reason in point of evidence; for it brings with it the highest testimony that can be conceived, expected or desired.

3. Christianity exhibits such things, as it might be reasonably expected, a *revealed* religion should exhibit. It exhibits the character and state of man both before and after he became a sinner. It exhibits the gracious design of the ever blessed Trinity, to save our fallen race from sin and misery. It exhibits the character and conduct of the church and of their enemies. It exhibits some of the most extraordinary and important changes and revolutions, which have taken place among the nations of the earth. It exhibits the great preparations which were made for the coming, the death, and sufferings of the divine Redeemer. In a word, it exhibits those things, which none but God

could exhibit, and which were the most useful and necessary for mankind to know, in their present guilty and perishing situation. It is just such a revelation as it might be reasonably expected God would give to mankind, if he intended to shew them mercy. Christianity bears upon the very face of it, the image and superscription of the Deity, and has every internal mark of its coming from God, which the soundest reason can suggest or demand.

4. The religion of Christ is agreeable to reason, in regard to the doctrines, which it contains and inculcates. The doctrine of a Trinity in Unity is agreeable to reason, improved and assisted by divine revelation. It is reasonable to think, that the eternal God should exist in a mysterious, incomprehensible manner; and when he tells us so, it is reasonable to believe his declaration concerning his own existence. The doctrine of Christ's incarnation is agreeable to reason, in the same sense, that the doctrine of the Trinity is. Why should it be thought incredible, that he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, should take upon him the fashion of man, and become personally united with human nature, to save our sinful world? It was worthy of God to send his Son for this purpose, and worthy of his Son to come into our nature, and into our world, to answer such a wise and benevolent design. It is therefore, agreeable to the plainest dictates of reason to believe, what he who perfectly knows has told us, that "God was manifest in the flesh." It is reasonable to suppose, that a *revealed* religion should contain some things, which mankind could not *discover*, nor *comprehend*, by reason; and therefore the doctrines of the Trinity, and of the incarnation of Christ, render Christianity not less, but more agreeable to improved and assisted reason.

As to the other Christian doctrines, which are not considered mysterious, they are agreeable to reason, in the same sense, in which all other truths are so, that depend upon a train of clear and fair reasoning. The doctrine of atonement, for instance, which is the most essential, and peculiar principle of Christianity, approves itself to every man's reason, properly exercised and assisted. Though reason could not discover how an atonement for sin could be made; yet now it is made and revealed, reason can discern the propriety of God's pardoning penitent sinners on account of it. The doctrines concerning the divine purposes, and the divine agency in the natural and moral world; concerning the total depravity and renovation of the human heart; concerning the final perseverance of saints; and concerning the future rewards and punishments of the righteous and wicked, are all agreeable to reason, when viewed in their proper dependance upon and connexion with each other, in the great system of Christianity. It is true, indeed, that very few men are capable of tracing all the doctrines of the gospel in their intimate relation to and connexion with each other, and so many may remain ignorant of the reasonableness of some particular articles. But this is no more an evidence, that those particular articles of Christianity are not agreeable to reason, than a man's ignorance of certain mathematical demonstrations, is an evidence, that those demonstrations are not agreeable to reason. A man must study mathematics, in order to see how the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. A man must study astronomy, in order to see how the sun or the moon will be eclipsed, at a certain time, and in a certain place. So a man must search the Scriptures, in order to see the reasonableness of Christianity, which contains a connected

system of divine truths. Let these be impartially examined, and fairly traced through their various relations and connexions, and the deepest as well as plainest things contained in the gospel will appear perfectly agreeable to reason. This leads me to observe, once more,

5. That the reasonableness of Christianity appears from the conviction that it has actually carried to the reason and conscience of mankind, in all ages. It has made its way in the world, not by foreign and exterior aid, but by its own intrinsic truth and excellence. Other religions have been propagated, by the force of arms and the power of the civil magistrate. But Christianity has made its way, not only without, but against human power and authority, and approved itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It has been called before the bar of kings, judges, and philosophers, and prevailed. It made Felix tremble, and Agrippa say, "I am almost persuaded to be a Christian." It convinced a Judge of the court of Athens, and several other respectable characters in that city. It convinced Constantine the great, and multitudes of his most eminent subjects. It convinced a Bacon, a Boyle, a Locke, a Newton and a Johnson, in Britain; and it has produced the same effect in the minds of the most eminent men, of all professions, in America. Some of the most ingenious and learned among the Laity as well as Clergy, have appeared as advocates for Christianity, and refuted every objection of its enemies beyond the possibility of reply. Hume never presumed to reply to Bishop Berkley, nor Gibbon to Bishop Watson, nor Bolingbrook and Shaftsbury to those, who exposed their sophistry and malignity. This triumph of Christianity over learning, philosophy, bigotry and superstition, is a strong and con-

clusive argument; that it is no cunningly devised fable, but a scheme of salvation, devised and adopted, by the wisdom and grace of God, and perfectly agreeable to the dictates of right reason.

This subject now very naturally suggests some things, which deserve our serious consideration, at the present day, and especially on the present occasion.

1. It suggests the absurdity of setting up natural religion in opposition to revealed. There is no doubt but mankind are able, by the proper exercise of their reason, to discover natural religion. If they seriously and attentively consider the works of creation and providence; they may be rationally convinced of the being and perfections of God, and of their obligations to love and adore him, as their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor. But it is absurd for them to imagine, that because they have discovered this natural religion, they have no need of any other. For natural religion is this religion of innocent, but not of guilty creatures. It is no less absurd for fallen men to depend upon natural religion, than it would be for fallen angels to depend upon it. They however have never been guilty of this absurdity. Their clear knowledge of natural religion has been a source of despair instead of hope, and made them fear and tremble before a sin-hating, and sin-revenging God. And the same knowledge has a direct tendency to produce the same effects in the minds of our apostate race. But yet our modern infidels have the stupidity and presumption, to set up natural religion in opposition to revealed. Lord Herbert framed a system of natural religion, with a view to supersede and subvert Christianity. And after him, Tindal a noted infidel, wrote a Treatise under the title of, "Christianity as old as the creation." By this, he meant to insinuate, that natural religion, which is as

aid as the creation, is the only true and rational religion; and of consequence, that Christianity is a gross absurdity and delusion. We readily admit that the light of nature may discover natural religion, and were it sufficient for the salvation of sinners, there would be no need of a supernatural and revealed religion. But since natural religion cannot exist in this guilty world, and if it did exist, could not save sinners from the wrath to come, the deists stand upon nothing while they presume to set up natural religion, and employ it as a weapon to destroy Christianity. Let them only reflect, that they are fallen, guilty creatures, and reason correctly from this self-evident truth, and they will feel the whole ground they stand on to give way, and find themselves plunged in utter darkness and despair. The whole controversy between Christians and deists turns upon the truth of total depravity. This single truth completely refutes Deism and establishes Christianity.

2. If Christianity be agreeable to reason then it has a natural tendency to subvert all other religions in the world. All other religions are the inventions of men, and essentially different from Christianity, which God alone was able to devise and reveal to the sinful race of Adam. Those, who see the reasonableness of this revealed and supernatural religion, must of course, see the unreasonableness and absurdity of every other religious system. Accordingly, we find, Christianity has actually turned the religious world upside down, wherever it has been embraced. It has converted men from Paganism, Judaism, Mahomitanism, Deism, Socinianism, Arianism, Arminianism, and Universalism. Hence it has been called the unsociable religion. False religions will unite with each other, but Christianity

condemns and opposes every false scheme, and every false principle of religion.

3. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then the more clearly it is distinguished from natural religion, the more reasonable it will appear. Many who have undertaken to maintain the reasonableness of Christianity, have done it great injury, by pruning off its great and essential peculiarities, and endeavoring to bring it down as near as possible, to natural religion, or the religion of reason. Socinians, Arians, and Arminians have adopted this method to exhibit Christianity, in what they view, the most reasonable and amiable light. But this is basely betraying, instead of promoting the cause of revealed religion. The only proper way to convince mankind of the reasonableness of Christianity, is to represent it as a scheme of divine wisdom and grace, which contains mysteries and doctrines, which no created reason could discover, nor comprehend. The doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the incarnation and vicarious sufferings of Christ, and the doctrines of human depravity, and special, irresistible grace, are essential branches of the Christian religion, and constitute its beauty and reasonableness. And the more clearly we display these peculiarities of Christianity, which distinguish it from natural religion, the more reasonable we shall make it appear in the eyes of infidels, and the more worthy of the cordial approbation of penitent sinners.

4. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then all who really understand it must necessarily believe it. Whatever gets hold of reason in any man, he is constrained to believe in spite of his heart. His heart may for a while obstruct, or eventually hinder truth from getting hold of his reason; but if it does not prevent truth from coming into his understanding, it cannot

prevent his belief of it. A man's heart may prevent his demonstrating a mathematical truth; but it cannot prevent his believing that truth, after he has demonstrated it. This holds true of Christianity. If a man will allow himself to examine, or suffer himself to be taught, the great and distinguishing doctrines of the Christian religion, so as really to understand them, he cannot resist conviction, but must believe them to be true, whether they are agreeable, or disagreeable to his heart. If the heart does not prevent the exercise, it cannot prevent the verdict of reason. Christianity displays the manifold wisdom of God, and therefore must approve itself to every intelligent creature who really understands it. It is the *reasonableness* of this revealed religion, that has convinced ninety nine in a hundred, if not nine hundred and ninety nine in a thousand, of those who in all ages, have embraced it either in speculation or practice. If we can only make men understand the gospel, we may be sure, we have gained their everlasting belief; in consequence of which, they must forever hold the truth, either in righteousness or unrighteousness.

5. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then it is no mark of superior penetration and knowledge, to disbelieve it. That men of great information and acuteness in reasoning, have disbelieved the gospel, we would not pretend to deny; but that their disbelief has been owing to their superior learning and ingenuity, we must be allowed to call in question. Reason can never prevent men's seeing the reasonableness of a perfectly reasonable religion; but only prevent their seeing the reasonableness of such religions, as are founded in ignorance, delusion, or falsehood. If Christianity were a cunningly devised fable, it might be justly expected that men of the first abilities should be the

first to discover, and to disbelieve the imposture. But since it is founded in the highest reason, the disbelief of it, in both the learned and unlearned, can originate from no other source, than that native corruption of heart which blinds the understanding, and creates either stupidity, inattention or prejudice, respecting the glorious gospel of the blessed God. To this criminal cause, our Savior himself ascribes the infidelity of his hearers. “Why do ye not *understand* my speech? even because *ye cannot hear my word*. If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me. He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye therefore hear them not *because ye are not of God*.”

6. If Christianity be agreeable to reason, then it is no evidence of a weak or disordered mind, to believe and love the gospel. It is every way suited to gain the reason and conscience, and to raise the affections of all those, who realize their guilty and perishing condition by nature, and are willing to return to God, upon the most reasonable and gracious terms. It was a very unjust and unmerited reproach, which the enemies of Christianity cast upon those who gladly received the word on the day of Pentecost, that their minds were disordered by new wine. And it was equally absurd and malignant in Festus, after the apostle had related his conversion, and religious views and feelings, to cry out in a sneer, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” But the apostle replied with a pertinence and solemnity, directly suited to fill his mind with shame and remorse. “I am not mad most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” In this striking instance, “Wisdom was justified of her children.” Our Savior forewarned his followers of what they had to expect from unbelievers. “It is enough for the disciple that he be

as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." But it is preposterous folly in Infidels to sneer at the children of light, as weak or disordered in their intellects, because they believe, and love, and prize that reasonable and glorious gospel, which the highest order of intelligences contemplate with admiration and extacy. The most eminent Christians, whether high or low, whether learned or unlearned, act the most reasonable and proper part, in regard to religion, of any men in the world. They are the *wise* who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, when the impenitent and unbelieving shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt.

The reasonableness of Christianity is a fruitful subject, and did the season and circumstances admit, I might easily enlarge upon it. But I will relieve the patience of my respected audience, after saying a few words by way of address to the pastor elect.

DEAR SIR,

You have acted a reasonable part, in preferring the work of the ministry to any other calling. It is the most reasonable, the most useful and the most agreeable service, in which, God allows any of our fallen, guilty race to be employed. If you understand, and believe, and love the religion of Christ, you will find peculiar satisfaction, in leading your fellow creatures to the knowledge and love of those revealed truths, which are able to make them wise to salvation. Christianity is so perfectly and profoundly reasonable, that you will never have the least occasion to handle the word of God deceitfully, in order to es-

tablish any doctrine, or to inculcate any duty, or to reprove any vice, or to refute any error, or to avoid any inconsistency in the sentiments you deliver. While you preach the great and interesting truths of the gospel in their harmony and connexion, you will approve yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The reasonableness of Christianity affords you great encouragement, to preach it with the utmost plainness and fidelity. At first view, it appears surprising, that mankind, who are by nature enemies of the cross of Christ, should suffer ministers to preach the painful, mortifying doctrines of the gospel. But when we consider, that all men have reason and conscience, and that a reasonable religion will take hold of these inflexible powers of the mind, in spite of their hearts, it is not so strange, that sinners will hear what their reason and conscience constrain them to believe is strictly true, and infinitely important. The faithful preacher always has the reason and conscience of every man on his side, which is the firmest hold of the human mind. If you preach the gospel plainly and fully, you will make it appear reasonable; and if you make it appear reasonable, you will constrain your people, not only to believe it, but to feel their infinite obligations to obey it from the heart. If you yourself clearly see and sensibly feel the importance of divine truths, you can scarcely fail of arresting the attention, piercing the consciences, and impressing the hearts of your hearers. The gospel is a two-edged sword, which has slain its thousands and ten thousands. It is not a carnal weapon, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Only be faithful!

in pointing this weapon to your own breast, and to the breasts of your people, and you will certainly gain all that you have any reason to expect, or even to desire, and that is, to be a sweet savor of Christ in them that are *saved* and in them that *perish*. To this, may you and all the people in this place, say Amen.

SERMON XV.

Delivered November 3, 1790, at the particular request of a number of respectable men in Franklin, who were forming a Society, for the Reformation of Morals.

PROVERBS xiv, 34.

—*But sin is a reproach to any people.*

THE whole verse is this. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” As the mode of expression here requires a more full and pointed antithesis, so the spirit of the original allows us to read the verse with a small variation. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is the *poverty, depression, or sinking of any people.*” This last construction, instead of weakening, serves to corroborate the sense of the former; for reproach as naturally follows poverty and depression, as the shadow follows the body in motion. But without any critical remarks, the very face of the text carries this plain and obvious meaning, that sin naturally tends to involve a people in ruin and reproach. This therefore shall be the leading sentiment in the following discourse.

We have had great opportunity of discovering the nature of sin. For sin hath prevailed more or less, in every person and family, as well as in every community and society of men; and invariably displayed, by all its various operations and appearances, the same malignant nature and tendency. The history of particular persons, and of particular nations, and indeed of the whole world, is but the history of their vices, and of the natural and penal evils which have flowed from them. The Bible draws a shocking picture of the lusts and corruptions which ruined the old world; and of the enormous vices, which finally destroyed

Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, Ninevah, and many other great and ancient kingdoms. And, if we open the leaves of profane history, we find every leaf, like Ezekiel's roll, full "of lamentations, mourning and woe," the dire effects of sin. It wounds a tender mind, to read the history of Alexander, of Mohammed, of the Man of sin, and of those unhappy nations, who have fallen under their cruel and bloody hands; but it would be more than our hearts could endure, could we collect into one view, all the scenes of misery and horror, which sin has ever produced in our malevolent world. If therefore we may give the least regard to sacred and profane history, and to the observation and experience of all ages, we are constrained to believe, that sin has a malignant nature, and directly tends to involve a people in ruin and reproach. We know the nature of sin, better than the nature of any other object around us. For, we have heard, and read, and seen, and felt more of its evil and fatal effects, than of any other object in the whole circle of our knowledge, observation, or experience. We know that sin is a corrupt tree, because it always bears corrupt fruit. We know therefore, according to the analogy of things, that fire has not a more natural tendency to consume wood, nor water to extinguish fire, than sin has to injure and destroy any people, among whom it is suffered to spread and prevail.

To illustrate and impress this idea, permit me to enter into particulars and observe,

I. It is the nature of sin to lessen and diminish a people. The most populous nations have been reduced to a handful, by the prevalence of vice. Though Israel, at certain seasons, were numerous as the stars of heaven, yet, by their lusts and corruptions they were minished and brought low. When they left the kingdom of Egypt, they amounted to about three

millions, but before they reached the land of promise, near half their numbers pined away in their iniquities, and perished in the wilderness. And though they increased again in the reign of Solomon, yet in the next succeeding reign they departed from God, and for their groundless revolt, half a million were destroyed in one day. Nor did their open vices and immoralities ever fail to diminish their numbers, from that time to the time of their final dispersion and ruin. The Greeks, for many ages, maintained their virtue, and continued to increase; but as soon as the vices of Asia corrupted their morals, they immediately began to diminish. Rome was once extremely populous. It contained more inhabitants, than are now contained in all the United States. But vice, in a few years, not only thinned the capital, but diminished the whole empire. Vice has a natural, as well as a moral tendency to waste and destroy every human society. For, indolence, intemperance, luxury, and prodigality, serve to weaken and enervate the human frame, and of course, to expose men to the attacks and ravages of every malignant disorder. Hence we find, that the whole train of painful and mortal diseases, have always raged with the greatest violence, among those nations who have sunk the deepest in moral pollutions.

II. It is the nature of sin to sink and depress the spirits of a people. This is a fair and just conclusion from the last particular. The soul and body are intimately connected, and mutually strengthen or weaken each other. If vice therefore serves to weaken and enervate the body, it must in the same proportion, serve to sink and depress the spirit. Besides, the vicious and profligate sensibly feel, that vice immediately affects and contaminates their minds, sets their rea-

son, conscience, and passions at variance, and effectually restrains them from great and noble exertions. Hence says the Father of Spirits by the prophet, "whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart."

A people confirmed in the habits of vice, have no heart to labor, no heart to think, no heart to form, nor execute any virtuous and laudable designs. Their genius withers, their exertions languish, their hopes and honors, and virtues perish. These are no imaginary, but real and natural effects of the prevalence of vice. And these have been actually experienced, by the most brave and enlightened nations, in the last stages of luxury and corruption. There never was a people, perhaps, more brave and sprightly, and more perfectly polished in their taste and manners, than the ancient people of Athens. They carried learning in general, and the fine arts in particular, next to the last degree of refinement. Their works of genius and taste are still considered and admired as the standards of perfection. But indolence, prodigality and luxury, gradually enslaved and enfeebled their minds, and finally reduced them to the lowest state of savage stupidity and ignorance. The Romans, after they had subdued the Greeks and all other nations within the reach of their arms, finally subdued and enslaved themselves, by their own vices. In the time of Augustus, they reigned masters of the world, and stood without a rival in arms and arts. But at the close of the Augustan age, not only their spirit of enterprise, but their spirit of refinement began to languish; and after that corrupt and dissolute period, they never produced but two men of genius and eminence; the one to relate, and the other to satirize their vices.*

* TACITUS and JUVENAL.

The corruption of morals, which now prevails in some of the principal nations of Europe, already begins to impair their mental powers and improvements. Many of their modern productions of genius and taste, bear strong and visible marks of declension. Their late publications are extremely superficial. They discover neither strength of mind nor energy of expression. They appear more like the feeble births of leisure and memory, than the strong and masculine offspring of genius and study. They merit the corner of a monthly or weekly paper, but ought never to occupy the page of a serious volume. In short, their plays, novels, epigrams extracts, and abridgements, which compose the catalogue of their learned labors, are much better suited to amuse and stupify, than to enlighten and enlarge the mind; and therefore they naturally tend to diminish, rather than to increase the common stock of useful knowledge. The British nation, in particular, have been gradually declining in point of literature, ever since the licentious reign of Charles II. This is confirmed by the venerable authority of their own most venerable monuments. Their Newton continues to reign in philosophy; their Locke in metaphysics: their Milton in poetry; and their Addison in neat and nervous composition. When these illustrious and virtuous men went off the stage, the republic of letters sustained a loss, which will never be repaired by the feeble and languishing genius of Britain. Such plain and undeniable facts carry convincing evidence, that the prevalence of vice among a people, will impair their minds, obstruct the progress of learning and knowledge, and reduce them to that ignorance and barbarity, which must issue in their ruin and reproach.

III. It is the nature of sin to destroy the wealth of a nation, and subject them to all the evils and reproaches of poverty. Though some species of fraud and dishonesty may, for a certain time, and under certain circumstances, advance a person or people in wealth and grandeur; yet vice, according to its common and natural course, will eventually involve them in poverty and shame. Solomon assures us, "the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall cover a man with rags." And again, "slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." Luxury and prodigality not only waste the wealth which a people have already acquired; but, by destroying the spirit of industry, effectually prevent the future acquisitions of property. Besides, these vices stupify the minds of a people, and forbid them to reflect where their folly and dissipation will carry them, till poverty and distress awaken their fears, and plunge them in remorse and despair. We have a remarkable instance of this, in the stupid conduct and miserable fate of the corrupt and degenerate Romans. They had acquired immense treasures from their conquered subjects: but their immense prodigality and profusion soon wasted their wealth, and reduced them to extreme poverty. Their houses, their tables, their equipage, and other articles of private luxury, were sufficient of themselves, to destroy the wealthiest nation. But their public profusion was far more extravagant. Their temples, their theatres, their public games, and shows, and triumphs, cost millions and millions! They might have easily seen, that such prodigality and dissipation would soon exhaust the treasures of Rome and all her provinces; but the enchantments of vice would not permit the mass of the people to open their eyes and perceive their dan-

ger, till they were past recovery, and completely ripened for ruin. Accordingly they persisted in their folly, till poverty and meanness concluded the scene. The whole empire at length became so poor, so corrupt, and venal, as to be sold at a public auction to a private citizen. This must be the fate of any nation, who give themselves up to prodigality and luxury. No people can possibly supply the insatiable demands of vice; and therefore unless it be seasonably restrained, it will infallibly sink them in poverty and reproach.

IV. It is the nature of vice to deprive a people of the blessings of freedom, and involve them in the misery and meanness of slavery. Were it not for the vices and corruptions of men, they would have no occasion to give up any of their rights and privileges, in order to secure and enjoy the rest. The Apostle tells us, "The law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers, for stealers, for liars, for whoremongers, and for perjured persons." The ultimate design of government is, to prevent and restrain those open acts of violence, which disturb and injure the virtuous and peaceable members of society. But it is the nature of vice to pervert this salutary and important design of government, and transform it into an engine of slavery and ruin.

Vice has the same effect upon the body politic, that sickness has upon the natural body. The natural body is composed of innumerable cords or ligatures, which unite the parts, and strengthen the members to perform their office. But sickness serves to relax and dissolve these tender cords, and bring on a total extinction of life and motion. So the body politic is composed of innumerable moral ties and connexions,

which like veins and nerves, give strength and freedom to all its members. The ties of religion, the ties of virtue, the ties of friendship, the ties of commerce, the ties of office, the ties of customs and habits, so long as they retain their proper force, do more to promote the union and happiness of a people, than all their civil laws and constitutions. But it is the nature of vice to affect such fine and tender cords of society, and by dissolving these, to throw the whole body politic into great and fatal convulsions. Intemperance, prodigality, luxury and debauchery, not only violate the laws of religion and virtue, and disturb the peace and harmony of families, but at the same time, set the nearest and firmest friends at variance, dissolve the connexions of trade, and fill the minds of rulers with more concern to supplant their rivals, than to promote the common interest and freedom of their subjects. Vice, by destroying these moral and social ties, effectually saps the foundation of freedom, and completely prepares a people for the shackles of slavery. For nothing but the rod of arbitrary power is sufficient to restrain and govern a people, who have lost their virtue, and sunk into vice and corruption. Such a people are neither fit to enjoy, nor able to assert and maintain their liberties. They must be slaves.

Vice destroyed the liberties of Greece. Vice subverted the freedom of Rome. Vice deprived the Christian Church of her invaluable rights and privileges, and subjected multitudes of the meek and harmless followers of Christ, to all the usurpation and cruelty of the Man of sin. Vice, in these and all other instances, first preyed upon the nerves and sinews, before it attacked the vitals of liberty. But though vice be sometimes slow in its progress, yet in the course of its operation, it never fails to destroy the freedom of a people.

No instance, we presume, can be produced, where vice had pervaded all ranks and classes of a civil community, but it finally involved them in slavery and ruin. Whole nations are now living witnesses of this melancholy truth; and the cries and groans of millions are constantly proclaiming to the world, that vice and slavery are inseparably connected. I must still add,

V. It is the nature of vice to provoke the displeasure of God, and draw down his judgments, to complete the ruin of a people. As all nations believe the existence of some Divinity, so they all suppose he is displeased with vice, and disposed to punish it. All the heathen Poets represent vindictive justice as one of the attributes of the heathen deities. And they draw their descriptions of the pagan gods, from the common opinion of the pagan world. It is said, the Athenians recalled their celebrated general Alcibiades from an important expedition, because the night before his departure, he cast public reproach and contempt upon the gods of his country. The men of Athens expected their divinities would blast his enterprise, and ruin their Commonwealth, for such a bold and public act of profaneness. But we, who are Christians, have more than conjecture, we have absolute certainty, that the Governor of the world will severely punish human societies for their public vices. God hath expressly told us, that it is an invariable maxim of his providence, to pluck up and destroy any nation or kingdom, for their incorrigible wickedness. And more than this, he hath given us a *particular catalogue* of those very vices and corruptions, which have actually awakened his displeasure, and drawn down his judgments upon the nations of the earth. He drowned the old world, for stupidity, violence, and debauchery. He rained fire and brimstone upon

Sodom and Gomorrah, for pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness. He poured the vials of his wrath upon Pharaoh and his subjects, for pride, oppression and cruelty. He extirpated the seven nations of Canaan, for lewdness, incest, and brutal uncleanness. He punished the Israelites, for murmuring and unbelief. He cut off the ten tribes of Israel, for idolatry and rebellion. And in the days of Isaiah, he smote with a scab, the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, for their haughty airs and extravagant dress. In short, we never find a single instance in scripture, where God threatens to destroy a nation or kingdom, but he, at the same time, declares, that their sins are the procuring cause of his wasting judgments. "Evil pursueth sinners." Every people, therefore, have reason to expect, that *their* sins will sooner or later find them out, and involve them in ruin and reproach.

Having illustrated the point I proposed, I must now beg every hearer to lay aside all bias and prejudice, and give a candid and impartial attention to what I have still to suggest, in the application of this moral subject.

If it be a truth, that the prevalence of vice directly tends to bring a nation to ruin and reproach; this is certainly a very serious and interesting truth with respect to us, who have just taken our rank among the nations of the earth. Doctor Price, whose abilities and friendship demand our particular attention and respect, has these just and enlightened observations on our present critical and important situation. "It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the Independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce the universal empire of reason and virtue: and I can scarcely be de-

ceived in this conviction, *if the United States should escape some dangers which threaten them*, and will take proper care to throw themselves open to future improvements, and to make the most of their present situation. If this should happen, it will be true of them as it was of the people of the Jews, that *in them all nations of the earth shall be blessed*. It is scarcely possible that they should think too highly of their consequence. Perhaps there never existed a people on whose *wisdom and virtue* more depended; or to whom a station of more importance in the plan of providence has been assigned. They have begun nobly. They have fought with success for themselves and for the world; and in the midst of invasion and carnage, established forms of government favorable in the highest degree to the rights of mankind. But they have much more to do; more indeed than it is possible properly to represent."

This great politician apprehends we are exposed to dangers. But what dangers can be more alarming than those which arise from the decay of virtue and the corruption of morals? We are young indeed, but very corrupt considering our age. We are like Ephraim of old, who had gray hairs here and there, but perceived them not. The leaven of vice has begun to operate, and unless it be speedily counteracted, it will leaven our whole nation, and blast all our flattering hopes and prospects.

The time was, when we were distinguished among all other nations, *for purity of manners*. Our Fathers when they came into this land, were strict and rigid in their notions of morality; and even censured some things as vicious and criminal, which were, perhaps, really innocent and laudable. But alas! how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!

We are fallen far into the opposite extreme. For near twenty years past, various causes have united their influence to introduce almost every species of vice and corruption among us. War is always prejudicial to the interests of piety and virtue; especially the war in which we have been lately engaged, which continued so long and which spread so far through the heart of our country. Our army contained a collection of the loosest characters, who being free from their usual restraint, soon corrupted the minds of many, who, when they came into the camp, possessed the principles and habits of morality. Most of our youth were necessarily called in the course of the war, into this corrupt and dangerous school; and, being disbanded at the commencement of peace, they mixed with the mass of the people, and greatly increased wherever they went, the corruption of morals. Besides, during the war, the neglect of schools, the relaxation of government, and the rapid depreciation of a paper currency, afforded new opportunities, and suggested new and strong temptations to vice.

By the united influence of these, and various other causes, we have actually become an extremely corrupt and degenerate people. Isaiah's description of the Jews will apply to us, without the least variation. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

It is truly alarming to take a serious and particular view of our prevailing corruptions. The name of God is freely and awfully profaned amongst us. This heinous and unnatural sin which was formerly confined to particular places, and to particular persons, is

now become a general vice, and deeply corrupts the language of common discourse. A sober man, at this day of declension, can scarcely fall into company, or travel the roads, or pursue his common concerns, but his ears will be wounded by impious and profane language. The streets are filled with children, who learn the dialect of hell, before they learn the rudiments of their mother tongue; and who, instead of remembering and praising their Maker, are growing up in the habit of taking his great and tremendous name in vain. Swearing is become so universally prevalent, that we have reason to fear, a thousand curses are every day entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, to one effectual, fervent prayer to obtain his pardoning mercy.

The Bible, which came from God, and displays his character and will; which unfolds his great and gracious designs, and opens the only door of hope to guilty perishing sinners, is much neglected and despised by us, and often treated as a cunningly devised fable. Some deny the inspiration of the Scriptures. Some pervert the fundamental truths of Christianity. Some attack the first principles of virtue and religion. And multitudes are plunged in the waves of uncertainty and doubt. This spirit of infidelity and skepticism which begins to spread and prevail among us, threatens to destroy our remaining religion and virtue, to fill up the measure of our iniquities, and expose us to the severest marks of the divine displeasure.

We treat sacred and divine things with great neglect and contempt. Some totally disregard the holy Sabbath. Some employ it in the common concerns of life. Some devote it to scenes of vice and amusement. Some travel more on that day of sacred rest, than on any other day in the week. And many who

neither travel nor labor, nor visit on the Sabbath, yet make a general practice of neglecting the public worship of God in his house. Though our numbers are evidently increasing, yet our religious assemblies are visibly diminishing. There appears through the land, an uncommon indifference and coldness respecting the duties of public devotion; and the ways of our Zion mourn, because her sacred solemnities are greatly despised and neglected. The public worship of God was designed to keep alive in our minds a realizing sense of the great objects and motives of eternity. Those therefore who neglect and despise the house and worship of God, we may be certain, neglect and despise every thing sacred and divine, and have lost all sense of the infinite weight and importance of eternal realities. And when these objects have lost their weight and influence upon the minds of a people, there is nothing to restrain them from the grossest vices and immoralities.

We have criminally departed from the noble and virtuous examples of our pious ancestors, in neglecting family religion and family government. They brought up their children and those committed to their care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and warned them against every appearance of evil. They strictly guarded them in their young and inexperienced age, and actually restrained them from that company, and from those places, where they would be eminently exposed to temptation. And to impress all their instructions and admonitions the deeper on their tender minds, they called them together every morning and evening, to the private devotions of the family. This general and strict observance of family religion and family government, which went hand in hand, and strengthened each other, did, for more than a cen-

fury, preserve our virtues, and prevent a general corruption of morals. But now, these strongest bulwarks of virtue and piety are gone. For family devotion, and parental instruction and discipline, are very generally neglected and despised. Many of the rising families do neither exhibit the forms of religion, nor the examples of virtue. They cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God; and neglect the important duties which they owe to Him, to the public, to themselves, and to the precious souls committed to their care and instruction. These prayerless and irreligious families are the lives of vice. And from these, we may expect, will issue swarms of prayerless children, prayerless parents, ungovernable subjects, and prodigies of wickedness, to disturb the peace of society, and to propagate irreligion and immorality from generation to generation.

There is no vice in nature more debasing and destructive to men, than the vice of *intemperance*. It robs them of their reason, reputation, and interest. It renders them unfit for human society. It degrades them below the beasts that perish, and justly exposes them to universal odium and contempt. But even this mean and shameful vice has become extremely common and fashionable amongst us. Multitudes may be seen, every day, and almost every where, wallowing in drunkenness, and glorying in their shame. Intemperance appears not only in public houses, and at public places, but in private families, and among individuals of every age, and every sex. Those foreign liquors, which were once used as mere cordials and delicacies only, are now used by many, as common and necessary articles of life. The consumption of intoxicating spirits is tenfold greater now than in time past, and a thousandfold greater than it ever ought to be in time to come. Among all our vices, there is

none so rapid in its progress, nor so fatal in its consequences, as this of intemperance. And unless it be seasonably restrained, it will assuredly turn the poor men into sots, the rich men into beggars, and the wise men into fools.

Prodigality reigns among us in every form, and in every place, covering the heads of rich and poor with the feathers of folly and pride. Those silks which ought to be worn by those nations to whom they were given for use, are become the common ornaments not only of our ladies and gentlemen, but of multitudes in the lowest ranks of life. The rage for foreign manufactures, foreign fashions, foreign customs and manners, seems to have seized people of every class, and rendered them totally blind to their own, as well as to the public good. Our resources are by no means sufficient to support our prodigality and extravagance. We live in a country formed by nature for agriculture rather than for commerce. We shall never be able, therefore, to support that luxury and profusion, which the more commercial and opulent nations have been able to support. A people who are obliged to labor with their hands, must never indulge in the fopperies and ornaments of dress, but always practise the rigid virtues of industry and economy. It is our wisdom and honor, therefore, as a distinct and separate nation, to form our own customs and manners agreeably to our own peculiar genius, situation, and climate. Besides, we are now loaded with a public debt of many millions, which requires all our exertions, and the most frugal application of all our resources, to discharge. The voice of prudence, the demands of justice, and even the cries of necessity, unitedly urge us to a reformation of manners, and a general disuse of foreign superfluities. And unless we

seasonably hearken to these admonitions, we have nothing to expect, but to reap the fruits of our folly in poverty and shame.

I might still add to this long list of vices, *injustice, avarice, oppression, indolence, gaming, gamboling,* and almost every other species of corruption, which ever disgraced the most abandoned people. But it is time to observe,

That all these open and gross immoralities, which I have now mentioned, are in the strictest sense, land-defiling and God-provoking iniquities, which threaten to destroy our highest and best interests, both for time and eternity. If public vices have invariably destroyed single individuals, private families, and whole nations and kingdoms in time past; it is the height of folly for us to imagine, that the same vices in time to come, will not be followed with the same serious and fatal consequences. If the laws of nature remain, and the same causes continue to produce the same effects, *our sins* will as certainly, and much more rapidly destroy *us*, than the same sins have actually destroyed *other* nations. For,

Vice is the bane of a republic, and immediately saps the foundations of liberty. If our industry, economy, temperance, justice, and public faith are once extinguished by the opposite vices, our boasted Constitution, which is built upon the pillars of virtue, must necessarily fall. And if any other form of government should happen to arise from its ruins, it must be one which springs from corruption, which is administered by corruption, and which tends to spread and perpetuate corruption.

Besides, we have more reason than any other nation, to expect that our vices will speedily awaken the displeasure of the Almighty, and draw down his judg-

ments upon us. Heaven has favored us with great and distinguishing privileges. We have been indulged with more instructions and examples of virtue and religion, than any other nation on earth. We have had line upon line, and precept upon precept. We have been planted in the house of the Lord. We have lived in virtuous and religious families. And great numbers of us have been long inured to the political virtues of economy, industry, temperance, and commutative justice. By falling into vice, therefore, we shall do violence to our customs and habits, as well as to the enlightened dictates of reason and conscience. Add to all this, the great and marvellous deliverances, which God has, from age to age, and especially of late, granted to our nation. These will amazingly aggravate our guilt, if we forsake the Author of our mercies and the God of our fathers, and defile the land which he hath taken from the heathens, and given to us. We may justly conclude therefore, that God will deal with us for our sins, as he said he would deal with his own people, on whom he had bestowed great and distinguishing favors. "You only of all the families of the earth have I known, *therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.*"

Now if our sins do really abound and eminently expose us to ruin and reproach, what is our duty? Is there a single person at a loss to know? Our guilt and danger speak louder than words, and call upon us to exert every effort, to prevent and restrain the corruption of the times. But what course shall we pursue? Let us awake from our lethargy, consider our situation, and remove the grounds of our danger. We shall be enemies to ourselves as well as the public, if we do not put away our strange vices, as the polluted Israelites put away theirs, in the days of Ezra, and in a time of

reformation. And let us moreover do, as some of the same people did, on the account of the corruption of morals. They sighed, and cried, and prayed for the guilty nation; and then united their exertions to reform their public vices. They entered into a solemn engagement, and sealed it with their own hands, to employ all their influence in restraining open and shameful immoralities.

Nor let any imagine, that it is either impracticable or fruitless in these times, to form unions in virtue to weaken and destroy combinations in vice. This mode of reformation has been tried, in various parts of the British dominions, with great success. At the end of the bishop of St. David's sermon, preached to the Societies for the *Reformation of Manners*, is subjoined the three and thirtieth account of the progress made in the cities of London and Westminster, and places adjacent, by those virtuous and respectable Societies. The account says, "This undertaking *begun* by a few persons, has mightily spread itself, not only in Great Britain, but in foreign parts. And the great good which, by God's blessing, has been done by the said Societies has very much animated their endeavors. They have likewise been encouraged by several Royal proclamations, orders of Sessions, presentments of grand Juries, in many counties in England; by the lord Mayors and court of Aldermen of the city of London; by many sermons of the right reverend the Bishops, and other eminent divines preached to the Societies, and by the writings of other learned men." After this, the account further says, "The said Societies have presented, and been assisting in presenting, from the first day of December 1727, divers sorts of offenders; viz. *For lewd and disorderly practices, common gaming houses, and other disorderly houses, common*

gamesters, profane swearing and cursing, exercising their trades, or ordinary callings on the Lord's day, and for drunkenness; in all 1363.

“The total number of persons prosecuted by the Societies, in or near London only, for *debauchery and profaneness*, for 36 years last past, are calculated at about 94,322.”

These accounts carry convincing evidence, that unions in virtue may be so formed and conducted, as to restrain, in some measure at least, the progress of vice. What is there then, which can possibly prevent us, in this day of declension, from uniting our exertions for the reformation of manners, but merely *the want of virtuous resolution*? Were we sufficiently possessed of virtuous resolution, we might easily form such respectable unions, as would put the bold and brazen vices to the blush, and cause them to creep into corners. Union is of singular service to any, who are engaged in promoting the same common cause. It collects their wisdom, adds weight to their characters, and at the same time, enlivens their zeal and fortitude. Indeed, union in a good cause, scarcely ever fails of success. Can we therefore answer it to God, or to ourselves, if we neglect to pursue those measures, which we *believe* are wise and expedient, and would effectually check the progress of vice, and produce a reformation of manners? I mean not, however, to urge this point. I choose to submit this subject to your more private, deliberate, and solemn reflections.

But if the measure which we have now suggested should surpass the strength of your virtue; yet there remain many other methods of restraining vice, which lie equally open to every individual. Be entreated then to act properly as individuals, and exert all the influence of your private characters and connexions, to restrain the licentiousness of the times.

Let the aged lead in this good design. They have lived to see the happy fruits of virtue, and the baneful effects of vice. They have lived to observe that course of conduct, by which these infant States gradually arose to greatness and affluence; and that course of conduct by which they are now subjected to great embarrassments. They have lived in the days of industry, economy and temperance, and owe their ease, reputation, and fortunes to the practice of these political virtues. They are able, therefore, by their own observation and experience, to warn the young and inexperienced, of the folly and danger of departing from their primitive purity and simplicity of manners; and to exhibit the most forcible evidence, that diligence and virtue will raise men to wealth and honor, but idleness and vice will sink them to poverty and wretchedness.

It is the duty of parents to employ their peculiar power and authority in promoting the reformation of morals. They have the first and easiest access to their children, while their minds are young and tender, and susceptible of the deepest impressions. They have peculiar opportunity of inculcating the precepts of prudence, virtue and religion, before their minds have been hardened and corrupted by the pollutions of the world. They may, by a proper mixture of instruction, persuasion, authority, and example, form their external conduct and behavior, almost just as they please. And in this way they can do more to restrain the prevalence of vice, than all the exertions of ministers and rulers can do, without their particular concurrence and aid. They are, therefore, under the strongest obligations, to give their children a virtuous and pious education. They ought, in season, to teach them the knowledge of God, the nature of religion, the

beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice. They ought to enforce all their instructions by their own amiable and virtuous examples. They ought to keep a vigilant eye upon the conduct and disposition of their children, and carefully restrain them from those particular evils, to which they perceive they are particularly exposed. They ought to shut their doors against the entrance of vice: and never suffer their children to push into the world, before they are possessed of either age or experience to govern their conduct. These are methods, by which parents may preserve the peace and purity of their own families, and at the same time universally promote the reformation of manners.

It is the proper business of executive officers, to employ their power and authority in suppressing those public vices, which corrupt the morals and disturb the peace of society. We have strict and severe laws against profane swearing, sabbath breaking, gaming, tavern haunting, drunkenness, lewdness, and debauchery. But have these laws against these public and pernicious vices been duly executed? We have scarcely known a single person, in the course of twenty years, who has been prosecuted either for swearing, sabbath breaking, drunkenness, or gaming. Has this been owing to the scarcity of offenders, or to the want of evidence? If not, can it be imputed to any thing else, than the neglect of informing and executive officers? Better had it been, to have had no such laws enacted; better would it be, to have them now repealed; than to have such silent laws and silent magistrates. Can those who wear the sword of justice, wear it in vain, and yet be blameless? Or can they answer for their negligence, before the Supreme Ruler, whose ministers they are, and before whom they have lifted

up their hand to be faithful? It is devoutly to be wished, that all from the highest to the lowest in the executive department, would personally obey, and faithfully execute the laws of the land.

The supreme Judges, in the several States, may throw the weight of their great and respectable characters into the scale of virtue. *Their* sacred regard to the Sabbath; *their* constant attendance on public worship and family devotion; *their* open profession of the great principles of natural and revealed religion; *their* shining examples of virtue and piety in all their public and private conduct, will give great encouragement to the practice of virtue, and pour the highest contempt upon the practice of vice.

The subordinate Judges, Justices, and informing officers, being much more numerous and much more conversant, with the people at large, have a far greater opportunity of employing their exemplary characters and peculiar powers in promoting a reformation of manners, through all the counties, towns, and parishes in each of our Commonwealths.

We must, in tenderness and compassion to those who are pursuing the paths of vice, beseech them to consider not only the present but future consequences of their pernicious course. The contagion of their vices may reach to future ages, and destroy after they are dead, and sunk in oblivion, the souls of millions. "One sinner destroyeth much good." One sinner destroyed the ten tribes of Israel. It is repeated again and again, "*Jeroboam the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin—Jeroboam the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin—Jeroboam the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin.*"

What a load of guilt did that vile and corrupt seducer contract! What curses did he heap upon his own head, by drawing away the souls of thousands,

age after age, from the service, from the house, and from the favor of God! With what a stigma of reproach, hath God linked his name and character together, and conveyed them down to the latest generations, as a warning to all, who shall dare to corrupt and destroy the souls of others! Let such at this day, be intreated to regard this kind and salutary warning, and immediately repent and reform. It is possible, they may now, in some measure, undo what they have already done, by endeavoring to reclaim and save those from ruin, whom their vicious examples have well nigh destroyed.

But though every other description of characters, should either neglect or obstruct the reformation of manners; yet, we trust, all the friends of God will cheerfully join in promoting this virtuous and benevolent design. They will not cease to sigh and cry for the abominations committed in the land, nor neglect to pour out their hearts before God, for the effusions of his Spirit, and the revival of religion. The Noahs, Jobs and Daniels have great encouragement to wrestle with God in prayer, that he would graciously take the work of reformation into his own hand, and change the *lives* of men, by changing their *hearts*. This would be a reformation indeed! This would destroy the roots and branches of vice together!

Thus every person in every station of life, has some weight and influence to be employed in the cause of virtue. And who can hesitate in these evil days, which side to take, or what part to act? Every man will find his account in the reformation of morals. For, "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." There are various motives, which urge us immediately to exert our best endeavors to restrain our prevailing vices, and to revive those

languishing virtues, which were once our distinguishing glory and happiness.

If we *now* begin to check our growing vices and corruptions, we may hope to succeed. The piety and virtue of some, and the distresses of others, bear a favorable aspect upon the reformation of morals. Delays will afford us no help nor encouragement, but only weaken our resolutions, and increase our difficulties. If we can ever restrain our public immoralities, we can restrain them now. Now therefore is the time to begin. The work of reformation devolves upon us; and we cannot refer it to another generation, without neglecting *our own* duty, and suffering the cause of virtue to languish in *our own* hands.

Besides, if we are remiss in checking those vices and corruptions, which spring up and prevail, while we are upon the stage, we shall actually partake in the guilt of those whom we neglect to reform; and must expect to share in the dreadful calamities, which may justly fall upon a corrupt and incorrigible people.

But, if we faithfully endeavor to suppress the prevalence of vice, as far as our power and influence extend, we shall merit that noble and distinguishing character which belongs to reformers. And who would not wish to be placed on the list, which enrolls the names, and embalms the memories of Asa, Josiah, Jehoiada, and many other great and amiable men, who improved the virtues, and restrained the vices, of the several ages in which they lived? God, who carries the characters of all in his hand, hath expressly said, "*Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*"

But, if all our efforts in the cause of virtue, should fail of success, and only expose our characters to the reproach of those, whom we labor to reclaim; yet

the approbation of conscience, in the hour of death, will afford us an ample and sufficient reward. When all our civil and social connexions on earth shall finally cease; then to be able to reflect, that we have done all in our power, to leave those behind us both *virtuous* and *happy*, will be the strongest support, and the highest satisfaction, that our natures can know.

SERMON XVI.

Delivered September 3, 1792, to the Society for the Reformation of Morals,
in Franklin.

2 THESSALONIANS iii, 9.

—But to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

ENSAMPLE is only another word for example. Each of these terms properly denotes a copy or pattern, which is designed to convey either natural or moral instruction. And this mode of teaching is, of all others, the most easy and forcible. Precept *constrains*; example *allures*. Precept *compels*; example *persuades*. Precept is a *dead*, example is a *living* law. Such a law the Apostles made themselves to the Thessalonians. The case was this. Some among them had neglected their daily business, misimproved their precious time, and become a burden and temptation to others. While the Apostle, therefore, reproveth such idle and disorderly persons, he reminds them, that he, and other preachers of the gospel, had labored night and day, merely to set them an example of diligence and activity in business. “*Not because we have not power,*” that is, a right to lay aside secular concerns. *but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.* These words, on this occasion, naturally lead us to consider the peculiar force of example. And in order to discover its great and extensive influence, it will be proper to view it in a variety of respects.

I. Let us consider it in respect to some other things, which are known to have great influence upon human

conduct. Advice is persuasive, but example is more persuasive. Let a man advise his friend to act contrary to his own example, and what will be the effect? His friend will follow his example, and reject his advice. The force of authority is great, but the force of example is greater. A parent's habitual conduct has more influence upon his children, than his most positive precepts. The law of the land is not equal to the law of example. Every written law must yield to common law. And common law is nothing but long and immemorial example. A man may safely travel any road, use any property, speak any word, or do any action, which common and uninterrupted custom allows. For, all written laws are obliged to bend to the supreme law of example.

II. We may consider the force of example upon the human mind, in the various stages of life. These are usually divided into childhood, youth, manhood, and old age.

In childhood, example is always the governing motive of action. Every one comes into the world a total stranger to men and things. In this situation, the child takes example for his first and surest guide. By example, he learns what is harmless and what is hurtful; what is decent and what is indecent; what is pleasing and what is displeasing; what secures approbation and what creates disgust. He observes every person's conduct, and endeavors to act as he sees others act; especially those with whom he lives, and on whom he depends. A sense of dependence, and a desire to please, are habitual dispositions in children, which continually impel them to follow the example of others. They soon perceive their want of assistance from those, who possess superior strength and superior wisdom. And

to secure this assistance is their first and supreme object. But to attain this desirable object, they find by experience, that they must speak as others speak, dress as others dress, walk as others walk, sit as others sit, and, in all their behavior, conform to the example of others. In this way, they make swift advances in the knowledge of the world. They learn something every day and every moment. They let no person pass by them without observation, nor without instruction. Hence to learn, and to learn by example, becomes a habit; and this habit, formed in this early and tender age, becomes a second nature, which time only serves to strengthen and increase.

In youth, which is the next period of life, they still retain their natural sense of inferiority and dependence, and are eager to secure the favor and patronage of those, who have reached the years of manhood. To act like men, is the height of their ambition. They mean therefore, to follow their example, and tread in their steps, as nearly as possible. Nor are they inattentive to those of their own age, among whom there is great inequality in other respects. Some have superior wealth, some superior learning, some superior genius, some superior reputation, and some superior art and address. These become leaders, while others who feel their inferiority, are obliged to follow their steps. Hence the rising generation grow up under the habit of imitation, and the power of example. Let them turn which way they will, the example of both their equals and superiors in age, attacks them with a double influence, which they are totally unable to resist.

In manhood, they arrive to years of discretion, enter upon the busy scenes of life, and attain a certain measure of independence and self-direction. But

though they now equally disregard the example of the young and of the aged, yet they cannot rise above the example of those of their own standing. In the meridian of life, men sustain very different characters and relations, and are placed in very different circumstances. Some are rich, and some are poor; some are high, and some are low; some move in a private, and some in a public station. Accordingly all continue to lead and to be led. Though ambition, in this season of life, takes a more serious turn, forsaking the vanities of childhood and youth, and pursuing the manly objects of riches, honor, and power, yet it loses nothing of its real strength and vigor. In manhood, all the powers and passions of the mind are bent upon making and supporting distinctions. Every one is sanguine to distinguish himself, by setting example to some, and by following the example of others. There is no man but feels he has both superiors and inferiors. The rich feel they have superiors in learning. The learned feel they have superiors in genius. The men of genius feel they have superiors in influence and address. And on the other hand, the poor feel themselves to be superior to many in beauty of body, in strength of mind, and in many other qualities, which command esteem and respect. The consciousness of this mutual superiority and inferiority disposes every man both to set and to follow example. He means to follow the example of his superior, and to set example to his inferior. This disposition to lead, and to be led, displays itself in every art and science; in every business and diversion of life. Let the mechanic go into the museum of the philosopher, and the philosopher will feel and display his superiority. Let the philosopher go into the shop of the mechanic, and the mechanic will feel and display his superiority. Let the philosopher,

the mechanic, the merchant, the attorney, the physician, and the farmer, meet in the same company, and each will feel, by turns, his superiority and inferiority, as the conversation happens to fall upon different subjects. And let the man of the world mix in this company of learned and useful men, and he will lose that sense of superiority, which he felt in the circle of the gay and trifling, and sink into his own proper insignificance. Thus, in the meridian of life, while men are pursuing power, riches, honor and pleasure, example has the largest field to exert her sovereign influence over all their views and behavior.

In old age, which is the last and most serious stage of life, we might expect that example would lose all her influence; but observation and experience clearly teach us the contrary. The aged both set and follow example. In some places the aged gradually retire from the view, from the conversation, from the employments and diversions of those in younger life. But in other places, they keep up their connexions with the world, mix among the young and the gay, and join in their employments and amusements. This practice prevails among the rich and the great in all polished nations, and is much recommended by many modern writers. Here we see, that the influence of example never leaves men, till they leave the world. And indeed, it often displays its power in the article of death. When Cesar was stabbed in the senate house, and perceived that his wounds were incurable, he wrapped his cloak around him, and threw himself into the most decent posture of dying. And criminals are often seen to be very attentive to the rules of politeness, while they were standing on the brink of time, and preparing for the awful stroke of justice. Such is the early and lasting influence of example. It

takes mankind by the hand in their infancy, and leads them through all the remaining stages of life. It is the first law they know, and the only law they keep. Its authority is gentle, though always irresistible. And its precepts are pleasing, though often severe and tyrannical. I pass,

III. To consider the influence of example upon human societies. These are composed of individuals, and equally subject to the power of example. A family is a small, but important society. In this little circle, children acquire their strongest habits. It is not so much what the parents command, or what others advise, as what every one does, that forms the characters and manners of children. Jonadab's example formed the character of his children, and of his children's children, from generation to generation. Domestic example has the same influence among all nations, and in all places. Take a child from one nation, and carry him to another, and his character will more resemble the nation in which he is educated, than that in which he was born. Or take a child only from one family, and put him into another of the same place, and he will more resemble the family in which he is brought up, than that from which he was taken, and from which he derived his very existence. If you go into a little neighborhood, parish, or town, you will find a certain similarity in their customs and manners. This can be ascribed to nothing but the force of example. There is no law human nor divine which requires towns, parishes, or neighborhoods, to observe such a similarity of conduct. And perhaps no law but that of example would be strong enough to produce such an effect. If we consider the peculiarities which are observable in national characters, we must ascribe these to the powerful influence of exam-

ple, rather than to different climates, different food, different laws, or different religions. A nation takes its peculiar character from the stock from which it originates. Wherever we can discover the first inhabitants of any country, there we find that they gave the national character to their descendants. In America, we are able to trace the rise and progress of each of the United States. We know the character of the first planters of Massachusetts, of Rhode-Island, of New-York, of Pennsylvania, of Maryland. And we know that the same peculiarities which distinguished the first settlers, continue to distinguish their descendants in each of those States. The national character of the natives of America was formed by example, for they had no written laws, nor written religion, to form it. And there is no national character more distinctly and strongly marked than theirs. They will by no means conform to the customs and manners of any other nation. The reason is, they make the example of their progenitors the sole rule of their conduct. Example is their supreme law, which they use every possible method to render absolutely sacred. Such is the force of example in all human societies, that it marks them with peculiar and permanent characters. And the nature of men must be changed, before this effect of example will cease. I observe once more,

IV. That example governs all the *modes* of human conduct. The modes of speaking, of reading, of writing, among all civilized nations are formed by the force of example. These modes vary according to the opinion and practice of those who are esteemed the best instructors. The few set the example to the many; and the many implicitly follow. The mass of the people have no other guide in these matters than bare example. The higher branches of learning are subject to the same

sovereign authority. Sometimes mathematics, sometimes philosophy, sometimes metaphysics, and sometimes the fine arts are in fashion. And each of these sciences is principally cultivated, according to the example of those who reign in the republic of letters. Example governs the various modes of building. Different nations, different states, different towns, and even different villages, commonly construct their buildings in a different manner. In travelling the road, when we meet with a cluster of houses, we may generally observe a great similarity in their structure, magnitude and materials. This is a familiar instance of the force of example, which is every where to be seen. Example fixes the various degrees of reputation, which belong to the various stations, and employments of life, in the various parts of the world. Different professions are very differently esteemed in different nations, and even in different parts of the same nation. And there is scarcely any profession but what is reputable among some people. Among the Jews it was reputable to labor in any of the mechanic arts. Our blessed Savior was a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter. To cultivate the earth was the original business of man. And this employment was honorable among the Romans in their most flourishing situation. Cincinnatus was repeatedly called from the plough, to the head of that mighty empire. In different parts of our own country, different professions are very differently esteemed. To labor with the hands in the field, in the house, or in the shop, is reputable in the Northern States. But in the Southern States, every species of manual labor is looked upon as below the dignity of men of rank and fortune. This is the fruit of example, which has peculiar influence upon men, in the choice of their particular occupations and professions. Nor does the force of

example stop here, but absolutely directs almost every man in the particular *modes* of prosecuting his particular business. The son follows the example of the father, the daughter the example of her mother, the servant the example of his master, the scholar the example of his teacher. And posterity follow the example of their ancestors.

The great affairs of government are subject to the supreme power of example. A single nation follows some great general, or great politician. One nation treads in the steps of another. The modes of one government are interwoven with those of another. The British government still retains the effects of popery, and many of the laws of Rome. The American government bears striking features of the British. And the French constitution is a mere transcript of the American.

The modes of religion ought to be wholly subject to the divine authority; but the example of man often outweighs the authority of God, in these serious concerns. The peculiarities and ceremonies of each different sect among Christians, took their origin from the opinion and practice of one single person, or of a few individuals. And when a sect is formed, example preserves their existence, and all their peculiarities. Let me instance in the Friends, a sect with whom we are acquainted. Their peculiarities can scarcely plead the least divine warrant. But yet there is no other sect so perfectly uniform in all their religious modes, even to the smallest punctilios. This must arise from the prodigious power of example.

Modes of public mourning and of public rejoicing take their rise from the same powerful cause. Example is the law, to which all nations submit in those points of ceremony. Savage nations mourn and re-

joyce according to nature; but polished nations according to art. The former give indulgence to their passions; the latter lay them under restraint, and neither mourn nor rejoice according to their own feelings, but according to the feelings of the spectators, who are less interested in the mournful or joyful events. Here example appears stronger than the strongest passions of human nature.

I may add, it is the proper province of example, to govern modes of dress, modes of living, and modes of diversion. Here example reigns alone and supreme. It has no superior, no assistant, and no rival. Example commands the French always to change, and forbids the Spaniards ever to alter their dress; and both are equally obedient. Men eat and drink more according to example, than according to reason, interest, health, or appetite. Were it not for the tyranny of example, men would live as much according to nature as the inferior animals, and as seldom injure themselves, by intemperance. But foolish example triumphs over their reason, interest, reputation, and happiness, and subjects them to the greatest present and future evils.

Diversions, properly so called, have no foundation either in reason or religion. They are the offspring of a corrupt heart, and nourished by vicious example. God requires duties, and nothing but duties. And the duties which he requires are so various, and so well adapted to our present state, that in the performing of them, we may find all the relaxation of body and mind, which either can ever require. But example overcomes duty, and constrains all to indulge themselves in amusements, which the dictates of reason and the commands of God forbid. Few have the conscience and the resolution to resist this tyranny

of example. Most are easily led astray by the practice of those, whom they consider as greater, or wiser, or better than themselves. Many diversions wear an innocent appearance, though they really murder time, and unfit the heart for the duties of devotion. All diversions, whether more mean or more manly, are the grapes of Sodom, and the clusters of Gomorrah; and though they are sweet to the taste, yet they are bitter to the conscience, and injurious to the soul. But example is strong enough to stifle the dictates of duty, and to lead the sons and daughters of men, in the smooth and pleasant path of diversion, to endless ruin. Thus it appears from universal observation and experience, that example has a great and constant influence over mankind, in all their diversions and employments, through every stage and condition of life, from the cradle to the grave.

It now only remains to improve the subject.

1. We learn from the great influence of example, why parents are so unsuccessful in the education of their children. They naturally have a strong and tender affection for their offspring, which is a powerful motive to promote their reputation and happiness. But though they generally endeavor to instruct and restrain them, both by precept and penalty; yet they often find, to their sorrow, that their well meant endeavors fail of answering their ardent wishes. And this is frequently a matter of their astonishment as well as of their grief. But if they would only reflect on their own example, which they have set before their children, they might, in many cases, easily discover the principal cause of their great disappointment. They often defeat their own instructions and corrections by their own examples. Example has a more constant and controlling influence over the

minds of children, than any precepts or penalties. If parents neglect to govern their own tongues, children will neglect to govern theirs. If parents neglect to govern their own tempers, children will neglect to govern theirs. If parents neglect to treat their superiors, inferiors, and equals, with proper respect, children will follow their ill example. If parents disregard and violate the Sabbath, children will do the same. If parents are prayerless, so will the children be. If parents are worldly-minded, children will imbibe the same spirit. If parents trample on the laws of the land, children will be unwholesome members of society. If parents are given to vanity, children will become still more vain in their feelings and appearance. In short, children will be more influenced by the example of their parents, than by all their instructions and restraints. It is the want of good example, more than any thing else, which so often defeats parental instructions. If parents, therefore, would enforce their good instructions, by their good examples, they would happily succeed in the education of their children, and train them up in the way in which they should go, and from which they would never depart.

2. From the great influence of example, we learn why executive officers so often fail in the discharge of their trusts. There is a great and visible neglect of putting into execution the laws of the land. It is true, the laws respecting property are strictly executed; but the laws against vice are allowed to sleep in silence. Executive officers have the same authority, and are bound by the same solemn obligation, to execute the laws against immorality, as those against fraud and injustice. Why then do they neglect to execute the former rather than the latter? The cause is obvious. The voice of example commands them to de-

send men's lives and properties; but the same formidable voice forbids them to suppress their fashionable vices.

But besides the general example in favor of vice, there is the particular example of *negligent officers*, which those who wish to execute the laws are afraid to resist. And hence they cast the blame of their own negligence upon the negligence of others. They say, it is impossible for a few to suppress the prevalence of vice, when the most, in number and influence, neglect the duties of their office. The truth of this assertion cannot be denied. For judges, justices, sheriffs, constables, and tithingmen, are become extremely negligent in the discharge of their respective trusts. They not only neglect to execute, but personally violate the laws of the land. And their own example, as well as the example of the people, forbids them to execute those laws, which condemn their own evil conduct. This general example of rulers and of people is the greatest obstacle, in the way of executing the laws against open immoralities, and is the only excuse which executive officers can plead for the neglect of their duty. But will God, whose ministers they are, allow the validity of their excuse? Will that which increases, lessen their obligations to fidelity? Will the crying vices of the times, stifle the accusing voice of conscience? Will their being highly esteemed among men, prevent their being an abomination in the sight of God? Or will the dreadful fruits of their negligence, hereafter yield them the least consolation? If executive officers cannot render a better reason for their negligence, than the force of bad example, they may be assured, that their negligence will be bitter in the latter end; and their elevation in this life, will terminate in shame and contempt in the life to come.

Be wise, ye judges and rulers, and fulfil your sacred trusts, or ye will finally fall under the condemnation and wrath of the Judge of all the earth.

3. We learn from the great influence of example, why it is so difficult for any not to deviate from the path of virtue. Example leads many great, and good, and strong men astray. Those who are sober, virtuous, and even pious, are often overcome by the force of example, to say and do things, which they resolve not to say and do, in their calm and retired hours. Joseph did not allow himself in profaneness, yet it seems the example of courtiers sometimes led him to use profane oaths. Solomon was a wise and good man, but example led him astray. The patriarchs and many of the kings of Israel were good men, but example betrayed them into polygamy. The common people in Israel were generally inclined to obey the commands of God externally, but the example of their kings, and of neighboring nations, often seduced them to the worship of idols. It was example, which led many of the common people to despise and reject the Savior. "Have any of the Rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" was the question they asked; and the answer determined their conduct, because they were unable to resist the force of example. Why do so many sober, and even pious men, indulge themselves in vain and unprofitable conversation on the Sabbath? Is it not chiefly owing to the example of the company into which they unhappily fall? Why do so many temperate men, on public days, sit and drink with the intemperate? Is it not to be imputed to the alluring force of example? Or why do Christians in general so often symbolize with the world? Is it not because the strength of example surpasses the strength of their virtue? The propensity to follow bad examples,

is the greatest weakness, that the strongest and best of men find about them. Were it not for this weakness, there would be many more shining characters in the world in general, and in this place in particular.

4. We learn from the great influence of example, the importance of avoiding bad company. It is the example of the vicious, which renders their company dangerous. Those who mean to conduct well themselves, might safely frequent the worst of company, if they only had strength of virtue to resist the power of example. But none have this strength of virtue, and therefore none can safely frequent the company of the vicious. Example has a most secret and insinuating influence. Milton ingeniously conjectures that Satan employed this artful method to seduce our first parents. It is certain, however, that their posterity, are extremely subject to the secret and delusive power of example. A looseness of thought, a looseness of speech, a looseness of conduct, in others, very insensibly warps our sentiments and corrupts our hearts. We are always apt to imagine, that we may safely conform to our company, with a little reserve or some small restrictions. When we observe others say and do certain things, without any apprehension of guilt, we are ready to ask, Why is it wrong, or why is it improper, for us to say and do the same? So the child argues—so the youth—and even so the man of gray hairs. Such thoughts of foolishness are sin. And there is no way to avoid them, but to avoid bad company.

5. We learn from the great influence of example, that no man can live in the world, without doing either good or hurt to others, as well as to himself. Many vicious persons neither lie nor cheat, nor steal, nor rob, and therefore console themselves with the

thought, that they are harmless members of society, and injure nobody but themselves. This, however, is a great mistake. No man lives unobserved, and no man's example is without some effect. Every man's general conduct fixes his general character; and his general character has either a good or bad influence upon all around him. Indeed, every man means to set an example, and he never fails of doing it. Some mean to set good examples. Some mean to set bad examples. And some mean to set the example of mere negative virtue, by barely shunning infamous vice. But there are, in reality, no negative examples. They are all either good, or evil, and have either a good or evil effect on somebody or other. Every man, therefore, whilst he lives in the world, has some influence in making it either better or worse, by his own example. And hence every man does either good or evil to others, as well as to himself.

6. From the great influence of example, we learn the great account which great men will have to give for the use of it. The example of the great has the greatest influence. And this influence they ought to improve for the glory of God, and the benefit of the world. The high, the rich, the learned, and the aged, are eminently men of influence. These men, in every society, nation, and kingdom, govern the mass of the people, more by the power of example, than by any other power. Joshua and the Elders were the men of influence among the Israelites. And accordingly we are told, that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua." The king very often forms the court, and the court the rest of the nation. King Charles II. spread corruption through all orders, ranks and classes of the kingdom. The force of example is the same in

all nations and in all places. A few men of influence in every nation govern the nation. A few men of influence in every state govern the state. A few men of influence in every town govern the town. And a few men of influence in every society govern the society. The men of influence possess a great and dangerous talent. And if they duly considered the great account which they must hereafter give for their use of it, they would be more solicitous to improve, than to increase their influence. Men of influence are under the highest obligations to set good examples. And they ought to esteem it a privilege, when a fair opportunity opens, to throw the weight of their example into the scale of virtue. This frequently happens in all places. It now happens in this. Let me ask then, Why some in this place have neglected to unite their influence with that of others, for the reformation of morals? Can you answer it to God, if you continue practically to oppose the virtuous, and to countenance the vicious? You may choose to be neuters, but neuters you cannot be, either in the view of God or man. Your neglect is an example, and an example which has great influence—not to promote, but to prevent a reformation of morals.

7. From the great influence of example, we learn how easy it is, to effect a reformation of morals among any people. Example alone will do it. This is a very easy and unexceptionable way. If men of influence among any people, would only set good examples themselves, they would insensibly and gradually promote a reformation of morals. There is a few in every town and parish, who carry the power of reformation in their own conduct. Let them but uniformly conduct worthy of imitation, and others will voluntarily and cheerfully tread in their steps. This may be illustrated by the article of dress. Let the wealthiest per-

sons in this place, only agree to wear their own manufactures, and strictly conform to their agreement, and they would soon establish the fashion of wearing our own manufactures here. Not the example of neighboring towns, not the example of Boston, nay, not the example of all the world besides, would be sufficient to destroy the influence of the leading men in this place. Every society are independent in regard to their own customs and fashions, and always submit to the example of a few leading characters among themselves, in those particular points. This is exemplified by the sect called the Friends. Not that I would recommend them as perfect patterns of dress. They doubtless go to an extreme in singularity. But certainly any people might avoid the extravagance of fashion, as well as they can avoid all the varieties of it. The youth in this place, are not so much governed, in their fashions, by the example of other places, as by the example of a few in this. If this few, therefore, would set a good example, in this respect, they would easily bring into discredit and disuse many superfluities and fopperies of dress, which begin to increase and prevail.

And what has been said respecting the extravagance of fashions, will equally apply to any other vice or immorality. Example alone would suppress it. The example of a few in this place, would reform the vices which begin to prevail among us. We have the power of reformation in our own hands. And this power might be exerted without the least offence or expense, and with all desirable success. How inexcusable, therefore, must those be, who neglect to pursue this easy and effectual mode of reformation!

8. If the force of example be so great as we have represented, then it certainly concerns reformers in particular, to set good examples. This is the principal

method, by which they can reach their desired purpose. And the want of their own good examples will effectually frustrate all other methods they can possibly use, for the reformation of morals. The eyes of all will be upon *their* conduct. If they act up to their profession, it will give energy both to their profession, and to all their exertions, for the suppression of vice. They must cast the beam out of their own eye, before they offer to cast the mote out of another's eye. They must heal themselves before they attempt to heal others. In all their attempts for a reformation, they must act under the shield of their own bright example. With this armor, they may safely attack the strong holds of vice, and bid defiance to all the impotent arrows of obloquy and reproach. They must set an example of all virtue; but especially of those particular virtues, which stand in opposition to the particular vices, which they wish to reform. And here, I beg leave to mention a few examples, which it highly concerns them to exhibit.

Punctuality is a virtue of great importance in society; and the want of it is a source of innumerable disadvantages and embarrassments. One small disappointment may prove the occasion of twenty or fifty great ones. Let reformers to cure this evil, observe the strictest punctuality in all their promises and appointments.

The due observation of the Sabbath greatly tends to promote Christian knowledge, piety, and virtue among a people. And this duty is more promoted by the law of example, than by any other law. People in general govern their conduct on the Sabbath, not according to the word of God, or the law of the land, but according to the law of example. They mean to attend public worship every Sabbath, if they see those above them, attend it every Sabbath. They mean to

attend public worship both parts of the day, if they see those above them, attend it both parts of the day. They mean to take their places in the house of God, before public exercises begin, if they see those above them set them the example. They mean, after public worship is over, to visit their own habitations, and spend the remainder of the day in retirement, if they observe this to be the practice of their superiors in age, knowledge, and reputation. Let reformers, therefore, remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, and, by their own example, restrain others from the outward profanation of it.

The wise and profitable improvement of time, is the best antidote against sinful diversions. The habit of industry destroys the habit of idleness, and when the habit of idleness is destroyed, the propensity to vain and sinful diversions is cured. Hence Paul, to cure the Thessalonians of their idle habits, made himself an ensample of industry. Let reformers, therefore, follow his example, that theirs may restrain others from idleness and vanity.

It is the very business of reformers to employ the power of laws in their service. They ought to improve the advantage, which our great and wise men have put into their hands. They ought to display the same virtue in executing, which was displayed in framing the laws against vice. And to encourage you in the prosecution of your duty, I have a right to observe, that some of you have already set a good example, and merited the public approbation. Be not weary in well doing, but persevere in every laudable method for the suppression of vice. You have every possible motive to animate you in your arduous, but noble undertaking. For the approbation of God, the applause of the virtuous, and the gratitude of the reformed, will be your sure and ample reward. AMEN.

SERMON XVII.

Delivered September 2, 1793, to the Society for the Reformation of Morals, in Franklin.

2 KINGS v, 18.

—*The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.*

THESE are the words of Naaman, the Syrian, on a very remarkable occasion. He had just been miraculously cured of his leprosy, by washing seven times in Jordan, at the direction of Elisha. Though at first he despised this simple remedy, yet when he found that it had completely removed his loathsome disease, he altered his opinion of the prophet, and wished to reward him amply for his kindness. Accordingly “he returned from Jordan to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: And he said, behold, now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: Now therefore I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. And Naaman said, Shall there not then I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules burden of earth? For thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, *the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.*”

Naaman was a great and valiant general, who had commanded the armies of the king of Syria, and de-

livered his kingdom from surrounding enemies. He stood high in the favor of his prince. He was his prime minister. He attended him at his public devotions, as well as at his other public appearances. And after his mind had taken a religious turn, he was still willing to serve both his God and his king; *but, he was not willing to oppose sinful customs.* This threw him into great embarrassment. Though he could lavish his treasure on the prophet, and though he could expose his life in the field of battle, yet he could not summon sufficient resolution and courage, to attack those *reigning customs*, which he verily believed to be wrong. He felt as though he must renounce the service of the God of Israel, unless the God of Israel would allow him to tolerate, and, in some measure, comply with the sinful customs of his country. "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. I beg, I intreat, that I may be excused from opposing sinful customs. I know their strength. I know the danger of attacking them. I may lose my office, and what I still more dread, I shall certainly lose the love and respect of my fellow men. I must be excused from this hazardous, and, I fear, fruitless attempt. Require me to do any thing else, and I will cheerfully do it, at the risk of my fortune, or my life; but in this thing pardon and excuse thy servant." So Naaman felt. And he felt just as other men feel. Hence the general observation is this:

Every body desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs.

I shall first show, that every body desires to be excused from this; and then show, that nobody can be excused from it.

I. I am to show, that every body desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs.

This truth needs but a very little proof. It carries its own evidence to every one, who has attended to the exercises of his own mind. Though men may differ in their opinions about *some customs*; yet there are *many customs*, which all believe to be sinful. All, therefore, have had an opportunity of knowing their own minds upon this subject. And were all to speak the real language of the heart, they would unanimously say, that they have often felt a strong reluctance to opposing sinful customs. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." All feel, as Naaman felt, unwilling to combat sinful customs, and wish to be excused from the disagreeable task. This will more fully appear, if we consider,

1. That every body is apt to neglect the opposing of sinful customs. Men will often and readily oppose sinful actions. But do we find them equally ready and forward to oppose sinful customs? Are they not very apt to connive at practices which custom has long sanctioned? Even those who are very careful to avoid all appearances of evil themselves, are very negligent as to opposing sinful customs in others. But why are men so generally, and almost universally negligent in this particular? Can it arise from any thing but a strong desire in every one, to be excused from opposing sinful customs?

2. Men are unwilling to *unite*, in opposing sinful customs. This is sometimes proposed; but how generally is the proposal rejected! We have actually made the experiment. A few have had virtue and resolution enough to overcome the natural reluctance to such a hazardous undertaking. They have invited others to unite their exertions in opposing sinful customs; but the greater part have declined. And should the same proposal be made through the land, it is more than probable, that a very great majority would desire

to be excused, and refuse to join in such an important and benevolent design. This is another evidence, that every body naturally desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs. I may add,

3. Those who have resolved and engaged to oppose sinful customs, are extremely prone to come short of fulfilling their resolutions and engagements. Though they are really sincere in their resolutions and attempts, yet, upon trial, they find a strong desire to be excused in this, in that, and the other instance. To will is present, but how to perform, they find not. It requires more self-denial and fortitude, to oppose customs which have been long established, than any can imagine, before they have made the attempt. Hence the best of men, and the boldest reformers, have neglected to perform this arduous and disagreeable task.

Asa was a good man, and a great reformer, but there were some sinful customs in his day, which were so formidable, that he durst not oppose them. "And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and removed *all the idols* that his father had made. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burned it by the brook Kidron. *But the high places were not removed.*" We have the same account of his son. "And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father, he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord: *Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.*" There were two sorts of high places in Israel. One sort was devoted to the service of the true God,

and the other sort was devoted to the service of idols. The high places devoted to the service of the true God were allowed of *before* the temple was built; but after that was built, Jerusalem was the only place where men ought to worship. And though the reformers destroyed the high places devoted to the service of idols, yet they were afraid to destroy the high places devoted to the service of the true God. The people had been so long and so generally accustomed to meet in these before they were forbidden, that after they were forbidden, they still persisted in their old custom. And this old and venerable custom, the boldest reformers wanted resolution and fortitude to oppose.

The bold and zealous Peter was afraid to oppose a custom, which was once lawful, but had become sinful. It was once lawful for the Jews to abstain from eating with the Gentiles; but after the gospel was published, this bar of separation was taken down, and the believing Jews had no right to follow this custom any longer. But Peter through fear of reproach, followed this sinful example, for which Paul sharply rebuked him. So he tells us in the 2d of Galatians. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed: For before that certain came from James he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." So formidable are long established customs, that the most bold and zealous reformers are afraid to oppose them. And this shows, in the clearest manner, that every body desires to be excused from opposing sinful customs. But I proceed to show, as proposed,

II. That nobody can be excused from it.

Naaman desired to be excused, but there is no evidence, that God excused him. I know the prophet said unto him, "Go in peace." But he did not ask the prophet to excuse him. He addressed his petition to God, who alone had a right to excuse him. "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." This request probably struck the prophet very disagreeably, and therefore he said ironically, "Go in peace. If it seem evil to serve the God of Israel, and oppose ceremonies and customs, which dishonor his name, go worship in the house of Rimmon, or wheresoever you please. I have no more to say to you. You cannot serve God and mammon. And if you will not renounce mammon, you must renounce God, who never will indulge you in conniving at sinful customs." This leads me to observe,

1. That *God* will excuse none from opposing sinful customs. Though he knows that all wish to be excused, yet their wishes will not move him to excuse them from a plain duty. They evidently ought to honor and glorify their Maker, and of consequence, to oppose and restrain whatever tends to his dishonor. But sinful customs certainly tend to dishonor God, and wound his cause and interest in the world. And besides, God has clearly revealed his mind on this subject. He has expressly said to every person, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." He has expressly said, "Be not conformed to this world." He has expressly said, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." He has expressly said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather *reprove them*." And again he has expressly said, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not

suffer sin upon him." After God has laid such solemn injunctions on men to avoid and oppose sinful customs, they must be guilty of the greatest presumption to imagine, that the Lord will pardon or excuse them, if they neglect their duty in this thing.

2 *Christ* will not excuse any from opposing sinful customs. He is the same yesterday, to day, and forever, and changeth not. He came into the world to condemn sin in the flesh. When he was in the world he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. And while he lived among sinful customs, he uniformly and strenuously opposed them. He began his ministry by preaching against what had been said and done, by them of old time. He attacked without fear or favor, the reigning sinful customs of the Jewish nation. They had a sinful custom of putting away their wives without any just cause; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of swearing by the earth, by heaven, and by Jerusalem; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of calling hard names; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of abusing their aged parents, by taking what ought to be expended for their support, and dedicating it to religious uses; this he condemned and opposed. They had a sinful custom of profaning the Temple, by buying and selling in it; this he condemned and destroyed. And they had a sinful custom of treating all other nations with neglect and contempt; this he condemned and reprov'd, by the parable of the Jew and Samaritan. In short, it appears to have been a peculiar object with Christ to oppose all sinful customs. And if this was his own feeling and practice, we may presume, that he will never excuse any from this most reasonable and important duty.

3. *Those who follow sinful customs will not excuse any from opposing them.* The time is coming, when their consciences will be awakened, and they will see things in a true light. And whenever this time comes, whether before, at, or after death, they will not excuse those who neglected to restrain and reclaim them. Of this they have often given abundant evidence. How many unhappy creatures, at the gallows, have condemned those who neglected to oppose their wicked practices? How many vicious persons, on their deathbeds, have bitterly upbraided their ministers, their parents, and their friends, for winking at their vices, and neglecting to oppose their sinful customs? And all who are now pursuing evil courses, will, sooner or later, upbraid those who neglect to oppose and restrain their vices. Though at present, they love and caress those who indulge and countenance them in their evil ways, yet when they come to have just views of things, they will see the sin and folly of others, as well as their own presumption and guilt. And as they will not be able to excuse themselves, so they will not be able to excuse those who had excused *them*. But of all men, they will become the bitterest accusers and upbraiders of all who neglect the duty of opposing sinful customs.

It must be observed in the last place,

4. *That none can excuse themselves from opposing sinful customs.* It is a duty, a plain duty, which approves itself to every one's conscience. All know that they ought to oppose whatever opposes the glory of God, the good of society, and the eternal happiness of mankind. And all know that sinful customs have this malignant and destructive tendency. One sinner destroyeth much good. Evil pursueth sinners. He that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death. The

wages of sin is death. Sinful customs have destroyed their thousands and ten thousands. To prevent such dreadful evils, must be the duty of every person, so far as his power and influence extend. Nor will any one's conscience excuse him, if he neglects this plain and important duty. Though men desire to be excused; though they devise arguments of excuse; and though the arguments they devise in their own defence may lead others to excuse them; yet nothing will effectually excuse them before their own enlightened consciences. For, "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." And says Solomon, "if thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not: Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall he not render to every man according to his works?" Thus it appears, that none can be excused from opposing sinful customs. God will not excuse them, nor Christ, nor sinners, nor their own consciences. It only remains to apply the subject to the purpose for which we are convened.

1. We learn from what has been said, that there is nothing which men are more afraid of, than opposing sinful customs. Every body desires to be excused from this attempt; and this desire arises from fear. It requires no great strength, no great knowledge, no great expense, to oppose sinful customs. But it does require great courage and fortitude of mind. Here lies the only difficulty. But this difficulty is generally insurmountable. Men, who can brave the perils of the wilderness, the perils of war, and the perils of the sea, shrink back from the dangers of opposing sinful customs. The hardest seamen is afraid to rebuke his

comrade for blaspheming his Maker, and calling for the curses of heaven to fall on his own soul. The bravest general, who has often led his army into the hottest battle, is afraid to reprimand his fellow officer, or to correct his fellow soldier, for a sinful custom. This is exemplified in Naaman. He would have scorned to be excused from exposing his life to the point of the sword. He would have blushed to turn his back upon the most dangerous station, in the field of battle. But yet he beseeches the Lord to excuse him from opposing sinful customs, and exposing himself to the scorn of men. This was more than he had courage and fortitude to support. The danger of opposing sinful customs, therefore, is the danger of which the most of mankind are the most afraid.

2. We learn from what has been said, that there is nothing which more deserves the public esteem, than the opposing of sinful customs. If every body desires to be excused from this difficult and hazardous duty; and if few, very few, have virtue, zeal and resolution enough to perform it, then it is one of the strongest expressions of self denial. And for persons to deny themselves, in the tenderest point, and in the highest degree, for the public good, deserves the largest share of public applause.

Sinful customs are the greatest public evils. A thousand sinful actions are not so injurious to the public, as one sinful custom. Sinful actions are transient; they produce their effects, and immediately cease. But a sinful custom is permanent, and may continue its destructive influence for ages. I will illustrate this by a single instance. It is that of playing cards. This sinful custom has continued for ages past; and may continue for ages to come. How many estates, how many characters, how many lives, and how many

souls, has this sinful custom destroyed! And all sinful customs have a like extensive and destructive influence. Those, therefore, who dare to condemn, and restrain sinful customs, do the greatest public good, and deserve the greatest public esteem. The public are naturally grateful to their benefactors, when they discover them, and they generally do discover them sooner or later. Reformers therefore, have generally been finally rewarded by the largest portion of public honors. Witness the rigid Cato, among the Romans; and the virtuous Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Jehoiada, among the Jews.

We learn from what has been said, that nothing requires union more, than the attempt to oppose sinful customs. If every individual wants courage to make this attempt then it especially requires the united aid of numbers. There is nothing like union among individuals, to inspire them with courage and zeal in any design whatever. It is the union of individuals that forms, and preserves every sinful custom. Custom is not the effect of the few, but of the many. Whatever sinful practice the multitude pursue, is, for that very reason, a sinful custom. And as union forms sinful customs, so union alone can destroy them. A small number united by virtuous ties, can oppose and restrain a much larger number united only by the brittle bands of vice. It therefore highly concerns those who are engaged in opposing sinful customs, to be firmly and heartily united. They should, *with one voice*, speak the same things, and *with one heart*, pursue the same measures. "Two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." This the vicious know, and this the virtuous ought to consider. If it be the policy and strength of the vicious to divide the virtuous; then it is the duty and strength

of the virtuous to divide the vicious. And this, in a multitude of instances, may be easily done. The beginnings of vice are weak and timid. There are many, who, for a time, halt between two opinions, and stand in doubt which of two paths to pursue. These, by wise and prudent measures, may be easily detached from the veterans in vice, and deterred from the paths of the destroyer.

4. We learn from what has been said, that there is nothing more criminal, than the approving and the supporting of sinful customs. It is a sin against God. It is a sin against man. And it is a sin against every person's own conscience. But the great and visible evils which flow from this sin, are the great and visible aggravations of it. Men may do much more mischief to the world, and much more injury to the cause of God, by approving and supporting, than by actually pursuing sinful customs. A sober, regular man, who avoids sinful customs himself, may do ten times more to spread and continue sinful customs, than the most artful and profligate wretch. And were it not for the countenance and support of such apparently sober, virtuous, and religious persons, all sinful customs would every where become contemptible. This is the case of all practices, which no sober, honest, virtuous man approves. Thus, for instance, stealing is universally contemptible. The reason is, all sober, honest, good men, hold this vice in perfect abhorrence. And did all such men refuse their countenance and support to sinful customs, they would equally sink into universal contempt. Therefore, to approve and support sinful customs is one of the greatest of all sins.

5. We learn from what has been said, that it is utterly in vain for any to pretend to excuse themselves from opposing sinful customs. It is in vain to say,

that they desire to be excused. It is in vain to say, that it will expose them to reproach and contempt. It is in vain to say, that it does not belong to them to make the attempt. It is in vain to say, that it will do no good to make the attempt. It is in vain to say, that others neglect this duty. It is, in short, in vain to say a single word, by way of excuse. For there is no excuse, which either God, or Christ, or sinners, or their own consciences will accept. Hence,

6 This subject calls upon every person to oppose all customs, which *he* believes to be sinful. Men, as we have observed, may differ in their judgment of certain customs. But every man ought to oppose such customs as *he* believes to be sinful. And does not every person believe, that there are some sinful customs in this place?

Is not encroaching upon the Sabbath, a sinful custom? Is not profaning the Sabbath, a sinful custom? Is not profane swearing, a sinful custom? Is not gaming, a sinful custom? Is not frolicing, a sinful custom? Is not the custom, which has no name in the Dictionary, but which is commonly called bundling, a sinful custom? Is not drinking to excess, a sinful custom? Is not extravagance in dress, a sinful custom? Is not the neglect of family devotion, a sinful custom? Is not the neglect of family government, a sinful custom? Is not the neglect of executing good laws, a sinful custom? Now let me ask. Do not all these sinful customs abound in this land? And do not many of them, at least, abound in this place? If they do, it concerns all, according to their various ages, relations, and stations, to exert their power and influence, in opposing such sinful and destructive customs. In particular:

Ministers of the gospel ought to discountenance all prevailing vices. Though men differ in their opinions, what doctrines Ministers ought to preach and oppose, yet all are agreed, that they ought to preach all the civil, social, moral virtues; and to condemn and oppose every custom, which tends to destroy, or even weaken their happy influence.

Civil rulers ought to be the fathers of their people, and the guardians of their virtues, as well as of their rights and privileges. They are appointed to be a terror to evil doers; and to employ the authority with which they are vested, in opposing and restraining sinful customs. And if they neglect their duty in this respect, they will deserve the character, and contract the guilt of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Professors of religion are bound, by the most solemn obligations, not only to depart from all iniquity themselves, but to rise up for God against evil doers, and to stand up for him against the workers of iniquity. Instead of being conformed to the spirit of the world, they ought to be totally opposed to it; and by their example and influence, oppose all sinful customs.

Those who have engaged to oppose sinful customs, have laid themselves under peculiar, additional obligations, to attempt, and, if possible, to bring about a reformation of morals. They have acknowledged this to be their duty, and have pledged their reputation to be faithful. They cannot turn to the right hand or to the left; they must pursue the path they have chosen, and, with unremitting ardor, prosecute the benevolent design, they have so nobly undertaken. Having put their hand to the plough, they must never look back.

Those who have not engaged to oppose sinful customs, are under indispensable obligations to engage. Their duty does not depend on their inclination. If they desire to be excused, they cannot be excused. Their very desire is sinful, and instead of atoning their negligence, betrays and aggravates their guilt. They may think themselves wise in declining to oppose sinful customs. But their wisdom is from below, and deserves all the epithets, which the Apostle has justly given it. They have excused themselves, but God has not excused them. And they are entreated to remember, that if they continue to neglect opposing sinful customs, sinful customs will oppose them, and prove their future and everlasting ruin.

If any who are well disposed and wish to do their duty, should here ask what they must do to oppose sinful customs, it is easy to give them a number of directions, which being faithfully followed will insure success.

1. Avoid all sinful customs yourselves. When you see others pursuing them, never join with them, but practically condemn their sin and folly.

2. Establish *good* customs. This you may do, as well as others can establish evil ones. And this is one of the most effectual means of destroying sinful customs. Many fall into evil habits, simply because good ones are exhibited before them. And many who have addicted themselves to sinful customs may be reclaimed by the good examples of others.

3. Execute good laws. Our wisest and best politicians have been thoroughly convinced of the pernicious tendency of vice, and to prevent its baleful influence, have enacted a variety of laws to restrain men from vicious customs. These laws you have a right to see well executed. And it is your duty to

appoint good executive officers, and to insist upon their faithfully discharging their trust.

4. Realize your obligations to God. It lies not at your option, whether you shall oppose sinful customs. God demands this at your hands. And you must soon give account before his awful bar, whether you have employed your talents, your opportunities, and your obligations for him, or against him; and whether the world has been the better or the worse, by your living in it. Let the fear of God be in your hearts, and you shall escape that dreadful snare, the fear of man. AMEN.

SERMON XVIII.

Delivered on the day of the Annual Fast, in Massachusetts, April 7, 1805.

2 CHRONICLES xxiv, 15, 16.

But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.

And they buried him in the city of David, among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

THIS venerable priest lived a long and useful life. He spent all his days in promoting the cause of God and the good of civil society. By a faithful discharge of his sacred office, during six successive reigns, he exercised a powerful influence over the hearts and consciences of both rulers and subjects, and, in that way governed their public and private conduct. It is said, "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord *all the days of Jehoiada the priest.*" And it appears from the representation in the text, that all classes of the people in the kingdom, were deeply sensible of the great benefit, which they had derived from his public labors and instructions. For "they buried him in the city of David, among the kings, *because he had done good in Israel.*" Some have conjectured, that these words were a part of an Epitaph put upon his tomb; but whether they were or were not, they express the high sense, which the nation entertained of his eminent usefulness in his sacred profession. There is nothing singular in this ancient opinion concerning the utility and importance of religious instructors; for

the same sentiment has generally prevailed in all ages of the world. Accordingly, this will be the leading idea in the present discourse: That it has been the common opinion of mankind, that religious instructors are very useful in civil society.

To set this subject in a clear light, it will be proper to show in the first place, that this has been the common opinion of mankind; and in the next place make it appear, that this opinion is well founded.

I. Let us consider the common opinion of mankind, respecting the usefulness of religious instructors, in civil society.

We may easily learn the opinion of the world upon this subject, by their uniform and immemorial practice. The Jews have always had an order of men, to teach the duties and perform the ceremonies of their religion. And though Christians have been greatly divided in their religious sentiments and modes of public worship; yet they have universally agreed, to support religious teachers. If we now turn our thoughts to the heathen world, we shall find, that they have all gone into the same practice. The Egyptians were the first, or next to the first nation, who formed themselves into civil society, and laid themselves under the restraints of civil government. And as early as the days of Joseph, they certainly had religious instructors among them, who were treated with peculiar marks of respect. The sacred historian tells us, that when the seven years famine prevailed in the land to such an extremity, that the people in general were constrained to sell their persons as well as their property, to procure sustenance, the *priests* were exempted, and "had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them." Profane history assures us, that the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks

and Romans, all had their teachers of religion. And when Julius Cesar first carried his arms into Britain, he there discovered the Druids, who were considered and treated as a sacred order of men, by the Britons. Nor do we find by the best accounts, that there is at this day a nation on earth, who have not some form of religion, and some men to perform religious offices. Now, this immemorial and universal practice of mankind; in maintaining religious teachers, is a strong evidence, that they have considered them as very useful in civil society. For no nation have ever been so much attached to their religion, that they would be willing to sacrifice their temporal interests to support it. All civil communities, therefore, in maintaining religious instructors, have always acted upon the principle, that they are a body of men really useful and necessary in civil society. If any people viewed their religious teachers as useless or burdensome, they would either suppress, or banish, or destroy them. This has been sufficiently demonstrated by the late conduct of a great nation, who, in a day of infatuation, looked upon their priests as a burden to society, and who accordingly either banished or destroyed the whole order. Human nature has been the same in all ages and in all nations. They never would, therefore, have suffered religious instructors to live among them, and much less have respected and supported them, if they had not really considered them, as instrumental of promoting their interest in this, as well as in a future state. This general practice of mankind speaks louder than words, and proclaims it to have been their general opinion, from the earliest antiquity to the present day, that those who teach the doctrines and duties of religion are useful in civil society.

The next and principal thing proposed is,

II. To make it appear that this common opinion of mankind, respecting religious instructors, is well founded.

The common opinion of the world is generally just. They seldom form a wrong judgment of those things, which come under their own observation and experience. It is hardly conceivable, that they should be united, for ages, in any sentiment which is not founded in truth. It is true, in arts and sciences, the mass of mankind are not competent judges; but in respect to the character and conduct and influence of any set or order of men, with whom they are intimately acquainted, they are capable of forming a just and impartial opinion. They may know by experience, whether they have derived advantage, or disadvantage, from their public professional employment. There have been in all ages those who practised the healing art; and though mankind have often suffered by the ignorance and presumption of the unskilful, yet taking the whole profession together, they have always agreed in opinion, that they are highly useful in every human society. The same general opinion has ever been entertained of civil rulers. Though some have cruelly oppressed and tyrannized over their subjects; yet no nation have disbanded, after forming into civil society, on account of the injustice, oppression, or tyranny of those, who have abused their usurped, or delegated power. This is an infallible evidence, that civil communities have always been agreed, that civil rulers are of great importance to the public. And all nations have been as well agreed, that religious instructors are useful in civil society; for they have as long and as universally approved and supported this order of men, as they have any other professional characters. There is, therefore, as good ground to

conclude that their common opinion, in this case, is well founded, as in the case of physicians and civil rulers. In all these instances, they have formed their opinions upon the evidence of universal observation and experience. And if their opinions in these instances are wrong, how is it possible, that they should ever be rectified? How can they have higher evidence against their opinions, than they have always had in favor of them? If the observation and experience of ages past have confirmed their opinions, how can future observation and experience refute them? This opinion, therefore, which mankind in all ages have formed, respecting the usefulness of religious instructors, rests upon a broad and firm foundation, which can never be shaken.

But, however just and conclusive this argument may be, in favor of the truth under consideration; yet I shall chiefly insist on another, to be drawn from the *duties*, which the ministers of religion ought to teach, and from the *motives*, by which they ought to enforce all their religious instructions.

1. It belongs to those in the sacred office to inculcate the duties, which rulers owe to their subjects. When God first appointed civil magistrates, he prescribed their qualifications, and enjoined upon them a faithful discharge of the important trusts reposed in them. He directed his people, in the choice of their civil officers, "to provide able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." And he said by the mouth of David, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Though he allows men to be clothed with civil power, and to bear the sword of justice; yet he does not release them from those moral obligations to obedience and fidelity in their elevated stations, which result from their relation

to him, and to those whom they govern. He holds them responsible to himself for all their public as well as private conduct, and he intends that they shall finally stand upon a level with the meanest of their subjects. before his supreme tribunal. He knows, that all their powers to do good, are equally powers to do evil, and of consequence, that they stand in peculiar need of divine precepts and prohibitions, to keep them in the path of duty, and to restrain them from abusing the authority with which they are invested. Accordingly, he expressly required the kings of Israel not only "to read the law of Moses all the days of their life, but also to write out a copy of it with their own hand, that they might learn to fear the Lord their God, and keep all the words of his law." Besides this, he frequently employed extraordinary as well as ordinary teachers, to pour religious instruction into the minds of the rulers of his people. Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets, spent much of their time in warning and admonishing kings and princes in particular. And we find the stated instructions of Jehoiada the priest, had a most happy influence upon the life of Jehoash the king of Judah. "And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days wherein Jehoiada the priest *instructed him*." By this it appears, that religious instructors may do great and extensive service to a whole nation or kingdom, by faithfully inculcating the duties of those, who are concerned in the administration of government.

2. It is the proper business of religious instructors, to explain and enforce the duties, which subjects owe to their rulers. The people are under indispensable obligation, to respect and obey those in authority over them. And the apostle enjoins it upon ministers, "to put them in mind to be subject to principalities and

powers, to obey magistrates, and to be ready to every good work." This duty, which he urged upon others, he performed himself, as appears from his solemn exhortation to subjects, in the thirteenth of Romans. "Let every soul be subject to the high powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honor, to whom honor." All the ministers of religion ought to follow this example, and be equally plain and particular, in urging upon subjects all the peculiar duties which they owe to those in authority, from the highest to the lowest. And can such religious instructions fail of strengthening the hands of civil rulers, and the cords of civil society?

3. The ministers of Christ ought to inculcate upon all their people every private as well as public duty. They are to call upon all men in every stage and condition of life, to repent and believe the gospel, and to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. They are not only to preach the great doctrines of the gospel, but also to inculcate all the Christian graces and social virtues, which are the strongest cements of civil society. Mankind are linked together by a great variety of relations and connexions, from which re-

sults as great a variety of correspondent and mutual duties. These, especially, come within the province of preachers to teach and inculcate. They are to explain and urge the mutual duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, of masters and servants, of the aged and the young, of the rich and the poor, of neighbors, friends, and enemies. The peace and happiness of every community, greatly depends upon the strict and faithful discharge of those relative duties, which lie beyond the reach of all human authority. And, indeed, it is a matter of doubt, whether it would be possible for any portion of mankind to govern themselves, by the mere force of civil laws, without the aid of religious instructions, to regulate their views and conduct in their private and personal concerns. Religious instructors may, therefore, by teaching the doctrines of pure religion, and inculcating the relative and social duties of life, perform an essential service to society, which no other teachers can perform, and which no human laws can render useless or unnecessary. But it must be further observed.

4. That it belongs to the ministers of the gospel, not only to teach all the duties of religion, morality, and humanity, but to enforce all their religious instructions, by the most solemn and weighty *motives*. Though politicians and moralists may read fine lectures upon the public and private virtues; yet their best speculations upon these subjects, are totally destitute of the force and obligation of religious discourses. It is the peculiar province of the ambassadors of God, to address the hearts and consciences of men, and enforce their instructions, by motives infinitely more powerful, than any which can be drawn from human laws or from the doctrines of true or false philosophy.

For, in the first place, they may enforce every doctrine and duty they teach, by all the weight and solemnity of the divine character. It belongs to their office to demonstrate the existence, and display the glory and majesty of the great Creator. And there is something awfully sublime and solemn in the character of a self-existent and independent Being, whose power, wisdom, goodness, and justice, are beyond all comprehension. The fear of God is one of the most powerful restraints upon the feelings and actions of moral agents. They cannot realize his all-seeing and heart-searching eye, without a fear of doing any thing, either in public or secret, which they know will incur his displeasure. A sense of the divine presence restrained Joseph, when and where no other motive could have had the least influence on his conduct. A fear of the divine disapprobation weighed heavier in the mind of Balaam, than a house full of silver and gold. The awful appearance of Jehovah on Mount Sinai, solemnized the minds, and awakened the consciences of near three millions of people, and constrained them to resolve and promise, that they would always be obedient to all his commands. Though the natural perfections of God are really terrible, yet his moral perfections make the deepest impressions on the human heart. While the preachers of the gospel, therefore, impress the minds of their hearers with a realizing sense of the existence of the Deity, and of his infinite holiness and justice, it must give a peculiar force and energy to all their religious instructions.

In the next place, they may give weight and solemnity to their religious discourses, by motives drawn from the authority of the supreme Law-giver. All the divine precepts and prohibitions which they inculcate, are clothed with divine authority. God always

speaks to men, in his word, as their absolute Lord and Sovereign. The duties, which he enjoins upon rulers and subjects and all classes of men, have the sanction of all his authority, which is underived, independent, and absolute. It necessarily arises from his being the author and owner of the universe, and from his possessing infinite power and absolute right to govern all his creatures and works. It is, therefore, infinitely superior to all human authority. Men derive all their authority from him, and, of course, the highest motive to obey their authority, arises from his command to obey it. It becomes the preachers of the gospel, therefore, not only to show the reasonableness of the divine precepts and prohibitions, but also their infinite authority, to bind the consciences of all to obey. Indeed, God requires them to employ his infinite authority, to give a sanction to the messages they deliver in his name. He said to Jeremiah, whom he sent to instruct both rulers and subjects, "Gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them *all that I command thee*: be not dismayed at their faces; lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an *iron* pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land—and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." The authority of God gives a weighty and solemn sanction to all the messages, which his faithful ministers deliver in his name. When they come with a "Thus saith the Lord," and admonish rulers and subjects of their danger and duty, the most stupid and hardened cannot despise and reject their instructions, without feeling themselves exposed to the severest marks of the divine displeasure.

The ambassadors of God may still further enforce all the duties and doctrines they teach in his name, by his universal, overruling providence. He acts, and appears to act, as Lord of lords and King of kings, in his wise and holy government of the world. He rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will. He stands in the congregation of the mighty, and judges among the gods. He confirms, or confounds, the counsels of the greatest potentates of the earth; who cannot, in a single instance, either stay his hand, or defeat his designs. A consideration of such a constant and powerful influence of the Deity over all the views and designs and exertions of men, serves to increase the force and obligation of religious instructions. Those, therefore, whose sacred office it is, to proclaim to Zion, "that her God reigneth," may give a heavy sanction to all they say to the friends and enemies of Zion, by displaying the power and operation of his invisible hand, who governs the concerns of all the kingdoms and nations of the earth.

Finally, the preachers of that gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light, may teach, and warn, and admonish their hearers, in the clear view of the glorious and awful retributions of eternity. God has expressly declared in his word, that he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and give to every man according to his work. All things are preparing, as fast as possible, for the day of judgment, when great and small, high and low, rich and poor, rulers and subjects, must all stand before the bar of Christ, who will lay open the secrets of all hearts, divide the righteous from the wicked, and close the solemn scene, by admitting the righteous to everlasting life, and dooming the wicked to everlasting death. Knowing these terrors of the

Lord, his ministers are solemnly bound to exhibit them before the minds of men, in all their weight and solemnity, to persuade them to hear and obey the instructions of his word. The final and awful retributions of eternity carry a weight and solemnity, sufficient to penetrate and bow the stoutest heart. Paul tried their strength and prevailed. "As he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."

These religious motives, which are drawn from the being and presence of the all-seeing and heart searching God, from the infinite authority of all his precepts and prohibitions, from the controlling influence of his universal providence, and from the future and eternal rewards and punishments, which he will finally dispense to the righteous and the wicked, are infinitely superior to any other motives, which can be exhibited before reasonable and accountable creatures. They are calculated to affect and influence all the powers and faculties of their souls. They are equally adapted to enlighten their understandings, to bind their consciences, and to govern all their hopes and fears. And they carry the same infinite weight and authority to all men, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. Hence it clearly appears, that the business of religious teachers perfectly coincides with the business of civil rulers. It is the ultimate design of civil magistrates to restrain the *external actions* of men; and so far as religious teachers restrain *their internal corruptions*, just so far they aid the civil powers, and contribute all their influence to promote the good of civil society. This salutary effect of religious instruction, enforced by the motives of eternity, mankind have observed and experienced in all ages; and upon this solid ground, they have formed their united and just opin-

ion, that religious instructors, are highly necessary to promote their civil as well as religious interests.

This subject naturally suggests a number of important truths, which deserve serious consideration, at the present day.

1. Since men in all ages have generally and justly agreed in the opinion, that religious instructors are useful in civil society, it discovers no less ignorance, than presumption in those, who adopt and endeavor to propagate the opposite sentiment. The generality of mankind may, undoubtedly, form false opinions concerning many subjects in religion, morality, and politics, which it becomes wise and learned men to expose and refute. But for any pretended politicians and philosophers to rise up and contradict the common opinion of all nations in all ages, upon a subject which has always fallen under their observation and experience, betrays a want of judgment or information, as well as a want of respect for superior wisdom. Though there may be ignorance without error, yet there cannot be error without ignorance. Let men be ever so wise and learned in some things, they are always ignorant in those things, concerning which they form false and groundless opinions. Indeed, learning is often the fruitful source of ignorance, as well as of knowledge; for the more ideas men collect, by reading, observation, or study, the more ignorant they are, unless they are able to discern the agreement and disagreement of their ideas, and to draw just conclusions from them. This will account for the gross errors and blunders of many learned infidels, who have written upon religious subjects. It was owing to learned ignorance, that Morgan undertook to prove, from the Old Testament, that the Jewish priesthood were a heavy and useless burden to the na-

tion. And it was owing to the same cause, that Helvetius and Voltaire endeavored to refute the common opinion of mankind, respecting the political benefit, which they have always supposed. they have derived from religious instructors. This gross error of learned infidels implies the ignorance of some important things, which it is a reproach to any professed politicians and moral philosophers not to understand.

It certainly betrays the want of knowledge in the science of politics. The chief design of civil government is, to restrain men from disturbing the peace and happiness of civil society. But the history of the world affords abundant evidence of the weakness and insufficiency of all human laws, to answer this important purpose. It must appear, therefore, to every wise and discerning man, who has traced the uniform effects of civil government, that it has always stood in need of religion, to supply its essential defects. So that the more learned any are in law, or in history, and yet deny the utility of religious teachers, the more they discover a natural or moral incapacity to draw just conclusions from the plainest premises.

Nor is this all; for they betray no less ignorance of human nature, than of the impotency of human laws. All men are more or less sensible of being weak and dependent creatures, which naturally disposes them to lean upon some superior invisible power. As individuals, they find they cannot support either themselves or each other; and hence in cases of extreme doubt, or danger, or distress, they spontaneously look up to some invisible divinity, to afford them light, protection and relief. These feelings, which are so congenial to religion in general, mankind have universally manifested by their conduct. They have always had their divinities, their real or pretended prophets and

religious instructors, and their external rites and modes of religious worship. This natural propensity of mankind to religion, all wise and prudent rulers have observed; and instead of opposing and restraining it, have taken peculiar care to foster and cherish it in the minds of their subjects. If therefore, any of our modern politicians and philosophers really imagine, that religion and its teachers are detrimental to civil society, they have searched the records of religion and of government in vain, and only involved themselves in gross ignorance upon a subject, which all nations have clearly understood. It is to be hoped and expected, that but few will embrace this novel and dangerous error, which is founded in ignorance, and which stands completely refuted, by the universal observation and experience of mankind.

2. If what has been said be true, then none are fit for civil rulers, who would exclude religious instructors from civil society. Men may possess different abilities, and entertain different sentiments in religion and politics, and yet be qualified to fill some public and important stations. But those, who maintain that religious instructors are useless in society, are totally unqualified to have any official concern in government. For should such men be invested with power to make, or to execute the laws of the land, they would strip them of their greatest influence, and strike away the strongest pillar of their own authority. There are some, who despise and neglect all religious instructions themselves, and yet view them of great importance to others, and would exert all their influence to support religious teachers. Such men as these, if qualified in other respects, may manage public affairs with great advantage to the public, while they neglect to secure the one thing needful to themselves. Though the

fear of God, or vital piety, be a peculiar beauty and excellence in civil rulers; yet those, who have no love to the gospel, may be great and useful statesmen. It is an absurd sentiment, that civil dominion is founded in grace, and that none but the subjects of Christ's kingdom are qualified to rule in the kingdoms of men. But still, none are fit to be intrusted with civil power who believe and maintain, that all religion and religious teachers are a burden, rather than a benefit to civil society. This absurd and pernicious opinion, must give a dangerous turn to their public as well as private conduct. And should they only have an opportunity, they would exert their power, to banish not only the appearance, but even the existence of religion from the face of the earth, and do all that in them lies, to subvert the foundations of government. Politicians of this description, lately seized the opportunity offered them, to carry their infidel opinion into practice; and they ordained, that there should be no teachers, nor even object of religion, in the nation. They denied the existence of God, destroyed the professed ministers of the gospel, and set the people free from all the motives and obligations of religion. And what were the consequences of this bold and presumptuous attempt to govern without the ministers of religion, and without the motives of eternity? We know they were anarchy, and confusion, and the untimely end of those who made the foolish and wicked experiment. But did those politicians want either learning or abilities? Did they not plume themselves upon their superior knowledge and wisdom? How, then, can any now imagine, that the greatest talents will qualify men to govern the affairs of state, who have the folly and temerity to discard the common and well founded opinion of mankind, that the fear of man, without the fear of

God. is totally insufficient to support civil government? It is a glaring inconsistency in any people, who acknowledge the truth and divinity of the Christian religion, to commit their government into the hands of atheists and infidels, whose opinions are hostile to moral obligation and the strongest cements of civil society.

3. It appears from the leading sentiment in this discourse, that a people ought to consider the gift of wise and faithful ministers, as a great public blessing. They are competent judges of their own happiness, and of the means and instruments, by which it is promoted. When they find by observation and experience, that their religious teachers do really employ their time and abilities for their temporal, as well as spiritual benefit, they ought to be sensible of the divine goodness, in giving them such useful and necessary instructors. God justly expects, that a people should gratefully acknowledge his kindness in bestowing upon them the distinguishing favor of faithful and exemplary ministers. He appeals to the consciences of his ancient peculiar people, whether they were not greatly indebted to his goodness, for raising up and supplying them with faithful prophets and preachers of religion. His expostulation with them upon this subject is extremely plain and pointed. "I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up of your sons for *Prophets*, and of your young men for *Nazarites*. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord." Before they became so degenerate, they were not so ungrateful to God for the gift of prophets and preachers. In the days of Jehoiada, they were deeply sensible of the great good he did in Israel, and, at his death, express-

ed their grateful feelings, by the highest marks of public respect. Other nations have entertained and expressed the same sentiments, in regard to religious instructors. The British parliament have more than once returned their thanks to particular clergymen, for the essential services they had rendered the nation.* If we look into the history of our own country, we shall find, that New England have, heretofore, highly esteemed the sacred order, and considered them as some of the best promoters, not only of religion, but of learning and all the interests of civil society. It must be very ungrateful in Americans, now to rise up and contradict the voice of their fore-fathers, and the general voice of mankind in all ages. Can they ever become so insensible of the goodness of God, and of the useful services of his ministers, as to wish to destroy them, or banish them from their borders! No people in the world, it is believed, have more reason to be thankful for religious instructors, than we of the United States. We have the best evidence, that, under God, our ministers have done great good in our Israel; and are now as necessary to secure and promote our civil and religious interests, as they have ever been, since our fathers landed on these western shores.

4. It appears from the foregoing observations, that it is the wisdom and duty of civil rulers to favor the cause of religion, and employ every proper method to promote the general diffusion of religious knowledge. They can do nothing more effectual to establish their just authority in the hearts and consciences of the people, and to form them good subjects of civil government. This has been the united opinion of the wisest and best statesmen. Those, who framed our State Constitution, were fully convinced of the great

* BURNET and HOADLY

importance of religious instructors, and made as ample provision for the religious instruction of the people, as they could make, consistently with the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Though nothing can be said in favor of religious establishments, which have done so much mischief in the Christian world; yet a great deal may be said in favor of protecting the preachers of the gospel in the discharge of their duty, and in the enjoyment of all their civil and religious privileges.

The rulers of our land never had a louder call, to promote religious instructions, than at the present day. Our nation is spreading, with astonishing rapidity, over the vast tracts of our uncultivated country, where the inhabitants will soon, in all probability, become equal in numbers to those who remain in their primitive settlements. And should they continue destitute of religious instructions, there is reason to fear, that no human laws will be sufficient to restrain them from those evil courses, which will be ruinous to themselves, if not to the nation. If our civil magistrates fear God, or regard man, or seek the public peace and welfare, they will consider it their wisdom and duty, to aid the propagation of Christianity, and give all parts of the country the best means of religious instruction. This appears to be the most probable way of preventing the spread and fatal effects of those pernicious sentiments in religion and politics, which the enemies of the gospel, and of the general government, are endeavoring to propagate with a blind and flaming zeal.

5. If it be a truth, confirmed by the common experience of mankind, that religious instructors are of real service to promote the principle design of civil government, then it argues a great degree of infatuation in the civil govern, to oppose or restrain religious instructors. It argues to be extremely wicked, without

being blind to their own present temporal interest. They may be wise to do those evils, which directly tend to promote their own power and aggrandizement. But when any pursue such methods to attain power, and wealth, and popularity, as reason, and scripture, and the general voice of mankind tell them, will certainly defeat their designs, then they may properly be said to be infatuated. And such is the infatuation of those who hold the reins of government, when they attempt to increase their power and influence, by depriving their subjects of religious instructions. We have many awful examples of such infatuated rulers, recorded in scripture, for the warning and admonition of all future magistrates. Jeroboam was so infatuated, as to put all the faithful priests out of office, and to forbid an inspired prophet to speak in the name of the Lord. "Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear his words. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." Ahab, another of the idolatrous kings of Israel, was so infatuated, as to cut off all the true prophets of the Lord that he could find. Zedekiah was no less blinded, when he delivered Jeremiah into the hands of those who sought his life, because he had faithfully admonished the nation of their duty and danger. Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the Jews put the Son of God to death, for no other offence than that of preaching the most important truths. I know, indeed, that all these religious teachers were charged with the odious crime of preaching sedition, but there

was not the least foundation for the charge, and they actually suffered for performing the religious duties of their sacred office. The Jewish rulers in all these instances, and especially in the last, were so infatuated as to believe they were pursuing the way of safety, while they were taking the direct road to destruction. They put Christ to death, to preserve themselves from the Romans, which proved the procuring cause of the Romans coming and destroying the nation. The French acted the same absurd part, when they cruelly massacred more than a million of religious instructors, merely because they favored and supported what they supposed to be the cause of true religion. This was owing to their then awful infatuation, as they themselves have since practically acknowledged, by recalling and re-establishing numbers of those religious teachers, who had escaped the general carnage of the clergy. So far as any of the rulers in our nation, manifest a disposition to silence, or destroy the influence of those in the sacred office, they plainly discover the symptoms of a fatal delusion. Nothing but a spirit of infatuation can lead them to imagine, that either their own, or the public safety depends upon putting an end to religious instructions. If they presume to tread in this path, it will undoubtedly lead them to the same end to which it has led all others who have presumed to walk in it, that is, to their own destruction.

6. If religious instructions have such a powerful influence upon the minds of men, as has been represented, then it is extremely difficult for civil rulers to subvert a good government, while religious teachers faithfully discharge their duty. They can do much to support the interests of religion, morality, and social virtue; and while these are supported, a people will

not be disposed to give up the blessings of good government. Jehoiada lived in a day of declension, when the men of Judah were bent to backsliding, but by his wise and faithful instructions, he prevented, as long as he lived, the rulers and the people from pursuing those unwise and wicked measures, which gradually and finally effected their ruin. This clearly appears from what is said concerning the conduct of Joash, both before and after the death of Jehoiada. It is said, "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, while Jehoiada the priest instructed him." But we are told, "After the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king *hearkened* unto them. And they *left* the house of the Lord God of their fathers and *served* groves and idols: and *wrath* came upon Judah and Jerusalem for their trespass." Though Joash and his princes and people were strongly disposed to go astray, yet they found themselves effectually restrained, by the weight and authority of religious instructions. Hence it appears, that religious instructions lay the strongest moral restraints upon those, who wish to subvert the foundations of religion and government. It is scarcely possible, therefore, that our nation should suffer the loss of their civil and religious privileges, by the arts and intrigues of designing men, so long as the clergy, through the continent, unitedly and faithfully discharge the duties of their office.

7. This subject teaches the duty and obligation of all the ministers of the gospel, to exert all the power and influence which their sacred office gives them, to prevent the ruin of the nation. The apparent prevalence of vice and infidelity directly tends to weaken and destroy all the nerves and sinews of the body politic, and to bring on its final dissolution. The words of the

prophet are the best that can be found to describe its present disordered and languishing condition. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores." The enemies of religion and government are incessantly engaged, to eradicate from the minds of the people every religious principle and virtuous habit, and to destroy all the influence of religious instruction. The better to accomplish this malignant purpose, they smile upon some religious instructors, and frown upon others; and use all their art and sophistry, to deter them from the faithful discharge of their duty. If ministers preach against licentiousness, they accuse them of preaching against liberty. If ministers preach against infidelity, they accuse them of preaching against the powers that be. If ministers inculcate the mutual duties of rulers and subjects, they accuse them of preaching sedition. And if ministers only teach the common sentiment of mankind in all ages, they accuse them of going out of their province, and preaching politics. They will not allow them to teach their hearers, that religious instruction is useful and necessary in civil society. In a word, they employ every method they can devise, to silence the whole body of the clergy, to take off all moral restraints from the minds of the people, and bring them into a state of universal infidelity and licentiousness. Now what is the duty of the ministers of the gospel in this alarming situation of the country? Is it their duty to obey man rather than God? Is it their duty to stand still and be silent, and let vice and infidelity produce their fatal effects? Or is it their plain and indispensable duty, to imitate the noble example of Jehoiada the priest, and exert all their influence to defeat

the designs of those, who are aiming to corrupt and destroy the nation? They never had a louder call, a fairer opportunity, or greater encouragement, to stand in their lot, to set their faces as a flint, and to oppose, by all the force and authority of religious instruction, atheism, deism, infidelity, and all the land-defiling iniquities. If they plainly preach the great doctrines and duties of Christianity, and inculcate upon rulers and subjects their mutual duties and obligations, they may be the instruments, in the divine hand, of restraining the nation from those errors in principle and practice, which threaten their ruin. This is a most animating motive to be faithful in their office, and to do all the good they can in the American Israel. But if any minister of the gospel refuse to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and neglect to plead his cause against the enemies of his kingdom, it may be said to him, as Mordecai said to Esther, when her nation was upon the point of destruction. "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape—For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise from another place, but thou shalt be destroyed."

Finally, we ought to infer from this subject, that we have great reason to fear the displeasure of God, for neglecting and abusing the ministrations of his word. He has raised up and sent us his ministering servants, who have long labored, by their faithful instructions, to make us a holy and happy people. But we have neglected to hear, and refused to obey his voice, by his sacred ambassadors. How many, of late years, have wholly forsaken the house of God? and how many more have become extremely inconstant in their attendance upon divine ordinances? By this criminal negligence, multitudes have grown up ignorant of the

important truths of the gospel, and unimpressed with the solemn objects and motives of eternity; which has exposed them to suck in the most poisonous sentiments, and to pursue the most vicious and destructive courses. Many others there are, who, though they have not neglected to *hear*, yet have refused to *obey*, the religious instructions, which have been poured into their minds from sabbath to sabbath, through the whole course of their lives. They have hated instruction and despised reproof, and with their eyes wide open, have followed the multitude to do evil. Such neglect and abuse of religious instructions, have brought a heavy load of guilt upon our nation. We have not despised man, but God, by neglecting and abusing his sacred institutions.

And now our greatest danger is, that instead of reforming, we shall wax worse and worse, and more and more provoke God to anger, by continuing to neglect and abuse the ministrations of his word. We may, indeed, have as many houses of public worship, and as many public teachers of religion, seven years hence, as we have now; but will these houses be filled? or these ministers of the sanctuary be heard? If the opposers of all religious instruction continue industrious and successful, the ways of Zion will be unoccupied, and the houses of God deserted. And is there not apparent danger of our revolting more and more, by neglecting and abusing divine institutions? This will ripen us, faster than any thing else, for the heaviest judgments of God. When God condescends to assign the reasons for punishing his peculiar people, he never fails to mention their stupidity and obstinacy under the warnings and admonitions of his servants. By Isaiah he says to his people, "Therefore I will number you to the sword, and ye shall bow down to

the slaughter; *because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear.*" To the same people he says by Jeremiah, "Behold, I will bring evil upon this city, and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, *because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my word.*" And again he says by the same prophet, "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up and sending them: *yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck.* Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken unto thee: thou shalt call unto them; but they will not answer thee: But thou shalt say unto them, *This is a nation, that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth instruction.*" The curse deserved and threatened is—"*the land shall be desolate.*" God is the same holy and righteous being from age to age. He is as much displeased with us, as he was with his ancient people, for despising and abusing the instructions and admonitions of his word; and we have just ground to fear, that he will punish us as severely, as he did them, for sinning against all the light and instruction, which he has given us by his faithful servants. In the view of our guilty and dangerous situation, we have abundant reason for humiliation, fasting, and prayer before God this day. We ought to bewail the atheism, the infidelity, the licentiousness, the impenitence, and stupidity, which abound through the nation. These national sins will certainly draw down national judgments, unless we reform, repent, and return to the God of our fathers, from whom we have unreasonably revolted. This is the duty which God requires of a degenerate people, and

upon the performance of which he promises to forgive and save them. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people." AMEN.

SERMON XIX.

Delivered on the Annual Thanksgiving in Massachusetts, November 29, 1861.

I TIMOTHY vi, 5.

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. From such withdraw thyself.

TO reason justly from a false principle is the perfection of sophistry, which it is much more difficult to expose, than to refute false reasoning. It is easy to discover any error in false reasoning, and, by just reasoning, to refute it. But if men reason justly from any principle, whether true or false, their reasoning is conclusive, and the more it is examined, the more conclusive it will appear. We often find as strong and conclusive reasoning in favor of error, as in favor of truth. The only proper way, therefore, to expose the errors of profound sophisters, is to make it appear, that they have built all their just and conclusive reasonings upon some false or absurd principle. Accordingly Paul took this method to expose men of corrupt minds in his day, who endeavored, by their sophistical and perverse disputings, to subvert the foundation of all religion and morality. They reasoned fairly and forcibly from a false principle, which they arbitrarily assumed. The apostle, therefore, does not pretend to examine their arguments, but only exposes and condemns the false and primary principle, upon which they had founded their whole system of error. This appears from the words I have read and those immediately connected. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of

all honor, that the name of God be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful, and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud knowing nothing, but doating about questions, and strifes of words: whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of truth, *supposing that gain is godliness: From such withdraw thyself.* These sophisters took it for granted, that "gain is godliness," and from this false principle it was easy to prove, by fair and conclusive reasoning, that servants were not bound to obey their masters, nor children to obey their parents, nor subjects to obey their rulers, nor creatures to obey their Creator. This was the most artful way of spreading the poison of fatal errors. The apostle, therefore, seasonably warns Timothy to avoid those evil men and seducers, lest he should be led astray, by their subtile and plausible sophistry. "From such withdraw thyself." Hence we may naturally conclude,

That men are greatly exposed to embrace the absurd doctrine, that virtue consists in utility. I shall attempt,

I. To explain the meaning of the doctrine.

II. To demonstrate its absurdity.

III. To show why men are greatly exposed to embrace it.

I. I am to explain the meaning of the doctrine that virtue consists in utility.

This sentiment has been maintained by those who believe, as well as by those who disbelieve divine revelation. Divines as well as infidels have supposed, that virtue consists in utility, and both have plainly explained their meaning. Bishop Law, in his Theory of Religion, after exploding what he considered a wrong notion of virtue, gives what he calls a more just and enlightened definition of it. "Now, since the subject of *mortality* has been reduced to a *science*, and as such, built on *rational principles*, the sense of all the terms relating to it has been pretty well agreed upon, and it is generally understood to include thus much: *The doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.* Obedience to God is the *principle*, the good of mankind the *matter*, our *own* happiness the *end*, of all that is properly termed *moral virtue*. We cannot, therefore, distinguish between *that* which leads to the ultimatum of all *private* happiness, and *real* *virtue*; since nothing is *materially good* on any other account than as it properly conduces to such end; nothing bad or vicious, farther than it tends to the contrary: and the producing of the first among mankind entirely and uniformly, must be *true* *virtue*; call it *moral* or *artificial*; so long as we have any meaning to the word."*

According to this labored definition of virtue, it wholly consists in utility, and all its excellence lies, not in its nature, but in its tendency to promote personal happiness. Dr. Paley, a friend and admirer of Bishop Law, has taken his definition of moral virtue, in his Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, from that favorite author. And he further observes, "It is the *utility* of any moral rule, which alone constitutes the obligation of it." The most ingenious Infidels give

the same definition of virtue, and argue from it with great advantage to their cause. Hume, in his *Essays*, places all virtue in utility, and represents every quality of a man, whether intellectual or corporal, which is *agreeable* and *useful*, as a constituent part of his *moral* character. But there is no infidel writer, who has so openly and boldly advocated the doctrine, that virtue solely consists in utility. as Godwin, in his inquiry concerning Political Justice. In that work, he abundantly asserts that happiness is the supreme good, and that any thing whatever, whether animate or inanimate, which *tends* to promote it, is really virtuous. I will cite a few out of many of his expressions to this import. "Morality is that system of conduct, which is determined by a consideration of the greatest general good: he is entitled to the highest moral approbation, whose conduct is, in the greatest number of instances, or in the most momentous instances, governed by views of benevolence, and made subservient to public *utility*."* "Morality consists entirely in an estimate of consequences; he is truly the virtuous man who produces the greatest portion of benefit his situation will admit."† "Morality is nothing else but a calculation of consequences, and an adoption of that mode of conduct which, upon the most comprehensive view, appears to be attended with a balance of general pleasure and happiness."‡ "An action, *however pure may be the intention* of the actor, the *tendency* of which is mischievous, or which shall merely be nugatory and useless in its character, is *not a virtuous action*."§ "In deciding the merits of others, we are bound for the most part to proceed in the same manner, as in deciding the merits of *inanimate substances*. The *turning point* is UTILITY. *Intention* is of no farther value than

* Vol. 1, page 109.

† Page 187.

‡ Page 278.

§ Page 159.

as it *leads to utility*: it is the *means*, and not the *end*.”*
 “The result of this part of the subject is, that those persons have been grossly mistaken, who taught that virtue was to be pursued *for its own sake*. Virtue is upon no other account *valuable*, than as it is the *instrument* of the most exquisite pleasure.”† All, who suppose that virtue consists in utility, agree in maintaining, that virtue has no *intrinsic* excellence, as an *end*, but only a relative excellence, as a *mean* to promote the only *ultimate end* in nature, that is, HAPPINESS. Since happiness is, in their view, the supreme good, and misery the supreme evil, they conclude, that the whole duty of men consists in pursuing happiness, and avoiding misery. Upon this single principle, that virtue wholly consists in its *tendency* to promote *natural* good, in distinction from *natural* evil, Godwin has founded a scheme of sentiments, which, carried into practice, would subvert all morality, religion, and government.

II. I proceed to demonstrate the absurdity of supposing that “gain is godliness,” or that virtue essentially consists in utility. This sentiment is not only false, but absurd, because it contradicts the plainest dictates of reason and conscience.

1. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that virtue may be predicated of inanimate objects. These have a natural tendency, in various ways to promote human happiness. The whole material system, with which we are connected, was made for our habitation, convenience, and benefit, and constantly answers these useful and important purposes. But not to wander in so wide a field of material objects, let us fix our attention upon the Sun, whose influence is the most extensive and beneficial. By its

* Page 134.

† Page 350

diurnal and annual revolutions, it diffuses light and heat over the face of the whole earth, and promotes the life and growth of every rational and irrational creature. And if *utility* constitutes *moral virtue*, where shall we find a more *virtuous* object, than this beautiful and beneficent luminary? The sun has been dispensing innumerable benefits to mankind for many thousands years, and if its *moral virtue* be in proportion to its *utility*, there is not a *moral* agent on earth, whose *moral worth* is equal to the *moral excellence* of this *material, inanimate, unconscious* object. Those who admit, that virtue consists in utility, cannot deny this consequence, however absurd it appears. Nor does Godwin pretend to deny it, but expressly allows that virtue may be predicated of *inanimate, senseless matter*. These are his own words: "There are two considerations relative to any particular being, that generate *approbation*, and this whether the being be *possessed of consciousness or not*. These considerations are *capacity* and the *application* of capacity. We approve of a *sharp* knife rather than a *blunt* one, because its *capacity* is greater. We approve of its being employed in carving food, rather than in maiming men or other animals, because that *application* of its capacity is preferable. But all approbation or preference is relative to *utility* or general good. A knife is as capable as a man of being employed in purposes of *utility*, and the one is no more free than the other as to its employment. The mode in which a *knife* is made subservient to these purposes is by *material* impulse. The mode in which a man is made subservient is by *inducement* and *persuasion*. But both are equally the affair of necessity. The man differs from the knife as the iron candlestick differs from the brass one; he has one more way of being acted upon. This additional

way in man is *motive*, in the candlestick it is magnetism.* Such is the natural and avowed consequence of the doctrine, that virtue consists in utility. It necessarily implies, that mere *material* objects may be really *virtuous*; and some material objects may have more virtue than the most benevolent of the human race. And this is an idea, as repugnant to every dictate of common sense, as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

2. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that virtue may be predicated of the mere animal creation. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, administer largely to our comfort and support. And if virtue consists in utility, it may be predicated of these, and of every thing that has the least portion of life and sensation. But is it in the power of our minds to conceive, that creatures which are totally destitute of moral discernment, and which cannot distinguish between right and wrong, are nevertheless capable of doing moral actions, which are worthy of praise or blame? Can the bare beneficial *tendency* of their actions render them *virtuous*? Was there any *moral virtue* in the gagging of the geese, which saved the city of Rome from destruction? It is no less absurd to ascribe virtue to the utility of animals, than to ascribe virtue to a refreshing shower, or a fruitful field.

3. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that men may be *virtuous*, without any *intention* to do good. They certainly may be very *useful*, without having *utility* in view. Their actions may have a *natural tendency* to promote useful and important designs, which they had no *thought* or *intention* of promoting. When Jesse sent David to see and comfort his brethren in the army, he had no thought

* Vol. i. p. 306.

of raising him to the throne of Israel, and, in that way of promoting the general welfare of the nation. Men are every day performing actions, which have a *tendency* to promote that public good, which lies beyond all their views and intentions. But let any man, or any body of men, do ever so much good, while they have *no intention* of doing it, and the *tendency* of their conduct will not render it in the least degree *virtuous*. It is contrary to the dictates of every man's conscience, to place the *virtue* of an action in its *utility*, or bare *tendency* to promote happiness. He cannot, if he tries, separate the *virtue* of an action from the *intention* of the agent. But the doctrine under consideration places *all virtue* in the *tendency* of an action, and not in the *intention* of the actor. This is the very inference which Godwin himself draws from his own principle. In estimating the *morality* of actions he says, "The turning point is UTILITY. INTENTION is of no further value than as it leads to UTILITY." This is stripping *moral* virtue of every *moral* quality, which is a gross absurdity.

4. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that men may be *virtuous* in acting, not only without *any* intention, but from a *positively bad* intention. If the *virtue* of an action consists altogether in its *tendency*, it may be as *virtuous* when it flows from a *bad* intention, as when it flows from a *good* intention, or from *no* intention at all. The intention of an agent does not alter the *tendency* of his action. A man may do that from a *good* intention, which has a *tendency* to do *evil*; or he may do that from a *bad* intention, which has a *tendency* to do *good*. Some actions done from the *worst* intentions, have been the *most beneficial* to mankind. Joseph's brethren were extremely *malevolent* in selling him into Egypt; but their *malevolent* conduct promoted the dignity and happiness of

Joseph, the preservation of their father and family, as well as the general good of the Egyptians and surrounding nations. The perfidy of Judas in betraying his Master was a *malevolent* action; but that action, however *malignant* in its nature, was in its *tendency* infinitely *beneficial* to the whole world. If then utility be the essence of virtue, the conduct of Judas and of Joseph's brethren was highly *meritorious* and *virtuous*. But can any man of moral discernment, discover any *moral virtue* in those *malevolent* actions? The conscience of an Heathen would condemn them. Seneca, in his *Morals*, has a chapter upon the nature of virtue, in which he maintains, that virtue consists in the *intention* of the agent to do good, and not in the *utility* of his actions. And he illustrates this by a very pertinent and striking example. He says a certain man stabbed another in his side, with an *intention* to kill him, but the wound instead of proving fatal, opened an abscess and proved the occasion of saving his life. Upon this he remarks, that the man, who stabbed his enemy, was as criminal as if he had perpetrated the murder he *intended*. With this opinion all mankind concur; for they never fail to condemn any action as *criminal*, which appears to proceed from a *bad intention*, whatever may be its *tendency* to promote either individual or public good. But, perhaps, it may be here objected, that no *malevolent* action has a *natural* or *direct tendency* to promote happiness, though it may be over-ruled to produce a *good effect*; and in such a case the *indirect tendency* of an action cannot constitute it *virtuous*. Be it so, that no *malevolent* action has a *natural* or *direct tendency* to promote happiness; yet if virtue consists in utility, the *good effect* of a *malevolent* action is just as *virtuous* as the *good effect* of a *benevolent* one. For the doctrine we

are considering, places all virtue in the *tendency* of an action, and not in the *intention* of the agent. And upon this principle, it is wholly immaterial, whether the agent has no intention, a good intention, or a bad intention. If *tendency* alone determines the *moral quality* of actions, then the most malevolent ones when over-ruled for good, may be the most virtuous. Hence the notion, that virtue consists in utility, necessarily carries in it this palpable absurdity, that men may be truly and eminently *virtuous* in their most malevolent conduct.

5. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that there is nothing right nor wrong in the nature of things, but that virtue and vice depend entirely upon mere accidental and mutable circumstances. There are certain relations, which men bear to each other, and which they bear to their Creator, which create obligations that never can be violated without committing a moral crime. One man is always bound to love another as himself, and it is always wrong to violate this obligation. It is always right that men should love God supremely, and it is always wrong to hate such an infinitely amiable and glorious Being. Right and wrong in these cases does not depend in the least measure upon circumstances. No circumstances can render it right for one man to feel or express malevolence towards another, nor for any created being to feel or express enmity against God. There are innumerable instances in which the duty of moral agents depends upon the nature of things, and in all such instances it cannot be altered by any change of circumstances. But if the essence of virtue consists in utility, it will necessarily follow, that any thing which is right to-day, may be wrong to-morrow; or any thing which is right in one situation, may be wrong in another. A man may think to-day,

under present circumstances, it will be for the general good to preserve his neighbor's life, and this will be his duty; but to-morrow circumstances may be so altered, that he may think it will be for the general good, to take away the life of his neighbor, and this will then be his duty. But it is perfectly absurd to suppose, that it can ever be right, under any circumstances, to commit murder. This inference so naturally and necessarily results from the doctrine, that virtue consists in utility, that Godwin is constrained, though with apparent reluctance, to own that it is right, in some cases, to do that which is wrong in the nature of things. He makes this concession in regard to lying. "Wherever a great and manifest evil arises from *disclosing the truth*, and that evil appears to be *greater* than the evil to arise from violating in this instance the general barrier of human confidence and virtue, there the *obligation of sincerity is suspended!!** This concession applies with equal force to theft, robbery, perjury, murder, and every atrocious action, which is absolutely wrong in the nature of things. Whoever admits, that virtue consists in utility, must avow this absurd consequence, that there is no essential and immutable difference between virtue and vice. Or in other words, he must admit, that the highest *malevolence* towards God and man, may be as *amiable* and *virtuous*, in one situation, as the highest *benevolence* in another; and that it is the duty (if there be any such thing as duty,) of every man to exercise the one or the other, according to the circumstances in which he finds himself placed; which palpably contradicts every principle of morality.

6. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that there is nothing in the universe *intrin-*

* Vol i, page 287

sically good or evil, but *happiness* and *misery*. This idea is so necessarily contained in Godwin's notion of virtue, that he undertakes to state it with peculiar accuracy and precision. "*Evil* is a term which differs from *pain* only as it has a more comprehensive meaning. It may be defined to signify whatever is painful in itself, or is connected with pain as an antecedent is connected with its consequent. Thus explained, it appears that a thing not immediately painful may be evil, but in somewhat improper and imperfect sense. It bears the name of evil not on its own account. Nothing is evil in the *fullest sense* but *pain*. To this it may be added, that pain is always evil. *Pleasure* and *pain*, *happiness* and *misery*, constitute the *whole ultimate* subject of MORAL INQUIRY. There is nothing *desirable*, but the obtaining of the one, and the avoiding of the other. All the researches of human imagination cannot add a single article to this SUMMARY OF GOOD."* But pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, are so far from constituting the whole ultimate object of *moral inquiry*, that they do not constitute the least part of it. *Moral inquiry* properly embraces only *virtue* and *vice*, or *moral good* and *moral evil*, in distinction from *natural good* and *natural evil*, or mere *pleasure* and *pain*. If there were no *moral good* in virtue, nor *moral evil* in vice, then there would be no propriety in using the word *moral* in any case, or making any distinction between the *kinds* of good and evil. But if there be an *intrinsic* excellence in virtue, which is worthy of *praise*, and an *intrinsic* turpitude in vice, which is worthy of *blame*, then there is a propriety in distinguishing *moral good* and evil, from *natural* pleasure and pain. Now, that there is such a distinction between things *moral* and *natural*, is

* Vol. i, page 166, 167

intuitively evident to every reflecting mind. Every man clearly discerns an *intrinsic* good in virtue, which he cannot discern in *happiness*; and an *intrinsic* evil in vice, which he cannot discern in *misery*. He feels *praise-worthy* for *benevolence*, but not for *happiness*; and he feels *blame-worthy* for *malevolence*, but not for *pain* or *misery*. Agreeably to these moral feelings, sound divines have maintained, that virtue is to be loved for its own sake, and sin hated for its own sake; and also that God is to be loved for what he is in himself, and not merely for the happiness he enjoys, or bestows. But to suppose that pleasure is the *only* good, and pain the *only* evil, in the universe, is to suppose that, could the universe enjoy as much happiness without holiness as with it, the universal reign of *sin* would be *as desirable* as the universal reign of *righteousness*. This is totally repugnant to every feeling of benevolence, and to every dictate of that moral faculty, by which we judge of moral things.

7. To suppose that virtue consists in utility, is to suppose that there is really no such thing as either virtue or vice in the world. If the actions of free agents are either good or evil, solely on account of their *tendency* to promote either pleasure or pain, then nothing can be predicated of them but *advantage* or *disadvantage*. Actions which promote *happiness* may be denominated *advantageous*, but not *virtuous*; and actions which produce *misery* may be denominated *disadvantageous*, but not *vicious*. For there is no *virtue* in the *tendency* of an action to do good, aside from the *intention* of the agent; and there is no *criminality* in the *tendency* of an action to do hurt, aside from the *intention* of the agent. Hence it necessarily follows, that if there be any *virtue* or *vice* in an action, it must consist not in its *tendency* to produce *pleasure* or *pain*.

but in the *pleasure* or *pain*, which it actually produces. But we all intuitively know, that there is no more *virtue* in *happiness* than in *misery*; and no more *criminality* in *misery* than in *happiness*. So that if virtue and vice do not consist in the *intention* of the agent, they cannot be found in human actions. But the doctrine that virtue consists in utility, excludes it entirely from the *intention* of the agent, which does in reality exclude it from the universe. And thus this doctrine terminates in the greatest of all moral absurdities. But yet,

III. Men are greatly exposed to embrace it. This the apostle plainly intimates, by exhorting Timothy to withdraw himself from those, who “supposed that gain is godliness.” If that young minister was exposed to imbibe the absurd sentiment, that virtue consists in utility, we may naturally conclude that there is still danger of men’s falling into this great delusion. Their danger arises from various causes.

1. From the resemblance which this error bears to the truth, though it be diametrically opposite to it. Those who maintain that virtue consists in utility, represent it under the alluring name of universal philanthropy, which is an imposing appellation. They pretend that happiness is the supreme good, and virtue solely consists in promoting it to the highest degree. They insinuate that this philanthropy directly tends to diffuse universal happiness, and to raise human nature to a state of perfection in this life. Such a representation is extremely agreeable to mankind, who are ardently seeking after temporal felicity, and directly calculated to draw them into the belief, that virtue consists in utility, which looks like the doctrine that Paul taught in opposition to the heretics mentioned in the text. “They supposed that *gain is godliness*;” but

he contradicted them by immediately asserting, "*that godliness with contentment, is great gain.*" To say, "that gain is godliness," is to say that utility is *virtue*; but to say that "godliness is gain," is to say that virtue *produces* utility. There is an essential difference between these two doctrines. The one supposes that *gain* is the supreme good, but the other supposes that *godliness* is the supreme good. The one supposes there is an *intrinsic* excellence in *gain only*; but the other supposes there is an *intrinsic* and *supreme* excellence in godliness. The one supposes it is our duty to seek *happiness supremely*; but the other supposes it is our duty to make *godliness the supreme object of pursuit*. But since *gain* is more agreeable to the human heart than *godliness*, there is great danger that men will embrace the erroneous sentiment, that virtue consists in utility, and duty consists in seeking *happiness*, rather than *holiness*.

2. The danger will appear greater, if we consider by whom this pleasing and plausible error is disseminated. It is taught by grave divines, in their moral and religious treatises and public discourses. Law and Paley have been mentioned, as placing the whole of virtue in utility. Dr. Brown, in his remarks upon the Earl of Shaftsbury's *Characteristics*, maintains, that virtue consists in its *tendency* to promote individual happiness. And there are many in this country among the clergy, who believe and teach the same sentiment. These divines, however, do not mean to carry the doctrine, that virtue consists in utility, so far as they might carry it, or so far as it is actually carried by modern infidels. But when they have once advanced the principle, their readers and hearers may, if they please, draw the natural inferences from it, and carry it into all its destructive consequences.

Many who call themselves *moral philosophers*, though really *skeptics*, are warmly engaged in spreading this first principle of infidelity. Hume led the way, and has been followed by many English, French and German philosophers. The main object of these licentious writers is, to establish the point, that gain is godliness, that utility is virtue, that whatever ultimately promotes happiness is right, or to use their own favorite expression, "that the *end* sanctifies the *means*."* Their acute and sophistical reasoning is directly calculated to bewilder and corrupt the minds of those minute philosophers, who wish to go out of the common road of thinking, and free themselves from all religious and moral obligation.

There is another set of men, who do more by their tongues, than divines and moralists can do by their pens, to corrupt the sentiments of the populace. These are *Seducers*, who employ all their eloquence in displaying the utility of virtue, and the happy effects of universal philanthropy. They endeavor to make every one believe, that virtue solely consists in utility, that it is his duty to do *all in his power*, to revolutionize the world, to promote the perfectibility of men, and to bring on a state of perfect *liberty* and *equality*, as fast as possible. Such seducers are travelling all over the world, and are often to be found in this country, using all their art and subtilty to deceive and beguile the unwary and unguarded.

While so many men of different characters, professions, and designs, unite their influence to spread the same plausible and palatable sentiment, there is certainly great danger, that multitudes will, either designedly or undesignedly, renounce the pure opinions in

* See Robinson's *Proofs of a Conspiracy*, and Barruel's *History of Jacobinism*, through the whole.

which they have been educated, and embrace the first principle of infidelity. For,

3. There is a strong propensity in human nature to believe any other scheme of moral and religious sentiments, than that which is according to godliness. Men naturally love happiness, and as naturally hate holiness. If it be plausibly and confidently asserted, that gain is godliness, or utility virtue, according to the fashionable system of morality, those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will greedily imbibe the sentiment. This is more agreeable to the natural heart, than any other doctrine that can be inculcated. And when it comes recommended by divines, by politicians, and by professed moral philosophers, as well as by more artful seducers, who is not exposed to fall into the agreeable delusion? Error always finds a friend in a corrupt heart, and men are more apt to believe according to the feelings of the heart, than according to the dictates of the understanding. On this account, they are continually exposed to reject the truth, and embrace an error, which strikes at the foundation of all moral, religious, and political obligation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the people in this country are exposed to embrace the absurd notion, that virtue consists in utility, then there is great danger of their renouncing all religion, and becoming avowed infidels. Those who believe that "gain is godliness," or that virtue consists in utility, can easily and fairly reason themselves into the grossest infidelity. Upon this principle, there can be no necessity, nor even propriety, of any revelation from Heaven. This Godwin means to make appear through his whole treatise on political justice. And his

reasoning, in some places, is not only plausible, but just and conclusive. He argues thus: If virtue consists in utility, then every man ought to judge for himself, what action or course of conduct will promote the greatest good, without being laid under any human or divine restraint. Hence he sets aside what he calls a *popular principle*. “A comprehensive maxim which has been laid down upon the subject of duty is, ‘that we should love our neighbor as ourselves.’ But this maxim, though possessing considerable merit as a popular principle, is *not modelled* with the strictness of *philosophical accuracy*.”* That is, the second great commandment in the divine law is not consistent with a higher and better principle, that virtue consists in utility. He goes on afterwards to deny the propriety of men’s being subjected to any rule of duty besides their own sense of rectitude. He says, “To a rational being there can be *but one rule* of conduct, justice, and *one mode* of ascertaining that rule, *the exercise of his understanding*.”† This is a full denial of all revelation; and those who once believe the doctrine, that virtue consists in utility, will naturally draw the same conclusion from it. It is an infidel sentiment, and directly leads to infidelity. It lately spread through a large nation, where it turned them into infidels, and subverted all their religious orders and institutions. If it should prevail in this country, it will undoubtedly produce the same deplorable effects here, that it did in France, and deprive the nation in general of that glorious gospel, which they have so long enjoyed. The present prospect is alarming. Various causes are concurring to spread this first principle of infidelity among us. It is inculcated in the most sophistical and pleasing manner in books of divinity, of morality, of histo-

* Vol. i, page 113.

† Vol. i, page 145.

ry and politics. These publications are circulated among all classes of people, at great expense and with peculiar art and industry. They are read openly by the bold and profligate, and in private by the young and timid. The same sentiment, which these dangerous writings contain and diffuse, is greatly propagated by those secret societies, which have lately increased beyond all example. They highly applaud and recommend universal philanthropy, and draw multitudes into the brotherhood, by this pleasing principle. The leaven also has begun to spread and operate among many in the learned professions, who throw in all their weight and influence to carry on the delusion. While these various causes are co-operating with increasing force, to proselyte the nation to the first principle of infidelity, is there not great danger of its eradicating from their minds those sound principles of piety and morality, in which they have been better educated than any other people on earth? It is undoubtedly true, that this absurd and ensnaring doctrine is spreading as fast among us, as ever it did in any part of Europe. It was about fifty years in coming to maturity and producing its full effects in France. And in less than that time, if the eyes of people here be not opened, and their fears alarmed, they may lose all their religious principles and privileges, and sink down into the darkness and horrors of Infidelity!

2. If our nation are exposed to embrace the absurd and pernicious doctrine, that virtue consists in utility, then they are in great danger of losing all their *civil*, as well as *religious* institutions. The same licentious principle, which strikes at the foundation of all religion and morality, equally tends to subvert all good government. It is impossible to bind men by civil

authority, after they have lost all sense of religious and moral obligation. The same doctrine that leads a people into infidelity, so far tends to throw them into anarchy and confusion. This the disorganizers in France knew, and therefore the first step they took to subvert their civil government was, to propagate the doctrine, which had a direct tendency to destroy all religion and morality. If the absurd sentiment we have been considering, should lead the American people into infidelity, it will in that way indirectly serve to weaken and overturn our government. But this is not all; for it has a *direct* as well as *indirect* tendency to destroy all civil order and authority. It operates as directly and forcibly against all *human*, as against all *divine* laws. 'This Godwin makes appear, by reasoning fairly upon it, and applying it to the fundamental principles of all civil government.

He infers from it, that *promises* and *oaths* of allegiance are not binding upon mankind. Hear his reasoning. "When I enter into an engagement, I engage for that which is in its own nature *conducive to human happiness*, or which is *not so*. Can my engagement always render that which was before *injurious* agreeable to, and that which was *beneficial* opposite of duty? Previously to my entering into a promise, there was something which I ought to promise, and something which I ought not. Previously to my entering into a promise, all modes of action were not indifferent. Nay, the very opposite to this is true. Every conceivable mode of action has its *appropriate tendency* and *shade of tendency* to *benefit* or to *mischief*, and consequently its appropriate claim to be performed or avoided. Thus clearly does it appear that *promises* and *compacts* are not the foundation of morality." He adds, "*promises* are, absolutely con-

sidered, an *evil*, and stand in opposition to the genuine and wholesome exercise of an intellectual nature.”* As to *oaths of allegiance*, he says, “When a promise or an oath is imposed upon me superfluously, *as is always the case* with promises of *allegiance*; or when I am compelled to make it by the operation of a penalty, the treatment I suffer is *atrociously unjust*, and of consequence the breach of such a promise is peculiarly susceptible of apology. A promise of allegiance is a declaration that I approve the existing constitution of things, and, *so far as it is binding*, an engagement that I will continue to support that constitution. But I shall support it for as long a time and in as great a degree as I approve of it, without needing the intervention of a promise. It will be my duty not to undertake its destruction by precipitate and unpromising means, for a much greater reason than can be deduced from any promise I have made. An engagement for any thing further than this is both *immoral* and *absurd*; it is an engagement to a non-entity, a constitution; a promise that I will abstain from doing that which *I believe* to be *beneficial* to my fellow citizens.”† Upon *Treaties* he observes, “Treaties of alliance are in all cases *wrong*, in the first place, because all *absolute promises are wrong*, and neither individuals nor bodies of men ought to preclude themselves from the benefit of future improvement and deliberation.”‡

Another inference he draws from his absurd notion of virtue is, that all human laws are unjust and tyrannical. He demands, “Who is it that has authority to make laws? What are the characteristics of that man or body of men, in whom the tremendous faculty is invested, of prescribing to the rest of the community what they are to perform and what avoid? The

* Vol. i, page 165, 166.

† Vol. i, page 176.

‡ Vol. ii, page 226.

answer to these questions is exceedingly simple: Legislation, as it has been usually understood, is not an affair of human competence.* Again he asserts, "Law tends, no less than creeds, catechisms, and tests, to *fix* the human mind in a stagnant condition, and to substitute a principle of *permanence*, in the room of that unceasing *perfectibility* which is the only salubrious element of mind."†

Arguing from the same principle, he denies that there ought to be any such thing as *punishment* in human society, because it cannot conduce to general utility. "Thus it appears, says he, whether we enter philosophically into the principle of human action or merely analyse the ideas of rectitude and justice which have the universal consent of mankind, that, accurately speaking, there is no such thing as *desert*. It cannot be just that we should inflict suffering on any man, except so far as it *tends to good*. Hence it follows, that the strict acceptation of the word *punishment* by no means accords with any sound principles of reasoning."‡

He carries his disorganizing principle still further, and infers from it, that all civil government ought to be totally *annihilated*. He says, "The language of reason on this subject is—Give us *equality* and justice, but *no constitution*. Suffer us to follow *without restraint* the dictates of our own judgment, and *to change* our forms of social order as fast as we improve in understanding and knowledge."§ He anticipates such a state of things, and exults in the glorious prospect. "With what delight must every well informed friend of mankind look forward to the auspicious period, the DISSOLUTION OF POLITICAL GOVERNMENT, of that brute

* Vol. i., p. 182. † Vol. ii., p. 293. ‡ Vol. ii., p. 237. § Vol. ii., p. 210.

engine, which has been the perennial cause of the vices of mankind, and which, as has abundantly appeared in the progress of the present work, has mischiefs of various sorts incorporated with its substance, and no otherwise to be removed than by its utter ANNIHILATION!"*

Thus Godwin himself illustrates the natural tendency of his unhinging principle, and clearly shows that its practical operation is to strip all promises, oaths, and treaties of their *moral* obligation, and all human laws and institutions of their *civil* sanctions. It is the most disorganizing principle in nature, and cannot fail to ruin any people who embrace it. Its present appearance and prevalence among us is extremely threatening. And unless it can be checked and restrained in its progress, it will prepare the whole nation to burst all the bands of morality, religion, and government, and involve us in anarchy and destruction.

3. We learn from what has been said, why those, who believe that virtue consists in utility, are so much given to change. It is the natural tendency of this loose and absurd sentiment to produce this effect in all who govern their conduct by it. For, according to this principle, there is no immutable rule of right, but every man is left to act just as he happens to think best, in his present situation. He may change his opinions, and alter his conduct every day in the year, and every hour in the day. He may promise, and break his promise, as often as he pleases. He may betray his friends, or murder his enemies, or overturn the government, if circumstances admit or require it. There is nothing too bad to be done upon the principle of universal philanthropy. Accordingly we find that those, who have adopted this licentious sentiment,

* Vol. ii, page 154

have discovered remarkable mutability and fickleness in their opinions and practice. Rosseau, with all his splendid talents, was as unstable as water. At one time he ridiculed and opposed the Bible; but at another time, he wrote in favor of Christianity, and painted the character of its divine Author, in the most amiable and glowing colors. Voltaire professed to be a Christian in one place, but a Deist in another. In health, he despised and blasphemed every thing sacred and divine; but in sickness and death, he trembled in the view of eternal and invisible realities. Bonaparte could be a Roman Catholic, or an infidel, or a muselman, just as places and circumstances required. He could overturn all religious institutions, and then establish them. He could dethrone one Pope, and then raise up another. He could swear everlasting hatred to Monarchy, and then proclaim himself Emperor of the French. Do we not see the same instability in some of our American politicians? and may we not ascribe it to the same cause? Have they not imbibed the principle of universal philanthropy, which allows them to pierce the breasts of their rivals—to undermine a Constitution which they have sworn to support—to turn into any shape, and act any part, to gain popularity and power? How deplorable would our situation be, if the majority of our Rulers should deem it *political justice*, or an act of duty, to break their promises, to betray their trusts, and to throw off all divine and human restraints!

4. Since so many, at this day, are exposed to embrace the absurd and destructive sentiment, that virtue consists in utility, we have peculiar reason to be thankful for the Bible, which God has put into our hands, and which is an infallible rule of faith and practice. In this respect, we are more highly favored than the

people of France, when they were led astray by corrupt and artful sophisters. The Bible was generally locked up from them; but to us it constantly lies open for our daily perusal and instruction. And if we impartially consult it, we may discover and avoid every fatal error, however plausibly taught and recommended. The present state of things ought to endear Divine Revelation to us, and induce us to esteem it, in some measure according to its infinite importance. It is, at this critical juncture of affairs, the grand palladium not only of our religion and virtue, but of all our civil rights and privileges. It is by this medium, if by any, that we must detect, oppose, and restrain those errors, which are coming in like a flood, and threaten to ruin us. Unless we adhere to this sacred guide, and the sound principles in which we have been educated, we cannot save ourselves from the fatal errors and delusions of this untoward generation. But if we withdraw ourselves from such as teach and propagate error, and use all proper means to make their folly manifest, there is ground to hope, that truth will prevail, and corrupters be defeated and disappointed. Let us be as zealous in circulating good books, as seducers are in circulating bad ones. Let us take as much pains to diffuse good sentiments, as corrupters do in sowing the seeds of error and delusion. Let parents give their children a pious education, and guard them against the prevailing errors of the times. Let instructors in schools, academies, and higher seats of learning, admonish their pupils of their danger, and teach them the pure principles of morality, religion, and good government. Let ministers of the gospel contend earnestly for that faith which is so violently attacked, and which they are set to defend against all gainsayers. In a word, let all men of piety, knowledge, and influence, unite

their exertions to suppress the progress of every demoralizing and disorganizing principle. And if we really feel and express that gratitude which we owe to God, for the innumerable benefits we have derived from our civil and religious institutions, it will constrain us to preserve them, by promoting that true godliness, which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. AMEN.

SERMON XX.

Delivered April 11, 1806, at a Public Meeting of a number of Singers who were improving themselves in Church Music.

EPHESIANS V, 19.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

THOUGH the art of music and all the other fine arts were first cultivated for the sake of mere amusement, yet God has been pleased to sanctify them to a more noble and pious purpose. When he set up his public worship at Jerusalem, he qualified and selected the most ingenious and skilful artificers, to build the temple, to prepare its furniture, and to perform its sacred psalmody, in the highest style of elegance and grandeur. That magnificent structure displayed all the beauties of architecture; the two cherubims, which overspread the mercy-seat, exhibited all the beauties of sculpture; the breastplate of Aaron, which contained the Urim and Thummin, was a master-piece of engraving; and the sacred songs to be sung, in ascending the steps of the sanctuary, were the perfection of poetry and music. These productions of art were employed in and about the temple, for the important purpose of attaching the people of God to his peculiar worship, and of guarding them against the idolatry of the heathen world. But ever since the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, there is no further occasion for exterior pomp and splendor in public worship. God now requires nothing more of his people, than to worship him in spirit and

in truth, at such places and in such houses, as they judge the most proper and convenient. But poetry and music are so congenial, with the spirit of true devotion, that these are still retained under the more pure and spiritual dispensation of the gospel. Our Savior himself joined with his disciples in singing an hymn, at the celebration of that sacred ordinance, which he instituted as a standing memorial of his sufferings and death to the end of time. The apostles followed this example, and sang praises to God on both public and private occasions. And Paul in our text exhorts the Christians at Ephesus, to glorify God and gratify their own devotional feelings, by the means of sacred poetry and music. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This passage of scripture, which gives us the most just and accurate idea of the proper use and design of sacred music, will naturally lead our minds into a train of thoughts altogether suitable to the present occasion.

It is proposed,

I. To consider the design of music in general.

II. To consider the design of sacred music in particular.

III. To consider what is necessary to render sacred music the most useful in religious worship.

I. We are to consider the design of music in general.

Singing is no less natural to mankind than speaking. They are naturally disposed to speak, because they wish to communicate their *thoughts*, and they are naturally disposed to sing, because they wish to communicate their *feelings*. Speaking is the natural language of the understanding, and singing is the natural language of the heart. We always use words to ex-

press our thoughts, but we do not always use words to express our feelings. These we can clearly and forcibly express, by simple sounds. How often do we see this exemplified in the case of little children. Before they are capable of speaking, or even understanding a single word, they can express their joy and sorrow, their love and hatred, and all the variety of their feelings, by merely varying the tones of their voice. This language of the heart grows up with every person, and would be as commonly used as the language of the understanding, were it not restrained by the force of example, or by the sense of propriety. Accordingly we find that music has always been much more in use among those people, who have been left to follow the mere dictates of nature, than among others, who have been governed by the customs and manners of civil society. It is natural to every uncultivated nation to have a music peculiar to themselves, which no foreigners can completely understand and make their own. The best English musicians have never been able to transplant the peculiar beauties of the Italian and Scotch music into Britain. This is in a great measure owing to the intimate connexion between poetry and music. All nations, in their infancy, have a poetry calculated to interest the feelings of the heart, and their music, which is adapted to their poetry, is the music of the heart, and not of the ear. Their songs are like the song of Moses at the Red Sea, and their music is like the music of the Israelites on that great and joyful occasion. Both their song and their music were wholly designed to express their grateful feelings, or to make melody in their hearts. And this should always be the design of singing, which is the proper language of the affections. Every distinct affection of the heart has a dis-

tinct tone of the voice,* which is perfectly natural to every person in the world. And when any one sings of his own accord, he always sings to express his feelings. This is plainly suggested in the text. The Apostle is not addressing the Ephesians as singers, but as men of piety who would wish to express their holy love and gratitude to the Author of all their mercies. He supposes, that when they felt such devout affections, they would naturally speak to themselves in psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs, and make melody in their hearts. And the Apostle James seems to convey the same sentiment, when he says, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Let him express his joy in the very way that nature dictates, which is always the voice of melody. But though it be the primary design of singing, to *express* our own feelings; yet there is another important end to be answered by it, which is, to *excite* similar feelings in others. Music has a natural tendency to *excite* the affections of those who hear it, as well as of those who perform it. And public music always has this design in view. In this respect, singing and speaking are exactly similar. We speak, to excite ideas in others, as well as to communicate our ideas to them. So the singer may have it in view, not only to *express* the various emotions and affections, which arise in his own mind; but to *raise* the same emotions and affections in the minds of others. Still, however, the only proper end of singing in general is, to make melody in the heart. Let us now consider,

II. The design of sacred music in particular.

General music becomes particular, when it is applied to one particular purpose. The first purpose to which mankind naturally apply music, is to cheer and exhilarate their spirits. They are formed for so-

* Note 1.

cial intercourse, and find a peculiar pleasure in meeting together, from time to time, to relax their minds from the cares and concerns of life, by all the means of self-enjoyment. And *festival music* is exactly suited to answer this agreeable purpose. Solomon tells us, "a feast is made for laughter." This has always been the principal design of feasting. And as it has been the custom of all nations to have festivals, so it has been their general custom, to employ music to heighten and increase their festivity and joy. It is well known, that not only the Jews, the Babylonians, and the Grecians, but the most rude and uncivilized nations, have been fond of music at their festival entertainments. As the laughter of fools, on such occasions, is like the crackling of thorns under a pot; so there is a certain kind of music, which is directly calculated to excite vain mirth, and gratify every natural feeling of the human heart. It was such light and airy music that Solomon approved, patronized, and employed in the days of his folly. And it is such music, that is now the most admired and cultivated by the sons of pleasure, who give themselves up to vain amusements and recreations.

The design of another kind of music is, to inspire men with a spirit of courage, fortitude, and patriotism. This is the music of the army. The Jews and other ancient nations always employed martial music, to rouse the minds of soldiers, and prepare them for the most fierce and bloody combats. And we know, that the natives of this country are extremely fond of their war songs, and always make use of them to keep up a martial spirit in time of peace, and to inflame a martial spirit in time of war. This kind of music is just as lawful and expedient as war itself. And whenever it is proper for any nation to engage in war, it is equal-

ly proper, that they should employ martial music to inspire their armies with a martial spirit.

But the great design of sacred music is, to awaken and express every holy affection of the heart towards God. He is the only object to be glorified and praised by sacred music. So the apostle plainly declares in the text. He calls upon all Christians, "to speak to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in their heart *to the Lord.*" As it is the sole purpose of sacred music to express the pious feelings of the heart; so there is no gracious affection but what may be properly expressed by singing. There is a proper sound or tone of voice to express holy admiration, holy submission, holy fear, holy love, holy joy, holy gratitude, holy hope, and holy sorrow. And whenever Christians are in the sensible exercise of these affections towards God, they feel disposed to speak to themselves in psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs, by actually singing in their own way. President EDWARDS, in giving an account of himself after his conversion, says, "My mind was greatly fixed on divine things: I was almost perpetually in the contemplation of them, spent most of my time in thinking of divine things, year after year; and used to spend abundance of my time in walking alone in the woods and solitary places for meditation, soliloquy, prayer, and converse with God: and it was always my manner, at such times, *to sing forth my contemplations.*" This is a beautiful illustration of the sacred design of sacred music, which is to express our devout affections towards God, and make melody in the heart to the Lord.

It now remains,

III. To inquire what is necessary to render sacred music the most useful in religious worship, or how it

should be composed and performed, in order to produce the greatest and best effect upon the human heart. Here the end naturally suggests the proper means to attain it, and leads me to observe,

1. That sacred music should be constructed with great simplicity.

Much art and ingenuity may be displayed in the composition of *complex* music; but while this art and ingenuity gain the attention and please the understanding and imagination, the heart is left cold and unaffected. Whatever is addressed to one power or faculty of the mind, will not, for that very reason, affect another. That music which is calculated to call the intellectual powers into lively exercise, has no tendency to move the affections. Since music has been reduced to an art, the composers have often discovered more ingenuity than judgment, by constructing it in such a *complex* manner, as serves to excite curiosity rather than devotion. It is simplicity of composition, which gives music, as well as poetry, the most easy and direct passage to the heart.* This will account for the extraordinary effects of music in ancient times. In those early days, music was composed with that perfect simplicity, which could not fail of raising the affections to the highest pitch of sensibility and tenderness. Modern music is too complex, to make such noble impressions upon the human mind. When we hear this kind of music, we are pleased with the art of the composer, and surprised with the various sounds and sudden transitions of the voice; while at the same time, this admiration either prevents or destroys the more sublime and tender emotions of the heart. But when we hear plain, simple music, it awakens all our sensibilities, instead of exciting our curiosity and ad-

* Note 2.

miration. "We see no contrivance, admire no execution, but our minds are open and passive to the impression." We judge of the goodness of the music, by the impression we feel, which is the most infallible criterion of its real excellence.

2. It is highly proper, that sacred music should be connected with poetry, in order to promote private and public devotion. Melodious sounds have only a mechanical operation on the mind; but when they are united with appropriate language, they produce a moral effect. For this reason, mankind have always connected music and poetry together. It appears, that poetry was first devised and composed for the sake of music. Though men never conversed in poetry, yet their first premeditated compositions were poetical. The time was, when tradition supplied the place of history. This tradition was handed down from one generation to another, by *poets*, who composed memoirs of past transactions and events in metre, and set them to music, to be sung at stated anniversaries, or on other public occasions. This practice continued until the time of Moses, when alphabetical writing was first revealed to mankind. Afterwards histories began to be written, and superseded, in a great measure, the use of poetical narratives. But the connexion between music and poetry was still preserved. The Israelites, at the overthrow of Pharaoh, sang the praises of God in the most beautiful and sublime poetry. And when they had arrived at Judea, God commanded them to sing his praise in those sacred psalms, which were composed under the influence of a divine inspiration. Nor has the New Testament dissolved the sacred connexion between music and poetry. The apostle directs Christians not only to sing, but to sing in psalms, or hymns, or spiritual songs. This is always proper

in devotional music, which has immediate reference to God, who is the only proper object of religious worship. How absurd would it be, for instance, to celebrate the birth-day of Washington, by mere music, without any ode or hymn adapted to the occasion! And how much more absurd would it be, to celebrate the character, the works, and the ways of God, by mere music, without using any psalm or spiritual song, to bring those great and glorious objects into view! There can be no religious affection without the perception of some religious object. Some part of the divine character or the divine conduct must be seen, in order to exercise any right affection towards God. And since it is the sole design of sacred music, to excite or express devout and holy affections towards the Divine Being, it should always be connected with some significant and appropriate language, either in prose or poetry.

3. Sacred music should not only be connected with words, but adapted to their *sense*, rather than to their *sound*. When music is adapted to the mere *sound* of words, it can serve no other purpose than to please the *ear*; but when it is adapted to the proper *meaning** of a psalm or hymn, it not only pleases the *ear*, but affects the *heart*. It is here, that both composers and performers of sacred music are most apt to fail. How often do composers appear to pay more regard to the *sound* than to the *sense* of the words, which they set to music. And how often do performers make choice of *festival*, instead of *sacred* music, in singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, on the Sabbath. All music, which is employed in religious worship, should be truly serious, because religion is a serious matter. It consists in a realizing sense of the being and per-

* Note 3:

fections of God, and in exercising right affections towards him. It becomes every intelligent creature to feel solemn, while contemplating and worshipping the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. Even to rejoice in God is something very different from rejoicing in the world. There is always a levity in worldly joy; but there is not the least levity in religious joy. Religious joy, resembles the joy of heaven, which is no less solemn than sincere. Hence religious joy as well as every other religious affection, ought to be expressed, not by *festival*, but by *sacred* music, or a music congenial with those pious affections, which are excited by psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. In a word, sacred music ought to be adapted to the great design of sacred poetry, which is to destroy levity, and promote solemnity and devotion, in private and public worship.

4. Sacred music can never produce its best effect, unless it be performed with true sincerity. There ought to be a perfect concord between the music, the words and the heart. It is a just observation, that no man can speak well, unless he feels what he says; and it is equally true, that no man can sing well, unless he feels what he sings. The highest graces of music flow from the feelings of the heart. Those who sing the praises of God, must possess truly sublime, solemn, tender feelings, in order to fill the minds of a religious assembly with similar emotions and affections. Besides, we are to consider the performance of sacred music, as an act of the highest homage to God. So the apostle recommends it to Christians in the text. "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." He requires those who worship him, to worship him in spirit and in truth. Accordingly the apostle Paul resolved, that he would not only pray with the spirit, but also sing with the spirit. And all who

are capable of singing with the understanding are under peculiar obligations to sing with the spirit, and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. He looketh on the heart, and not on the voice, or any outward appearance. He cannot be deceived, and he will not be mocked, with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue.

This subject teaches us, *in the first place*, that sacred music ought to be entirely *vocal*. In the early ages of the world there was no such thing as *instrumental* music. It was after music was reduced to an art, that instrumental and vocal music were united. And it is readily conceded, that this union is really necessary to carry *festival* and *martial* music to the highest degree of perfection. It is the ultimate design of these sorts of music, to gratify the ear, please the imagination, and exhilarate the spirits. And musical instruments of all kinds are calculated to produce these agreeable effects. But it is the proper and professed design of sacred music, to raise the heart to God, and fill the soul with a holy and rational devotion. This pious purpose instrumental music has a much greater tendency to *obstruct*, than to *promote*. For it appears from what has been said, that sacred music ought to be always connected with words, and adapted to their *proper meaning*: but so far as instrumental music is *heard*, just so far it *hurts* instead of *helping* the *sense* of sacred music, and if carried to a certain degree, entirely destroys it. And when the *sense* of sacred music is destroyed, it is no longer a devotional exercise, but a mere diversion or festival entertainment. It is granted, that instrumental music may increase the melody and harmony of sacred music, as well as of any other; and were these the only, or principal things to be regarded in sacred music, instruments might be admitted

into the church. But mere melody and harmony are not the only, nor principal things to be regarded in sacred music, and therefore these things ought to be sacrificed to the great and ultimate design of sacred music, which is to affect the heart in the view of the glory and majesty of God.

But here some may be ready to ask, why were musical instruments once used in the public worship of God, by his own appointment; and why is it not as lawful and proper to use them for the same purpose under the gospel, as under the law?

To this it may be sufficient to reply, that God appointed instrumental music in the temple service, for the same reason, that he directed the temple to be decorated with the richest ornaments, the high priests to be arrayed in the most beautiful and costly robes, and all the sacred utensils to be made of solid silver and gold. This magnificence of the temple and of all its appendages, was necessary to render it a proper type of Christ, and an effectual bulwark against idolatry. But now Christ has come in the flesh, and taken the Gentiles as well as the Jews into his spiritual kingdom, there is no longer any occasion for instrumental music, nor any other external pomp and parade in public worship. The instruments of music used in the temple-service were all appointed by God, and separated from a profane to a sacred purpose. And since we have no such musical instruments of divine appointment under the gospel, what right have we to appoint any, or to use any, without a divine appointment? All musical instruments, which are now used in our churches, except the organ, are employed in *festival* and *martial* music, and naturally suggest festival and martial ideas, which ought to have no place in the minds of those who are engaged in religious worship. In the time o

David, the particular species and particular number of musical instruments to be employed in the temple-service, were determined by divine authority. But if we once introduce musical instruments into divine service, we shall never know when, nor where to stop. This difficulty has already occurred in some cases, and will continue and increase, as long as the unscriptural practice finds advocates, among those who direct and lead in church music. And since there is no precept of Christ, no example of the apostles, no dictate of reason, and no sentiment of piety, which requires the introduction of musical instruments into divine worship under the gospel, it is devoutly to be wished, that they might be entirely and universally excluded from the house of God.

It appears, *in the second place*, from what has been said, that it is much more difficult to compose good music, than many imagine. None can excel in this profound science, without a thorough knowledge of the proper design of music, of the various modulations of the human voice, and of the various emotions and affections of the human heart. As very few have possessed the knowledge of these things, so very few have succeeded* in writing music. More good composers, however, have appeared in the course of the last century, than in any former age. "In the year 1732, GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL introduced the sacred musical drama into Great Britain. This wonderful genius had come from Germany to England about twenty years before, and by his zeal, and the incomparable excellence of his compositions, formed a grand era in music" In consequence of this, music in general, and especially *sacred* music, has been better understood, better composed, and better per-

Note 4.

formed in Britain, of late years, than it ever was before. Some of the best British and other European publications have reached America, and had a happy influence upon those, who have been capable of discerning and imitating the beauties of their no less simple, than solemn and sublime music. It is to be regretted, that so many among us undertake to write church music, who cannot distinguish it from any other kind, and who compose so many light and airy tunes, which are much better calculated for the theatre, than for the house of God. If such novices would consult European authors, and become acquainted with their peculiar excellencies, they would cease to admire and publish their own compositions. This censure, however, is not meant to be universal, for it is readily acknowledged, that there are some musicians of great merit in this and the other States, who are using very laudable exertions, to reform the gross corruptions, which have long been creeping into church music. And if they will only persevere in their united efforts, there is ground to hope, that they will happily succeed in forming the taste, and assisting the devotion of all our religious societies.

Finally, the whole tenor of this discourse applies to the present occasion, and urges the duty of discouraging *bad*,* and of promoting *good* music. All music whether good or bad, never fails to affect the heart, and all the finer feelings of human nature. There is now a great attention paid to the theory and practice of music, and if this attention could be properly directed and encouraged, it would have a happy influence upon the political, as well as moral and religious interests of our rising nation. It has been found by the experience of ages, that the prevailing music in any country, will either

promote the peace and harmony, the virtue and piety of its inhabitants, or rob them of these fruitful sources of private and public happiness. *Bad* music has already done much injury to the cause of virtue and religion among us, by banishing solemnity from our religious assemblies, and introducing such levity, as directly tends to destroy devotion, and defeat the design of religious instruction. It is in the power of ill-composed, ill-adapted, and ill-performed music, at the close of divine service, to eradicate from the minds of the people, the best impressions of the most instructive and most solemn discourses. Such serious and growing evils* call for some effectual remedy, and the promotion of *good* music is the only effectual remedy that can be applied. This is an object of sufficient magnitude to merit the attention of the most respectable characters, whose countenance and exertions are necessary to bring about a reformation in music. And here they may find a noble example in the conduct of the British nation. "The year 1784 was rendered a memorable era in the annals of music, by the splendid and magnificent manner in which the *birth* and *genius* of HANDEL were celebrated in Westminster Abbey, under the immediate auspices of the King and Queen of Great Britain, and the other most dignified personages of the kingdom." It well becomes men of science, property, and influence, to patronize the best composers and the best performers of music, and to assist them by all proper means in their power, to bring their extensively useful art to a greater state of perfection. But there is a higher obligation lying upon ministers, churches, and religious societies, to exclude all light, vain, festival music from the public worship of God, and to introduce a more *sacred*

* Note 6.

psalmody, which is adapted to enkindle and diffuse a spirit of true devotion through a whole religious assembly. And to come nearer home, I would seriously and earnestly exhort the people in this place to unite their influence and exertions in favor of the best kind of sacred music. This is a duty, which the glory of God, the interest of religion, and your own spiritual benefit, lay you under indispensable obligations to perform. And should you faithfully discharge this duty, there is a fair prospect, that the happy effects of it will continue and increase from generation to generation. But I would be more particular still, and entreat those individuals, whom God has distinguished with a musical ear and a musical voice, to improve the precious opportunity, which they now enjoy, of cultivating these talents for the service of their Maker. He has been pleased to favor you with a very able instructor;* and it now lies with you, whether you will bury your peculiar talents, and lose your past labor, or employ your future leisure hours, in perfecting your knowledge of sacred music, which is a most noble and useful attainment. In this connexion, I wish to impress upon your minds an idea, which ought never to be eradicated. "*Be not weary in well doing.*" It has been found by unhappy experience, that after young people have learned and practised sacred music awhile, they have become less and less attentive to it, until they have totally neglected it. I beseech you to retain the places which you now fill from Sabbath to Sabbath, and let no trivial cause deter you from bearing a part in the most delightful exercise of divine worship. Only remember and love your Creator, and sacred music will unite your *hearts* as well as your *voices*, and make you steadfast, unmove-

* Mr. Uri K. Hill.

able, always abounding in the high praises of God. Piety, poetry, and music are intimately and happily united. And whenever you feel what you ought always to feel, the spirit of the gospel, it will afford you a peculiar pleasure, "to speak to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." You will then go on your way rejoicing, and be continually preparing to join the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven, in singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb forever and ever. AMEN.

NOTES.

NOTE 1.

NATURE independent of custom has connected certain sounds with certain feelings of the mind.*

NOTE 2.

The ear may be transiently pleased with the air of a song, but that is the most trifling effect of music. Simplicity in melody is very necessary in all music intended to reach the *heart*, or even greatly to delight the *ear*. The effect must be produced instantaneously, or not at all. The subject must therefore be *simple*, and easily traced, and not a single note or grace should be admitted, but what has a view to the proposed end. The artifice of fugues in vocal music, seems in a peculiar manner ill-adapted to affect the passions.†

NOTE 3.

A Composer should make his music expressive of the sentiment, and never have reference to any particular word used in conveying that sentiment, which is a common practice, and really a miserable species of punning.‡

NOTE 4.

The influence of music over the mind is perhaps greater than any of the fine arts. It is capable of raising and soothing every passion and emotion of the soul. Yet the real effects produced by it are inconsiderable. This is entirely owing to its being in the hands of practical musicians, and not under the direction of taste and philosophy: For in order to give music any extensive influence over the mind, the composer and performer must understand well the human heart, the various associations of the passions, and the natural transitions from one to another, so as to enable him to command them in consequence of his skill in musical expression.§

* Gregory's Comparative View, p. 114.

‡ Page 155.

† Page 129, 130, 141.

§ Page 111.

NOTE 5.

We have another instance of the little regard paid to the *ultimate end* of music, *the affecting the heart and the passions*, in the universally allowed practice of making a long flourish at the close of a song, and sometimes at other periods of it. In this the performer is left at liberty to show the utmost compass of his throat and execution; and all that is required, is, that he should conclude in the proper key: the performer accordingly takes this opportunity of shewing the audience the extent of his abilities, by the most fantastical and unmeaning extravagance of execution. The disgust which this gives to some, and the surprise which it excites in all the audience, *breaks the tide of passion* in the soul, and *destroys all the effect* which the composer has been laboring to produce. The principles of taste in music, like those of the other fine arts, have their foundation *in nature and common sense*; these principles have been grossly violated by those unworthy hands to whose direction alone this delightful art has been entrusted; and men of sense and genius should not imagine that they want an ear or a musical taste, because they do not relish much of the *modern* music, as in many cases this is rather a proof of the goodness both of the one and the other.*

NOTE 6.

A certain gentleman published, in London, in the year 1786, a Tractate on CHURCH MUSIC; being an extract from the reverend and learned Mr. PEIRCE'S Vindication of the Dissenters. The editor of this Tractate obtained and published the following recommendations of it.

Extract of a letter from the Reverend Dr. Price, dated April, 1786.

"I have read these extracts from the excellent Mr. PEIRCE'S *Vindication of the Dissenters* with much satisfaction. I cannot but strongly disapprove instrumental music in churches. It is a deviation from the simplicity of Christian worship, which has a dangerous tendency and may terminate in all the fopperies of popery."^s

Extract of a letter from the Reverend Dr. Kippis, dated May 5, 1786.

“I have read with attention the Tractate on Church Music, taken from Mr. PEIRCE’s *Vindication of the Dissenters*, and entirely agree in opinion with the ingenious and learned author. The use of instrumental music in Christian worship has no foundation in the New Testament, which is the standard of our faith and practice. If once we depart from this standard, there will be no end to innovations. An opening will be laid to the introduction of one superstition after another, till the simplicity and purity of the gospel service are wholly lost. Every thing, therefore, which tends to divert men from a rational inward devotion to external pomp and ceremony ought to be discouraged as much as possible.”

SERMON XXI.

Concerning the process of the General Judgment, in which the modern notions of *Universal Salvation* are particularly considered.

MATTHEW XXV. 31—46.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took me not

in: Naked and ye clothed me not: Sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or a thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

IT is the intention of this discourse, to explain and confirm the sense of this passage of Scripture. And since Scripture is the best interpreter of itself, we shall compare the various representations in the text, with the general tenor of the sacred oracles.

I. Our Lord here gives us a particular and lively representation of the general judgment. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations,” &c. This description of the great day resembles that of several other inspired writers. Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, saying, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all.” Solomon says, “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” The apostle Paul declares “that God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men; in that he hath raised him from the dead.” We are told the fallen angels are “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” And

the apostle John beheld in vision this great and glorious and solemn scene. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." These declarations are too explicit to need any comment; they literally speak the language of the text, and confirm the representation it gives of the general judgment: which is also agreeable to the nature and apprehensions of mankind as well as the character of the Deity and the present dispensations of divine providence.

It is, in the first place, perfectly consonant to the nature of men as moral agents. They are endued with perception, reason, memory, conscience, and all the powers and faculties which are requisite to moral agency. And being moral agents, they are proper subjects of law and moral government. The Supreme Being therefore, will treat them but according to their nature, to call them to an account for all the deeds done in the body, and give them a just recompense of reward. Hence every man carries in the very frame and constitution of his nature, an irresistible evidence of a future judgment.

Accordingly, this is agreeable to the natural apprehensions of mankind. As they are sensible they lie open and naked to the view of the omniscient God, so they naturally expect he will call them to an account for all the inward motions and exercises of their hearts, as well as outward actions of their lives. The man who emburies his hand in the blood of his fellow-creature, though concealed from every other eye but the omniscient, has a secret fearful apprehension of the righteous judgment of God. And, though he is

neither accused nor suspected of his crime, yet his own conscience binds him over to the judgment of the great day. This is the secret voice of nature, which has discovered itself on many occasions. The barbarians, when they saw the viper on Paul's hand, "Said among themselves, no doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." The mariners in the ship with Jonah, when they found themselves in danger of perishing by a mighty tempest, "Said, come let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is come upon us." And when Joseph's brethren were thrust into prison, and subjected to great and unexpected misfortunes, they immediately recollect their cruel and unnatural treatment of their brother, as the procuring cause of their present calamities. "They said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: Therefore is this distress come upon us." All men thus feel the natural connexion between moral evil and physical, between sinning and suffering, between guilt and punishment. Hence every man's conscience presages a future day of retribution, when he must give an account of himself to God, as the supreme and final Judge.

And this is further confirmed by the rectitude of the divine character and government. Since the Author of Nature is infinitely holy, just and good, he must necessarily conduct agreeably to these divine attributes in the government of moral beings, and dispense rewards and punishments according to their respective characters. The present state of things, however, clearly evinces that the day of retribution is yet to come. Here, as Solomon observes, all things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and the

wicked, and no man knoweth either love or hatred, by the present dispensations of divine providence towards him. But as things cannot always continue so under the administrations of a Being of perfect rectitude; so the present state of the world is a clear demonstration of a future general judgment, when the Supreme Being will review the conduct of all his intelligent creatures, and reward the righteous and punish the wicked according to their works.

II. Our Lord speaks of one distinction in the characters of men, which will absorb all other distinctions, and divide the whole world into two classes at the last day. "Before him shall be gathered all nations: And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, &c.—For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.—For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: Naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not."

In many respects the righteous and the wicked resemble each other. They are often alike as to their natural powers and abilities. In this view, Absalom, Joab and Ahitophel resembled Moses, David and Solomon. There is also a resemblance in their natural tempers and dispositions. Absalom and the young man in the gospel, were perhaps in this respect, as ami-

able as Moses, or the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast. These, and many other circumstances which arise from birth, rank, fortune, religious denominations, &c. are common both to the righteous and the wicked, and will not characterise mankind at the last day. But there is a difference in the *hearts* of men, which forms a capital distinction in their characters and will finally place some on the right, and some on the left hand of their Judge. And this is the distinction, which our Lord here mentions and describes. He represents the righteous as possessed of that divine love and charity, by which they sought the glory of God and the good of their fellow creatures in all their actions. But he represents the wicked as actuated by a low, mean, mercenary, contracted disposition, which confined all their views and pursuits to their own good. Both these dispositions are described by the apostle Paul. His description of charity or divine love is in these words. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." So says our Lord in the text: But the description continues. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, *seeketh not her own*, &c. Whereas the contrary disposition, the apostle says, makes "men lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God." Heat and cold, light and darkness cannot be more diametrically opposite, in their nature and effects, than these two dispositions are. And since all mankind are governed by one or the other of these two principles of action, so there is an essential distinction in their characters, which justly denominates them all either righteous or wicked. Accordingly we find the scripture every where takes notice of this capital distinction in the characters of men, and marks it by such discriminating epithets as these—the godly and the ungodly—the holy and the unholy—the just and the unjust—saints and sinners—the friends of God and the enemies of God—the children of light and the children of darkness—the children of God and the children of the devil.

As this distinction is of great importance, and closely connected with the subject before us, we shall consider it a little more particularly.

The Supreme Being, in the course of providence, hath acknowledged and paid a visible regard to this distinction between the righteous and the wicked. In describing the character of Noah, he represents him as essentially different from the rest of mankind at that day. "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt: For all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth: And the Lord said unto Noah, come thou, and all thy house into the ark: For thee have I seen *righteous* before me in this generation." Here God distinguished the *righteous* from the *wicked*, and, to exhibit a public and visible regard to this distinction, he saved the righteous and destroyed the wicked

He likewise asserted and vindicated the distinguishing character of Job. "The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." The great accuser of the brethren disputed the truth of this divine declaration. "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands; and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." As if he had said, There is nothing singular in the character of Job. He conducts no otherwise than any other person would in the same situation. Let any other man receive equal tokens of thy love and favor, and he will make equal returns of gratitude and obedience. Sinners love those that love them. He is, like all other men, entirely governed by mercenary motives. Therefore only touch his interest, and strip him of those peculiar favors thou hast lavished upon him, and he will drop the mask, discover his hypocrisy, and curse thee to thy face. To wipe off these aspersions from Job's character, and to convince Satan that he acted from truly noble, disinterested motives, God gives him leave to try him with any afflictions or calamities short of death. Satan with pleasure makes the experiment. He brings a train of evils upon Job in thick succession. He strips him of his wealth. He slays his servants. And to close the scene, he rends from his heart, the dear objects of his affections, by the sudden and surprising death of his children: Thus he tumbles him in a moment, from the summit of human glory into the depths of human woe. Here is a

fair trial. And what is the effect? Does he curse God as Satan predicted, and as an unholy, unsubmitive heart would naturally prompt him to do under such a severe, corrective stroke? Nothing more remote. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Here is, as far as can be, a visible demonstration of the essential difference between nature and grace, between a saint and a sinner.

On another very memorable occasion, God explicitly acknowledged the reality and importance of this distinction. He had resolved to destroy Sodom. But previously to the execution of this design, he revealed his purpose to Abraham, who immediately breaks forth into the most fervent intercession for those miserable objects. And this is the language in which he addresses the Most High. "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee to do, after this manner to slay the righteous with the wicked: And that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? God graciously replies to this and his repeated importunity, that if he found fifty, or forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even ten righteous persons in the city, he would spare the whole place for their sakes. And when neither of these numbers could be found, he delivered just Lot, as a standing monument that the Judge of all the earth would do right. Such are the public, visible, striking testimonies, which God himself hath borne to the distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

David mentions and describes this distinction almost in every psalm. It may suffice to quote the first as a specimen of the rest. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the *ungodly*, nor standeth in the way of *sinners*, nor sitteth in the seat of the *scornful*. But his delight is in the law of God; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. The *ungodly are not so*: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the *ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*, nor *sinners* in the congregation of the *righteous*: but the way of the *ungodly shall perish*." If it be said this psalm refers to Christ, it is sufficient to observe, that there is no evidence of it from any description of his person or character, nor from any part of it being applied to him in the New Testament.

The book of Proverbs is, in a manner, one continued contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

The declarations of Christ on this head deserve special attention and regard. His sermon on the mount contains a beautiful description of the discriminating characters of the righteous. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: For they shall see God." That Christ here intends to distinguish saints from sinners, in respect to the inward motions and affections of their *hearts*, is not only evident from the descrip-

tion itself, but from the observation which he immediately subjoins. “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” And in the conclusion of this chapter, he more particularly describes the nature and essence of the distinction, which he had before been speaking of. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only; what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Our Lord here represents the children of God as bearing his divine image, and possessing his divine spirit, which distinguishes them from the rest of mankind who are utterly destitute of such a holy and heavenly temper. And in his conference with Nicodemus, he points out the source from whence they derive this special grace, and who it is that makes them to differ. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh: and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit: marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.”

We have only to add the testimonies of the apostles to this important distinction. St. Paul declares, “If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of

his." Again "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And he represents saints as distinguished not only from sinners, but from themselves whilst in a state of nature, by the special influences of the divine Spirit. "And you hath he *quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom we all had our conversation in times past; in the lust of our flesh, and of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." And in another place, after mentioning a catalogue of the blackest characters, he reminds the saints, "That such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The apostle John in the first chapter of his gospel, says, "As many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And in the third chapter of his first epistle, he insists on the same distinction as a matter of high importance. "Little children, let no man deceive you (by pretending there is no difference between saints and sinners, for) he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he, that is Christ, is righteous: he that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he

that loveth not his brother." Thus the essential distinction between the righteous and the wicked appears to be perfectly consonant to the whole tenor of the sacred oracles.

III. Christ further asserts that the righteous and the wicked shall be separated from each other, and respectively rewarded and punished at the last day. "And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This representation of the process of the last day falls in with the natural apprehensions of mankind. They naturally expect a future judgment, and they as naturally expect the judgment of God will be according to truth, and proceed upon the immutable principles of perfect rectitude.

And we have sufficient grounds to expect this, from many instances of the divine conduct. God separated the fallen angels from the rest of the heavenly hosts, and doomed them to a state of darkness and despair. He approved and preserved Noah, whilst he condemned and destroyed the ungodly world. He preserved just Lot from the ruins of Sodom. And he distinguished Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua from that evil generation, who were doomed to fall in the wilderness. These instances presage a more general and perfect display of retributive justice at the last day. And in this light they are considered and improved by the inspired writers of the New Testament. The apostle Peter urges them as incontestible proofs

of future rewards and punishments. “For, says he, if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an *ensample* unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: The Lord knoweth how to deliver the *godly* out of temptations, and to reserve the *unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*” And the apostle Paul reasons in the same manner upon the divine conduct towards the devoted Israelites. “But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now all these things happened unto them for *ensamples*; and they are written for *our admonition*, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” These instances leave us no room to doubt, that God will finally dispense rewards and punishments to all mankind with perfect rectitude and impartiality.

Nor is this less evident from the whole tenor and spirit of the *gospel*, which sets the rewards of the righteous, and punishments of the wicked after death, in the clearest and strongest light. The gospel not only proclaims divine mercy to all penitent and believing sinners, but on the contrary, denounces inevitable destruction to all who finally reject the offers of life. Accordingly our Lord, when he sent forth his apostles to preach the gospel, gave them special charge to proclaim its solemn sanctions as well as its gracious proposals. “And he called unto him the twelve, and began

to send them forth by two and two. And he said unto them, in what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet, for a testimony against them. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, *in the day of judgment*, than for that city." After Christ's resurrection, and just before his ascension into heaven, he gave a commission to his apostles, and to all their successors in the ministry, to preach the gospel wherever divine providence should call them. And their commission runs in this solemn form. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Here is the very genius and spirit of that gospel, which is to be unfolded and inculcated by all the ministers of Christ in every age of the church. And according to this summary of the gospel, future rewards and punishments appear to be not only consistent with the gospel, but an essential part of it. Indeed the gospel gives as full assurance of the destruction of unbelievers, as of the salvation of believers; and as infallibly fixes the certainty of future punishments, as of future rewards.

This truth evidently runs through the whole frame and contexture of the gospel, and is interwoven with all its peculiar leading sentiments. We might instance in the doctrine of election, divine sovereignty, regeneration, &c. But we shall only mention the terms of salvation, which are the cardinal precepts of the gospel.

Repentance is one of these. It is much insisted on both in the old testament and new. Solomon says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mer-

cy.” David tells us, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” Christ also declares, “He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” And he expressly told sinners, on a certain occasion, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Faith in the Mediator is a term of the divine acceptance. “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: But he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Love to Christ is a condition of divine approbation at the last day. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathama maranatha.” That is to say, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh to judgment.

A forgiving spirit is likewise necessary in order to obtain divine forgiveness. “When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any: That your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

And it is equally necessary to persevere in all Christian graces and duties, in order to receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. “Now the just shall live by faith: But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back unto perdition: But of them that believe to the saving of their souls.” These terms of salvation speak for themselves. If they have any meaning, they must mean that those who comply with them shall be saved; but those who reject them shall be lost.

The doctrine of future rewards and punishments may receive additional proof from many express declarations of scripture. To recite every passage in favor

of this truth, would be to transcribe a great part of the bible. We shall therefore only mention a few which are the most plain, and pertinent to our subject. We read in the ninth psalm, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." There was a set of men, in the days of Malachi, who ridiculed all experimental religion and vital piety. They said it was a vain thing to serve God, to walk mournfully before him, or to keep his ordinances. They called the proud happy, and applauded the workers of iniquity. In contrast with such persons, the prophet paints the characters and future prospects of the righteous in the most lively colors. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not."

The apostle Paul speaks equally plain and determinate on this head, in the second chapter of Romans. "But we are sure the judgment of God is according to truth, against them that commit such things. And thinkest thou, O man, that judgest those that do such things and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of

God; who shall render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every *soul* of man (not sin of man, but *soul* of man) that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

To these may be added the declarations of Christ. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, *ye that work iniquity.*" "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: But rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

To enforce these solemn warnings, our compassionate Redeemer, as it were, sets before our eyes the certainty and danger of future punishments, by a number of well-chosen and striking parables. To this end he spoke the parable of the vineyard—of the sower—of the rich fool—of the marriage supper—of the ten virgins—of the talents—of the tares—and of the rich man and Lazarus. Each of these parables would greatly serve to illustrate the subject before us, but especially the two last; which, therefore, we beg leave to recite at large. The parable of the tares is in the thirteenth of Matthew.

“The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: And in the time of harvest, I will say unto the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them: But gather the wheat into my barn.” Our Lord’s exposition of his own parable supersedes any other comment. It is this. “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one: The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and *them which* do iniquity: And shall cast *them* (not their *sins*, but them personally) into a furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father.”

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in the sixteenth of Luke, gives us a still more visible and affecting representation of the miseries of the damned.

“There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores; and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried: And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: For I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: So that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets: Let them hear them. And he said, nay, Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.” Nothing short of dreadful experience can give us clearer evidence of future torments than this parable; nor afford a better comment upon our Lord’s representation of the final separation be-

tween the righteous and the wicked, and their respective rewards and punishments at the last day.

There is one thing more contained in the text, which deserves particular notice, and that is,

IV. The endless duration of future rewards and punishments. “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: But the righteous into life *eternal*.” This is the general voice of scripture. The prophet Daniel says, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to *everlasting* life, and some to shame, and *everlasting* contempt.” The apostle Paul asserts, that “the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” In Rev. xx, 3, the apostle John tells us, “He saw Satan cast into the *bottomless* pit.” This epithet, which we meet with no less than six times besides in this book, expresses in the strongest manner the never ending miseries of the wicked, the smoke of whose torments is repeatedly said to ascend forever and ever. Our Lord once before asserted the eternity of future punishments as clearly as he does in the text. “If thy hand offend thee cut it off: It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.”

ed: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” In this last passage the eternity of hell-torments is expressed in terms which admit of no evasion. Our Lord’s argument here turns upon the infinite disparity between temporal and eternal pains. Duration is the only point to be illustrated. And finite is here set in contrast with infinite duration. And this infinite duration is expressed by a variety of epithets, which are, of all others, the most plain, determinate and unexceptionable.

As to the words—eternal—everlasting—forever and ever—they generally signify a duration which is absolutely boundless, and are to be taken so here, unless there be some special reason for restricting them to a limited duration. When they are applied to subjects which are in their *own nature temporary*; this naturally leads us to understand them in a limited and restricted sense. But when they are applied to the souls of men which are immortal, the subject allows us to interpret them in their most common and extensive meaning. The souls of the wicked may exist as long as the souls of the righteous, and therefore the miseries of the former may run parallel with the happiness of the latter. And this is asserted in the text. The same word in the original is used to express the duration of future punishments, which is used to express the duration of future rewards. “And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: But the righteous into life *eternal*.” The Greek word here rendered eternal and everlasting, is rendered so fifty-seven times in the New Testament; and there are but two places in the

New Testament, where the word eternal or everlasting comes from any other Greek word. The same Greek word is likewise used both in the Old and New Testament, to signify the eternity of the divine existence.* And the Earl of Nottingham hath shown, that this Greek word signifies eternity in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and the best Greek authors, and that they have no better word in their language, by which to express a proper eternity or endless duration.† Indeed Dr. Hartley who maintains that the miseries of the damned will finally cease, allows that the scripture expressions concerning the eternity of hell torments are sufficiently plain and determinate, and would establish the point, if any mere expressions could possibly do it, which however he absolutely denies. And though Mr. Seigvolk and others say, the Greek words which the inspired writers here made use of to express the eternity of future punishments, only signify *an age, or ages, or ages of ages, or periodical eternities of 50, 100, 1000, 2000 years continuance*, yet they do not tell us what other words could have been used to express an absolute eternity with more certainty and precision, or more to their satisfaction. According to their criticisms, if the inspired writers had really intended to assert the endless duration of future punishments, they could not have done it, because there is no word in any language, which primarily signifies an absolute eternity. But these and all other critics, however, are obliged to own, that the inspired writers have used such expressions as *sometimes signify eternity*, and acknowledge that the sense

* See Gen. xxii, 23. Isaiah xl, 28, and xxvi, 4, and lvii, 15. Psalm lii, 13, and xc, 2, and xciii, 2, and cvi, 48. Daniel xii, 7. Rom. xvi, 26. 1 Tim. i, 17.

† See his criticisms on those words in his answer to Mr. Whiston, Ed. 3, p. 37, 38.

of such expressions ought to be determined by the nature of the subjects to which they are applied, and the connexion in which they are used. Hence there appears no force in the criticisms which have been made upon the words, by which the eternity of future punishments is expressed in the sacred oracles. So far as words, or mere expressions can determine the matter, it is absolutely certain, that both the miseries of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous will run parallel with the interminable ages of eternity.

Nor is there any thing in scripture or reason to take off the force of these expressions, or lead us to imagine the wicked will ever be released from punishment and restored to the divine favor.

1. We have no reason to think so from the nature of sin. All allow that sin and guilt are inseparably connected, and therefore that every sin deserves *some* punishment. But many imagine, that no transient momentary act of a finite creature can contain such malignity and guilt, as to deserve an *eternal* punishment; and therefore that the damned must finally be released from punishment, upon the foot of equity, having paid the uttermost farthing which they owed to divine justice. And if their guilt shall ever cease, we may be assured their punishment will also cease, for the judge of all the earth will do right and punish them no longer than they deserve. But who in the whole circle of the intelligent creation, can tell us when their guilt, or desert of punishment will cease? *Sin* and *guilt* are inseparably connected. *Guilt* can no more be separated from sin than *criminality*. There is no sin without criminality, and no criminality without guilt, or desert of punishment. Therefore both the criminality and guilt of a crime must continue as long as the crime continues, or till it ceases to

be a crime and becomes an innocent action. But can murder, for instance, which is a crime in the very nature of things, ever become a virtue? Can time, or obedience, or sufferings, or even a divine declaration, alter its nature, and render it an innocent action? Virtue and vice, sin and holiness are founded in the nature of things, and so must forever remain immutable. Hence that which was once virtuous, will forever be virtuous; that which was once vicious, will forever be vicious; that which was once praise-worthy, will forever be praise-worthy; that which was once blame-worthy will forever be blame-worthy; and that which once deserved punishment, will forever deserve punishment. Now if neither the nature of sin can be changed, nor the guilt of it taken away, then the damned, who have once deserved punishment, will forever deserve it, and consequently God may, in point of justice, punish them to all eternity.

2. There is no ground to expect that the punishments of the damned will ever soften and purify their hearts, and so prepare them, in some distant period, to exchange the regions of darkness for the mansions of bliss. Among others Dr. Hartley and Chevalier Ramsay build their strongest hopes of the final restitution of all lapsed beings to the divine favor, upon this foundation. They imagine the punishments of the wicked will naturally soften and meliorate their hearts, and finally qualify them for the society and enjoyments of the blessed. They suppose God's ultimate view in punishing the wicked after death is to reclaim them, and bring them to good. They look upon such persons as die in impenitence and unbelief as peculiarly *perverse* and *obdurate*, whom none of the mild methods of providence and grace could effectually subdue and reclaim in this life, and therefore God is reduced

to the disagreeable necessity of purging and purifying them by the harsh and severe means of hell-torments. They imagine God constantly desires and uniformly pursues the happiness of every individual of the human race, and will bring them all to pure and permanent felicity as soon as he can possibly do it consistent with *their moral freedom* and *inveterate habits* of sin. And “as God cannot be eternally frustrated in his designs; as finite impotence, folly and malice cannot forever surmount infinite power, wisdom and goodness; as the sacrifice of the Lamb slain cannot be forever void and of no effect; reprobate souls and angels cannot be forever unconvertible, nor God unappeasable, nor moral and physical evil undestructible. Wherefore infernal punishments must at last cease, and all lapsed beings be at length pardoned and re-established in a permanent state of happiness and glory, never more to fall again. This is the end and consummation of all things, and the designs of all God’s promises and punishments.”

But is there any thing in divine revelation to support this hypothesis? That God visits the righteous, in this life, with pains, trials and afflictions for their *spiritual benefit*, he hath expressly told us, and they have found to be true by happy experience. “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the father of our spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our *profit*; that we might be partakers of *his holiness*.” And David gratefully acknowledges that

he derived real benefit from the divine corrections. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and thou in faithfulness hath corrected me." Thus God lets his children know the salutary nature of his fatherly chastisements. But where do we find the least intimation in scripture, that God intends to punish the wicked in a future state, for their *benefit*, as he here corrects his children for their spiritual good: hath he not, on the contrary expressly assured the wicked, that he intends to punish them, after death, not to *save*, but *destroy* them, not to express his love towards them, but his indignation and wrath? This is the plain import of the sentence to be denounced against them at the last day. "Depart from me ye *cursed*, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord." "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold of judgment; I will render *vengeance* to mine *enemies*, and will reward them that *hate* me." "What if God, *willing to shew his wrath*, and make his power known, endured with much long suffering the *vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*." Here the wicked after death are represented as the *enemies* of God, and as the objects of his wrath; and he is represented as punishing them to *reward* them for their wickedness, and to express his wrath and displeasure towards them, without the least regard to their amendment and benefit. But if future punishments were intended as fatherly chastisements to purify the wicked and qualify them for the eternal joys of heaven, why are they then represented as expressive of divine wrath, indignation and vengeance, instead of the tender mercy of God towards his offending but beloved offspring? The truth is, these expressions put it beyond doubt.

that God has diametrically opposite ends in chastising the righteous in this life, and punishing the wicked in the next. And we may be assured God can and will make his own *means* answer his own *ends*. As he designs future punishments shall not *soften*, but *harden*, shall not *save* but *destroy* the wicked; so they will eventually have this, and no other effect upon them. Accordingly we find this confirmed by the most incontestible evidence. A punishment of near six thousand years continuance hath hitherto, in no measure, subdued or softened the heart of Satan, who still remains an avowed and malignant enemy to God and man. The signal plagues sent in rapid succession on Pharaoh, instead of softening, *hardened* his stubborn heart, and made him seven fold more a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction, according to the divine *purpose* and *prediction* concerning him. And the tremendous judgments which fell on the subjects of Satan's kingdom, at the pouring out of the sixth vial, had the same *hardening* effect and impression on their impenitent hearts. "The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast: And his kingdom was full of darkness, and they knawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and *repented not of their deeds.*" Hence we are to conclude that the vials of divine wrath to be poured on the enemies of Christ at the last day, instead of softening and meliorating their hearts, will only serve to confirm and increase their malignant dispositions, to render them more odious to God, and more unmeet for the society and enjoyments of the blessed: And being thus eternally unqualified for heaven, they will never find admission into those realms of love and unpolluted bliss. Besides,

3. There is no intimation in the word of God, that those who are once separated from the righteous at the last day, shall ever be united to them again. Our text and many other passages of scripture clearly ascertain the time, manner and reason of the separation between the righteous and the wicked, but there is not a text to be found, which intimates when, how, or for what reason they shall be re united. Every representation of the general judgment naturally leads us to suppose, that God will then finally settle all the affairs of mankind, and irreversibly fix their characters and conditions for eternity. Accordingly none of the most able writers, that we have met with, in favor of the final happiness of all lapsed beings, have presumed to tell us *when* this important event shall take place, or the miseries of the damned shall cease. But if God intended to release them, one would imagine, that he would have made it known in his word, and relieved them from that intolerable despair, to which they may now be liable for ages of ages. Why should he so particularly fix, and reveal, and describe the day when their punishments shall commence, but never give the least hint concerning the time and circumstances of their release? Is not this bare silence a strong presumption that they shall never be released, and a full demonstration that no man can *prove* that they ever will?

N. B. This Discourse may be divided here.

NOW if the above observations have fully established the eternity of future punishments, then we are obliged to believe the doctrine, whether we can answer all the objections made against, it or not. It would be ve-

ry absurd for a man to deny his own existence, the existence of his fellow creatures, and the earth's annual productions of herbs, fruits and flowers, because after all his philosophical researches, he is unable to investigate the *mode* of the divine operation in creation and providence. And it is equally absurd to disbelieve the being of God, the inspiration of the scriptures, or the *eternity* of future punishments, because there may be some things connected with these subjects, which lie beyond the sphere of human comprehension. It is not the intention of these observations however, to preclude an examination of any objections that may be urged against the eternity of hell-torments, or any other doctrine of the gospel; or to insinuate that we are bound to believe real contradictions and absurdities; but only to prepare the mind to look at the difficulties which we propose to consider, with candor and impartiality; and lead us to rest our faith upon the firm foundation of real evidence.

It is said, that "by the separation between the sheep and the goats in the text, is not to be understood a separation between saints and sinners, but only a separation between *sin* and the *sinner*. The *sins* of men shall be separated from their *persons*, and their persons shall be saved, whilst their sins and the father of them, the devil, shall be destroyed.* This our Lord teacheth in the parable of the tares, and the apostle Paul acknowledgeth to be true, when he says, speaking of his own *evil* conduct, *It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*"

In answer to this, it is easy to observe, that though a sinner may become a saint, and a saint may become perfectly holy, or free from all in-dwelling sin and

* See a late Catechism, which, *perhaps injuriously*, claims the merit of a *fructuosa* production

corruption; yet the relation between him and his past sins cannot be dissolved. It will, for instance, forever remain true, that the apostle Paul persecuted the church of Christ, and that sin will always be his. He hath never sinned since he arrived to heaven, and never will sin again, yet the connexion between him and his past sins will forever remain and be *felt*, so as to enhance his own happiness, and display the riches of divine grace towards him. The notion therefore that sin can be perfectly disconnected from the sinner, that it can be burnt up, destroyed or annihilated, is a gross absurdity.

Besides our Lord tells us in plain terms, that by sheep and goats he means *all nations*. And he uses these metaphors in the same sense in which other inspired writers use them. Sheep signify *good* men, and goats *bad*, in many other places of scripture.* But if any one would *feel* the absurdity of supposing that goats represent *sins*, let him only read the text according to this construction. “Then shall he say also unto *them* on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed *sins*, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an-hungered, and ye *sins* gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye *sins* gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye *sins* took me not in: Naked, and ye *sins* clothed me not: Sick, and in prison, and ye *sins* visited me not. Then shall those *sins* answer him, *saying*,” &c.

It is objected farther, that “Christ as mediator was so united to mankind, that his actions were theirs, his obedience theirs, and his sufferings theirs, and consequently he hath as fully restored the whole human race to the divine favor, as if they had all obeyed and suffered in their own persons. The divine law now

* John x, 15, 26, 27, 28, 29. Dan. viii. Zach. x, 1.

hath no demands upon them, nor condemning power over them. Their salvation solely depends upon their union to Christ, which God constituted and established before the world began. And by virtue of that union, they will all be admitted to heaven, at the last day, and not one of Christ's members, not one of Adam's race will be finally lost." Mr. Rely says,* "Christ having taken on him the seed of Abraham, *he in them, and they in him*, fulfilled all righteousness, obeyed the law, and underwent the penalty for the past transgression, being thus made perfect *in one*." "According to this union, or being in him, as branches in the vine, as members in the body, &c. the people are considered together with him through all the circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory."† "And thus considering the whole law fulfilled in Jesus, its *precepts* obeyed, its *penalties* endured, *he* now inherits the promise: And apprehending ourselves in *him*, united to *him*, through all his *doings*, and *sufferings*, *his* condition, and state is *ours*. And thus standing in *him*, we can indeed read the law, or the doctrine of rewards, and punishments, without fear: Because the punishments, yea all the threatenings in the book of God, have been executed upon *us* (as sinners and law-breakers) in *him*."‡

This is the corner stone, this is the sole foundation which supports the scheme of *universal* salvation as maintained by Mr. Rely, Mr. Murray, and their followers. If this should give way, their whole fabric falls to the ground, and their hopes perish. We shall therefore consider this point with particular attention.

To suppose that mankind were "with Christ through all the circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory," is repugnant to the plainest

* Treatise on union. Boston Ed. p. 92

† Page 26

‡ Page 40.

dictates of common sense. Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; was circumcised the eighth day; was, at thirty years old, baptized of John in Jordan; was, after this, lead into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights, and baffled all the devices of Satan; and being thus prepared, he went forth preaching the gospel, healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead; till finally, he was betrayed by Judas, condemned by Pilate, crucified between two malefactors, buried by Joseph or Arimathea, and after lying three days and three nights in the grave, he arose from the dead, ascended up into heaven, and set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Were any, much less the whole human race with Christ in all these circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory? Where is the man who is conscious of being, acting, and suffering with Christ in any of these extraordinary and stupendous scenes? But had there been such an union between Christ and mankind, that his obedience was theirs, his sufferings theirs, and his glory theirs, they must all, in every age of the world, be conscious of having the same motives, the same affections, the same sorrows, and the same joys that he had; and of doing the same miraculous actions that he did. But what concord had Christ with Belial? What union of heart with an ungodly world? Was he not pure, and harmless, and *separate* from sinners, through the whole course of his life and conduct upon earth?

It may, perhaps, be said that this is an unfair representation of the matter, and that by "Christ's being in mankind, and they being in him," is only intended, that according to a certain divine constitution, God considers what Christ did and suffered as being done and suffered by mankind personally. The answer to this is obvious. No divine constitution or appointment

whatever, could make Christ's personal obedience and sufferings ours. A divine constitution cannot alter the nature of things, nor effect impossibilities. Can we conceive that it is now in the power of the Supreme Being, by a new, positive constitution, to make Christ the betrayer of Judas, the crucifier of his crucifiers, and the perpetrator of all the sin and wickedness of the whole human race? But it is no more impossible for God to do this now, than it was from eternity, to make a constitution, by which, not only the actions of Christ and of Judas, but the actions of Christ and of all mankind should be the same. The supposition of a divine constitution relieves no difficulty here. The notion that all mankind were "with Christ through all the circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory," is as absurd as the doctrine of transubstantiation, of which no man can form an idea.

And besides all this, it is entirely unscriptural. It is not to be found among any of the unions which are mentioned in the Bible. We there find indeed the union between the human and divine natures in the person of the Mediator. Christ often asserted both his humanity and divinity. He proclaimed himself not only the Son of Man, but the Son of God; and professed to be not only David's Son, but David's Lord. Accordingly, the Jews, who understood the true import of such phrases, considered him as assuming divinity and equality with God the Father; for which they accused him of the crime of blasphemy. And our Lord, to vindicate himself, never denied, but maintained his claim to the last; which claim was founded upon the union between his human and divine nature. Hence the apostle John tells us, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." And we read, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh."

Such an union of the two natures in the person of Christ, was necessary to qualify him for the work of redemption. For the divine nature separately considered, could neither suffer, nor obey; and the human nature separate from the divine, could not atone by obedience and death; but both these natures being united in the person of Christ completely qualified him for the mediatorial work. Besides, this union was also requisite in order to point out the objects for whom he made atonement. He would appear to die for those, in whose nature he died. Had he took upon him the nature of angels, and died in their nature, this would have proclaimed him the Mediator between God and *them*. But inasmuch as he did not take upon him the nature of angels, but that of the seed of Abraham, this proclaimed him the Mediator between God and *man*. Now if Mr. Relly had only asserted the necessity of such an union as this, in order to render the sufferings of Christ in the room of mankind, consistent with the divine attributes, we should have had no disposition to dissent from him. For we grant it would have been inconsistent with the divine truth, justice, mercy, wisdom and love, to have subjected Christ to those sufferings which he endured in the room of sinners, had he not been united to human nature, and so become the Mediator between God and man. But Mr. Relly overlooking this union between Christ and *innocent* human nature, maintains that Christ was *united to sinful men, and partook of their guilt*, and on that account *deserved* to suffer, in point of *justice*.* In this view indeed, the sufferings of Christ appear perfectly just, but not in the least degree *meritorious*, for there can be no *merit* in suffering a *just punishment*. So that had it been possible for such an union to have existed as Mr. Relly pleads for, it would have defeated the

* Page 3, 4, 5, 6.

ends of Christ's death, and prevented an atonement for sin.

The Scripture likewise mentions an union between Christ and the *elect*. A certain number of mankind were chosen to salvation from eternity, and given to Christ, in the covenant of redemption, as the reward of his sufferings. These are called the *elect*, or the *church*, and often alluded to in Scripture, particularly in the following passages. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*; according as he hath chosen us *in him*, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us *in Christ*, before the world began." "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a *spiritual house*, an *holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, behold I lay in Zion a *chief corner stone, elect precious*; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore, who believe, he is precious: But unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the *head of the corner*; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, *whereunto also they were appointed*. But ye are a *chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*." These, and many other passages of Scripture speak of the *elect*, and speak of them as *peculiar*, and *distinct* from the rest of mankind. All

the world are not the elect, but the elect are those who from eternity were chosen out of the world, and who are represented in Scripture, as entirely distinct from the world. Our Lord hath taken care to fix and determine this matter with great precision. He says in the 24th of Matthew, "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall *deceive many*, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very *elect*." Here the elect are distinct from the *many* that were to be deceived. Again, in the 15th of John, Christ tells his followers, "If the *world* hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: But because ye are not of the world, but I have *chosen* you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." In the 17th chapter, he hath these expressions. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me *out of the world*. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, *because they are not of the world*, even as I am not of the world."

Now as the elect were chosen to salvation from eternity, *in Christ*, as the means, and *for Christ*, as the reward of his sufferings and death; so it may be truly said, that there hath been a certain *union or connexion* between Christ and the elect *from eternity*. But besides this, there is another more intimate and *vital* union between Christ and the elect, which commences *in time*, but shall endure forever. For whom God predestinates, them he also calls; and whom he calls, them he also justifies; and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies. Hence, says the apostle, speaking of the success of his labors among the Gentiles, "*As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*." All the elect are brought in this life, by the influences of the

divine Spirit, to repentance and *faith*. And *in faith*, this vital union to Christ commences. The believer then becomes united to Christ *in his affections, views, and interests*. He loves what Christ loves, and hates what Christ hates. He has the same views of the divine Majesty, of the divine law, of sin, and of himself, that Christ has. And he has a joint interest with Christ in the love of God, in the protections of providence, and in all the blessings which result from the work of redemption. This union is of the same nature with that which subsists between Christ and his Father. Accordingly he prays, in the 17th of John, that this union might commence, in time, between him and those whom his Father had given him from eternity. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall *believe* on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also *be one in us*.” This union makes the principal figure in the sacred writings, and is oftener alluded to there than any other. It is on account of this union, that saints or believers, in distinction from the world, are said to *die* with Christ, to be *crucified* with Christ; to be *buried* with Christ; to be *quickened* with Christ; to *rise* with Christ; to *live* with Christ; to be *circumcised* with Christ; to be *baptized* with Christ; to be *complete* in Christ; to be *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*. And it is on account of this union, that Christ and the church are so often prefigured and represented by the various metaphors of Adam and Eve; of Adam and his posterity; of the husband and wife; of Aaron and his robes; of the vine and its branches; of the head and its members; and of the corner stone and superstructure.

These unions, which we have now mentioned and described, are the only ones respecting Christ and men, that are to be found in the sacred oracles. And these are so far from bearing the least affinity to that union between Christ and *all* mankind, which Mr. Relly pleads for, that they are utterly inconsistent with it, and subversive of it. If these be true, that must be false. And if these be true, then to one or other of them, must every passage of Scripture, which speaks of men's union to Christ, necessarily refer; and of course, leave Mr. Relly's notion of union as destitute of all support from divine revelation, as from reason and common sense.

But it may be still urged in favor of the universal salvation of mankind, that "Christ tasted death for every man, and made full atonement for the sins of the whole world. And it is preposterous to imagine that any of those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, should be finally lost." I answer,

First, this objection supposes that God is obliged, *in justice*, to save all mankind. Therefore,

Secondly, it supposes that mankind stand in no need of *divine forgiveness*. For if the price of redemption which Christ hath paid, hath fully discharged the debt which sinners owed to God, then they now owe him nothing, and if they owe him nothing, they have nothing to be forgiven; and therefore can never with propriety use that petition in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Wherefore,

Thirdly, there can be no grace displayed in the salvation of sinners, by the gospel. For if they all *deserve* to be saved, it is an act of *justice*, but not of *grace*, for God to save them. Though the apostle indeed tells believers that they are "justified *freely* by his

grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.”
But,

Fourthly, this objection is entirely founded in a misapprehension of the nature of Christ's atonement. It was not the intention of Christ by his obedience and death, to make *void* the law, to alter the *nature* of sin, to *move* God *in* mercy, or *oblige* him, *in* justice, to save sinners; for all this was impossible. But his design was, to *establish* the law, to *condemn* sin in the flesh, and maintain the dignity of the divine character and government, and thereby open a door for the display of divine mercy and forgiveness towards a perishing world. The death of Christ indeed hath removed all the obstacles, which before stood in the way of the exercise of divine mercy; and that is all. God is no more obliged, *in point of justice*, to save sinners, than if Christ had never died, and made atonement for sin. If God saves any of the human race now, it is an act of *mere grace*, and not of *justice*. Hence the *extent* of Christ's atonement does not in the least determine, whether more or less, whether a part or the whole of mankind will finally be saved. This can be determined only by the *divine declarations*, and *gracious promises* to Christ, which, as we have shown, all concur to reprobate the notion of universal salvation.

It is said by some, that “God being from eternity perfectly and independently blessed, could have no other motive in giving being to his creatures than *their good*, and of consequence, he must infallibly bring them all, sooner or later, to a state of perfect happiness.”

Though this objection is not void of plausibility, yet it seems to carry something in it extremely absurd and dishonorable to the divine Majesty. For the Supreme Being to leave himself entirely out of view in all his

works, and to make every thing in the universe solely subservient to the good of the creature, looks like setting the creature above the infinitely great Jehovah! Besides, if the Deity aims solely at the good of the creature, why should not the creature aim solely at his own good, and make his own happiness the sole object of all his desires and pursuits? And why should God blame him, if in the pursuit of this object, he casts off fear, restrains prayer, and loves and serves the creature more than the Creator? Moreover, if the Divine Being aims solely at the good of every individual person, why hath he not made every man perfectly happy through every stage and period of his existence? Why hath he made this world an Aceldema, a field of blood, and scene of every evil, where men are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward? Why hath he not rather poured one continued, uninterrupted stream of happiness upon *us*, as he hath upon the angels above, who have never felt one *sinful* passion, nor one *painful* sensation since their existence? Perhaps it will be here said, that though God aims solely at the good of the intelligent creation *in general*, yet this does not necessarily imply that he must *constantly* seek and promote the good of *every individual*. We grant it, and abide the consequence, which is this. If the good of the intelligent creation *in general*, may *sometimes*, require God to give up the good of *individuals*, then it may, for aught we know, require him to give up the good of *individuals forever*. If the *general good* of mankind once required the *temporal* destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts, who knows but *the general good* of the whole intelligent creation, may also require their *eternal destruction*? Therefore allowing that God does, in this sense, aim supremely and solely at the *general good* of the intelligent creation, yet he may

nevertheless make myriads and myriads of *individuals* finally and eternally miserable.

There is, however, no reason to think that God had, from eternity, no other view in all his works of creation and providence, than the *general* good of the *created* system. This supposition seems to originate from a false conception of the *nature* and *blessedness* of the Divine Being. God is not an infinite *Intelligence*, who is perfectly destitute of all *propensions*. He is not, as the Epicurians dream, an infinite *Stoic*, who is entirely unaffected with, and indifferent to, all created and uncreated objects. But he is a being of infinitely clear views, of infinitely wise designs, and of infinitely *strong propensities and affections*. And the perfect, undisturbed, eternal *gratification* of all these, is absolutely essential to his infinite, immutable blessedness. Though God was indeed perfectly blessed from eternity, independently of his creatures, yet not independently of his own views, purposes and affections. Could we only suppose it possible, that God's purposes and designs should now be erased from his mind, or that he should now find himself unable to carry them into execution, this would prove an eternal diminution of the divine blessedness. But since known unto God are all his works from the beginning; since they have always stood present to his view, as fully accomplished, they have been an eternal source of ineffable satisfaction, self-complacency and delight. Now if God be capable of great and noble designs, if he be capable of great and noble exertions, and capable of taking a *true, real, infinite pleasure and delight* in all his works, then it is easy to conceive that he might make his own *pleasure, his own blessedness or glory* the grand and supreme object in all his works of creation and providence, and

have but an inferior and subordinate respect to the good of the creature. Accordingly the scripture represents this as his ultimate and supreme end in the creation of the world. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov. xvi, 4. The apostle says, that "of him, and through him, and to him are all things." Rom. xi, 36. And it is the general voice of heaven, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for *thy pleasure*, they are and were created." Besides, the whole course of providence from the beginning to this day, clearly demonstrates that God hath sought his own glory supremely, and the good of the creature but subordinately in all his conduct. He expelled the rebel angels from heaven, destroyed the old world, and burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah, not for *their good*, but for his *own glory*. And we know the perdition of Pharaoh and of Judas was not designed for *their good*, since Christ hath said of the one, that it had been good for him, if he had never been born, and God hath told us, he raised up the other, that his name might be declared throughout all the earth. Hence the supreme and ultimate ends of the Deity in the creation of the world, afford no evidence in favor of the *universal* salvation of the human race. It may be consistent with God's original and eternal designs, for aught we know, to continue the miseries of the damned to all eternity.

We often hear the infinite love and mercy of the Deity pathetically urged as an irrefragable argument against the eternity of future punishments. It is said, "this doctrine represents the divine benevolence as far below the pity and compassion that are found in the human heart. A parent's love cannot endure the

thought that the dear offspring of his own bowels should be made fuel for quenchless flames. And the most malevolent man on earth does not even *wish* that his worst enemy should lie down in eternal sorrow, and dwell with everlasting burnings. Much less can the kind parent of the universe, who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, find it in his heart to doom any of the human race to the pains of hell *forever*."

This objection appears to be rather an address to the soft and tender passions of human nature, than an appeal to the cool and impartial dictates of right reason. The weaker passions of our animal nature, recoil in the view of those acts of public justice, which our reason, our conscience, and our *real* benevolence *approve*, and which the *divine* authority hath absolutely required. But who would hence conclude that *our* love and compassion transcend the tender mercies of the Deity? Did not Noah preach an hundred and twenty years to a stupid and impenitent world? Did he not offer up strong prayers and cries to the Father of Mercies, that he would graciously avert the dire destruction which hung over their guilty heads? And did he not rise in fervor and importunity, as the period of their day of grace and space of repentance drew nigh? How then must he have felt when he stood a spectator of their final doom! Who can describe or conceive the tender emotions of his heart, the painful conflicts and tumults of his breast, when the tremendous scene opened to his view! When he beheld the rains falling, the fountains of the great deep breaking up, and all nature in convulsions; and heard the waves roaring, and a guilty world, day after day, crying, and praying, and rending the heavens with their last, expiring groans! But shall we imagine that God was equally *shocked*

on this solemn occasion! No, He, (if we may be allowed the comparison) stood, like Brutus, with stern justice on his countenance, and beheld his beloved, but guilty offspring receive the due reward of their deeds.

With what fervent importunity did Abraham beseech the Most High to spare the devoted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? And next morning, when he repaired to the place, where he had stood and prayed before the Lord, and looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, how did it awaken every tender feeling of humanity and benevolence? But who will hence conclude that the Father of Mercies had less love and compassion towards the workmanship of his own hands, than Abraham? Hence nothing but our danger can equal our delusion, if we imagine the Divine Being to be altogether such an one as ourselves, and judge of the divine clemency by our own. What if Noah, what if Lot had done so! What if Noah had said, "I know the world is become universally corrupt. I know the earth is filled with violence. I know God hath told me his patience is limited to one hundred and twenty years. But I know my own heart recoils at the thoughts of their destruction, and it is my sincere desire and prayer to God that they might be saved. And I also know God is infinitely more kind, and gracious, and merciful than I am. I will therefore neglect the ark, and build my house on the sand, and fear no evil." But behold! the floods come, the winds blow, and the storms beat on his house, and it falls, and great is the fall of it! What if Lot had considered the divine threatenings as a mere mockery, like his sons-in-law, would he not have perished with them

in the ruins of Sodom? And is it not equally dangerous to reason in the same manner now, against the threatnings of the wrath to come?

But still, says the objector, is not God a God of love? And is it the nature of love to punish, especially its beloved objects? I answer, yes; it is the genuine tendency of *true* love, under certain circumstances to punish. True love to his child, induces the kind and indulgent parent to use the rod of correction for his good. So says Solomon, "He that spareth his rod, hateth his son, but he that *loveth* him, chasteneth him betimes." So whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. "But this reaches not the case," replies the objector. "I can easily conceive that love should punish its beloved object for its good; but will it extend further? Will it punish more than the benefit of the object punished requires? Will it therefore punish forever?" No doubt it will, when the *good of the object punished is not the end* proposed by the punishment. It is not always the intention of punishment to consult the *good* of the object punished. This is never the case with respect to *capital* punishments in this life. It is *love* to his country, or a tender regard to the *public* good, that induces the civil magistrate to condemn the traitor or murderer to a painful and ignominious death. It was love to God that fired the breast of Phineas, when he rushed into the camp of Israel, and slew Zimri and Kozbi. And thus it was considered, approved and rewarded by the God of love. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel (*while he was zealous for my sake among them*) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace," &c. It is love to the objects injured, and not to the objects

punished, that dictates the nature, degree and duration of their punishment. Thus it is God's love to himself, to his Son, to his law, and to the general good of the universe that induces him to punish the wicked after death. And as his infinite love to these objects will eternally remain, so it will induce him to punish the wicked *forever*. His love will burn to the lowest hell. Hence we find the most exemplary acts of divine justice are represented in scripture as the expressions of divine *mercy*. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is *good*; for his *mercy* endureth forever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens; for his mercy endureth forever. To him that *smote Egypt in their first born*; for his mercy endureth forever. And brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth forever. But *overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea*; for his mercy endureth forever. To him that *smote great kings*; for his mercy endureth forever. And *slew famous kings*; for his mercy endureth forever. *Sihon king of the Amorites*; for his mercy endureth forever. And *Og king of Bashan*; for his mercy endureth forever." Here the displays of divine justice are considered as the displays of the same *goodness* which first gave birth to the creation of the world. But to whom is the display of this justice, a *mercy*? To the wicked? Nay, but to the Israel, to the church of God. Hence the degree and duration of the punishments of the wicked will always hold proportion to the degree and duration of the *divine love* to the righteous. Accordingly God represents his *punitive justice* as the necessary fruit and effect of his infinite goodness and mercy. When Moses requested a special manifestation of his glory. He told him he would cause all his *goodness* to pass before him. And to do this, he proclaimed himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and

truth—and that will by no means *clear the guilty.*” Thus it appears that divine *goodness* may, and infallibly will *punish* the wicked *forever*, if the *good* of the universe requires their *eternal* punishment.

“The punishments of the damned,” say some, “must disturb the joys of the blessed. For how can those pure and benevolent spirits behold *without pain*, multitudes of their fellow-creatures, whom they love as themselves, eternally weltering under the vials of divine wrath.”

In answer to this it may be observed,

First, that the punishments of the damned are the displays of *divine justice* towards *them*.

Secondly, that they are the displays of *divine goodness* towards the *blessed*. Hence,

Thirdly, as displays of *divine goodness*, the heavenly hosts ought not only to *approve* of them, but to *rejoice* in them, and *praise* God for them. And hence,

Fourthly, the scripture tells us, that the pure spirits above do rejoice in and praise God for the eternal punishments which he inflicts upon his and their enemies. Upon the fall of mystical Babylon, it is said, “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.” “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and power unto the Lord our God: For true and *righteous* are *his judgments*; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up *forever and ever.*”

It is said, “If God should save some of mankind and finally punish others, then he *would be a respecter of persons.*”

To this it is sufficient to reply, that divine inspiration assures us, that God's rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked is *the very thing*, which demonstrates him to be no respecter of persons. "But if ye call on the Father, who, *without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work*, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear," 1 Pet. i, 17. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that *doeth wrong*, shall *receive for the wrong which he hath done*: And there is *no respect of persons*," Coloss. iii, 23, 24, 25. And the apostle tells the finally impenitent sinner, that God will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. *For there is no respect of persons with God.*" Rom. ii, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11.

It is further urged against the eternal punishments of the wicked, that "though God is obliged to fulfil his *promises*, yet he is not obliged to fulfil his *threatenings*; and therefore notwithstanding he hath threatened eternal destruction to the finally impenitent, yet we cannot hence absolutely determine that he will make them eternally miserable."

This objection does in a great measure, if not entirely defeat itself. For it supposes,

First, that God has really threatened eternal destruction to the wicked.

Secondly, it supposes that God may consistently with justice make them eternally miserable.

Thirdly, it supposes that it is utterly impossible for us to know and *prove*, that he will *not punish* them *eternally*, because this cannot be known unless God has *promised* not to *fulfil* his threatenings, which is absurd.

Fourthly, it supposes that it is *probable* that he will *punish* the wicked *forever*. Divine threatenings must, at least, imply that it is in some measure *probable*, that God will fulfil them, or else they imply nothing, have no meaning, and answer no end. And this probability is greatly corroborated by the many instances, which the Scripture gives us, of God's fulfilling his threatenings. He threatened to destroy the old world, in the space of an hundred and twenty years. And accordingly at the time appointed he destroyed them. He threatened to judge and destroy the Egyptians, after a period of four hundred years. And when the time of the promise and threatening came, he overthrew the Egyptians, and set the seed of Abraham free from the house of bondage. He threatened destruction to the Canaanites, and he destroyed them accordingly. He threatened a seventy years captivity to his people Israel, and he fulfilled his threatenings. He threatened the total excision of the Jews, their city and temple, and they were cut off at the time predicted. He threatened the ruin of the seven churches of Asia; and his threatenings have long since been fulfilled. He threatened the utter extinction of Babylon and Nineveh, and his threatenings have had a most exact and punctual accomplishment.* These and many other instances which might be adduced, afford a strong probability and presumption that God will ful-

* See Newton on the Prophecies.

fil all his threatenings according to their *real nature* and *import*. Nor does the case of Nineveh rightly understood suppose the contrary. God's threatenings against Nineveh were evidently *conditional*, agreeably to that divine maxim in the 18th of Jeremiah "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation—If that nation, against whom I have pronounced *turn* from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." And Jonah and the king of Nineveh evidently understood the threatening with this *implied* condition; or why did Jonah preach, or the Ninevites fast? Besides,

Fifthly, it is as certain as God can make it, that the threatening in the text will be executed upon all the finally impenitent, because it is of the nature of a prediction, which pledges, the divine VERACITY, as much as a promise. The process of the general judgment is foretold as an event, with all its consequences both to the righteous and the wicked. It is, therefore, just as certain that the wicked will be punished forever, as that there will be a day of judgment.

Another objection is this. "If sin and misery be not totally abolished, and all mankind finally saved, then Satan will triumph, and Christ will fail of accomplishing one of his principal ends in the work of redemption, which is to bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the works of the devil."

To this it may be replied, in the first place, that *merely the abolishing of sin and misery* will not destroy the works of the devil, and bruise the serpent's head. For supposing in any period of eternity, sin and misery should be perfectly abolished, Satan would still have cause to triumph, that he had brought an indelible stain upon the divine character, and done an irreparable injury to his creatures, and so far frustrated the

kind and benevolent purposes of the Deity in the work of creation. Unless,

Secondly, all the sin and misery which he had provided the means of introducing into God's world, are *turned against him*, and made instrumental of bringing *more glory* to God, and *more happiness* to the universe than if they had never existed. When this is done, Satan is effectually conquered, his *head* is bruised, and his works destroyed. But,

Thirdly, if the sin and misery of ages, can be made the means of bringing *more glory to God*, and *more happiness* to the universe, than if they had never existed; then the sin and misery of the damned through eternity, may prove the means of promoting the same ends forever. Therefore in order effectually to destroy the works of the devil, and bruise the serpent's head, it may be absolutely necessary that Satan and multitudes of his followers should be eternally miserable. Accordingly the scripture represents Christ as triumphing over Satan, by turning all his schemes and works against him, and finally casting him and his adherents into the bottomless pit, under the wrath of God, and the everlasting contempt of the heavenly world. And thus Christ is exalted, and his enemies are made his footstool.

Having shewn that there will be a general judgment—that there is an essential distinction between the righteous and the wicked—that agreeably to this distinction, they will be separated at the last day, and rewarded and punished according to their works—that their respective rewards and punishments will endure *forever*—and that there are no *solid* objections against these solemn and interesting truths; it only remains to conclude this discourse with such reflections as are naturally suggested by the subject.

It is obvious to remark, in the first place, that every scheme of *universal* salvation is utterly destitute of any foundation in the word of God. The foregoing observations equally strike at the root of this opinion, in whatever shape it appears, or on whatever ground it is built. Various schemes have been pursued to establish the notion of the final restoration and happiness of all lapsed beings. This notion perhaps was first conceived in the fertile brain of Origen, who, like other great and aspiring minds, made such gross blunders in speculation, as men of an inferior size are incapable of committing. This opinion of his, transpired with several others equally absurd and romantic. He maintained—that “the souls of men do pre-exist—that through their fault and negligence they appear here inhabitants of the earth clothed in terrestrial bodies—that the mystery of the resurrection is this, that we shall be clothed with heavenly or ætherial bodies—that after long periods of time the damned shall be delivered from their torments, and try their fortunes again in such regions of the world as their natures fit them for—and that the earth, after her conflagration, shall become habitable again, and be the mansions of men and other animals, and this in eternal vicissitudes.”* Such crude and undigested notions were propagated by Origen, which probably would have dropt into oblivion ages ago, had not the *name* of their author carried more weight with some, than the strength of his arguments. Out of this rubbish, however, the Romish clergy formed the absurd doctrine of purgatory. And after them, Chevalier Ramsay, Dr. Hartley and others have built on the same foundation, the doctrine of the final restoration of all lapsed beings to the divine favor.

* *Phoenix*, Vol. i, page 11.

Others have founded their expectation of the final happiness of the whole intelligent creation on the infinite goodness and mercy of the Supreme Being. They suppose that the *endless* misery of the creature cannot be reconciled with the nature of his crime, nor the boundless love and benevolence of the Deity. This scheme hath been generally adopted by deistical writers.

And of late, Mr. Rely hath devised another method of arriving to the same conclusion, and maintained, that *all* men will be saved by virtue of their *union* to Christ, which God constituted and established from eternity, without any act or exercise of theirs. This is the last improvement upon the doctrine of *universal* salvation; and is, of all others, the most absurd and repugnant to the genius and spirit of the gospel.

But the notion of universal salvation, in every form of it, is so absurd, that it hath never met with *general* acceptance among those that have called themselves Christians. They have never adopted it as an article in any of their formulas, creeds, or confessions of faith. Even the Romish church have not embraced it. They do not imagine that every sinner will have the benefit of purgatory, but suppose multitudes are so guilty as to be sent directly to hell, and shall there remain forever. Only a few individuals have believed and propagated this doctrine, in any age of the world, as Dr. Hartley frankly acknowledges. His words are these. **“It is farther to be observed, that the fear of death is much increased by the exquisiteness of the punishments threatened in a future state, and by the variety of the emblems, representations, analogies, and evidences, of natural and revealed religion, whereby all the terrors of all other things are transferred upon those punishments; also by that peculiar circumstance of the*

* Observations on man, Vol. i. page 467, 468.

eternity of them, which seems to have been a general tradition previous to the appearance of Christianity, amongst both Jews and Pagans, and which has been the doctrine of the Christian world ever since, some *very few* persons excepted." This general disbelief of the doctrine of universal salvation bears a very dark aspect upon the truth of it. For had it been true, and plainly revealed in the sacred oracles, it is strange that the Christian world could never yet be brought to embrace it; especially since it is a doctrine so every way adapted to please and gratify all the natural desires of the human heart. The belief of it would not have afforded half the evidence of its truth, as the disbelief of it, for so many ages, affords of its falsehood. There has been every thing to lead mankind to embrace it, and nothing to reject it, had it been *true*. But on the other hand, there has been every thing to lead mankind to reject, and nothing to embrace the doctrine of *eternal* punishments, had it been *false*. Therefore it is next to a miracle, that the Christian world should, for so many ages, embrace the doctrine of *eternal* punishments, and reject *that* of universal salvation, had not the doctrine of universal salvation been really *false*, and *that* of eternal punishments *most evidently true*. In no case, perhaps, the general voice of the Christian world ought to have more weight than in this; especially since it so fully concurs with the general voice of Scripture. We have seen that all the doctrines, declarations, precepts, promises and threatenings of the gospel conspire to condemn the notion of universal salvation. Indeed had the Bible been written on purpose to refute it, we can hardly conceive that it could have contained any thing more plain, full and determinate against it. And Chevalier Ramsay acknowledges, that "St. Jerom, St.

Gregory, of Nyssa, St. Augustin, and St. Cyril, of Alexandria, attacked and confuted this opinion, as maintained by Origen, before the fifth general council held at Constantinople.”* In short, there is every kind of evidence against it. It stands condemned by scripture, by reason, and by the general voice of mankind for more than a thousand years past.

Secondly, it appears from what hath been said, that this sentiment is not only false, but very *dangerous*.

If there be an essential difference between saints and sinners; if they shall be separated from each other, at the last day, and eternally rewarded and punished according to their works, as we have endeavored to show in the preceding discourse, then the notion of universal salvation, especially as maintained by Mr. Rely, and his followers, is fundamentally wrong and absolutely fatal. Their doctrine teaches, that holiness and piety are empty names; that faith, love, repentance, humility and submission, are no other than hypocrisy, pride and idolatry; that it is impossible for a man to prevent his salvation by the most irreligious, abandoned, profligate life; that there is no essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that they shall not be separated at the last day, but Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Judas, Pilate, and all the rest of the impenitent world shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of glory, and no human soul be finally shut out. Such a doctrine as this is replete with infinite mischief. It strikes at the root of all experimental religion. It confounds all notions of virtue and vice. It destroys all distinction of characters, it saps the foundation of morality. It takes off every restraint from vice. It opens the flood gates of iniquity. It renders even God, and Christ, and the

* Philosophical Principles, vol. ii, page 245. & *Sub finem*.

prophets and the apostles, the ministers of sin. It speaks peace to the wicked, to whom, saith God, there is no peace. It has indeed every signature of a damnable doctrine. There are many errors, no doubt, in regard to the modes and forms, and some of the doctrines of religion, which, though they cannot abide the clear light of the last great day, will not exclude men from the favor of God, or the kingdom of heaven. But this is a *practical* error of the first magnitude, which will eventually prove fatal in the day of decision. Our Lord hath so clearly described the process of the final judgment, that we may as certainly know *now*, that all unregenerate, unholy, impenitent, unclean, impure persons shall then be condemned, as if we now stood before that awful tribunal, and heard the last decisive sentence denounced against them, Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Some seem reluctant to pronounce absolutely upon the fatal tendency of this doctrine, and choose only to say, if it be *true*, we are as safe as those who embrace it. But we ought rather to say, if there be no future judgment then we are all safe, but not otherwise. Admit a future judgment, and there remains no room for doubt, whether God will make a difference between him that serveth him, and him that serveth him not; between him that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath. Indeed the supposition that no distinction will be made between the righteous and the wicked at the last day, wholly supersedes the necessity and even propriety of a general judgment. Why should God appoint a day, in which to judge the world in righteousness, if no persons were to be judged, no characters to be examined, and no displays of retributive justice to be made! "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what

a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: But he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.”

Did the human heart naturally prefer light to darkness, and truth to error, it would be sufficient to discover the truth and expose the error, and leave every person to follow the cool dictates of his own understanding. But since the case is quite the reverse, it becomes proper to address the hearts and consciences, the hopes and fears of men, and give divine truths all the advantages which they necessarily derive from the motives of eternity. Hence the apostles addressed mankind on the weighty concerns of the soul, with great solemnity, tenderness and pathos. “Knowing therefore the *terror* of the Lord, we persuade men.” “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Supported and directed by such examples as these, there needs no apology for addressing those who are particularly concerned in this serious subject, and warning them against the fatal dangers to which they are eminently exposed.

There are many, at this day, who are laboring to reason themselves out of the belief of all truth both human and divine; and boast of arriving to a certainty that all things are uncertain. But it may be questioned whether the human mind, which is formed to see and feel the force of truth, will permit any man to approach nearer to perfect *skepticism*, than perfect knowledge. By an habit of resisting truth, however, some may have unsettled their minds respecting divine things, at least, and become exposed to embrace *error*, if any thing, instead of truth in matters of religion. And for this reason, they are very liable to fall in with

the delusive scheme of universal salvation, which hath a tendency to diffuse some glimmering rays of light in their dark and despairing minds. But let such be entreated to awake from their reveries, and attend to the great realities with which they are surrounded and connected. Eternal rewards and punishments are substantial realities, whether they believe them to be so or not. By shutting their eyes against them, their danger is not in the least diminished, but greatly enhanced. The period is hastening when they must be thoroughly awakened from their delusive dreams. The solemn scenes of the last day will draw the curtain aside, and open upon their astonished minds the great realities which we have described. And these objects, which, at a distance, made Felix and Belshazzar tremble, will equally shock their guilty souls, whenever their presence can no longer be resisted. A realizing sense of guilt, and folly, and the divine wrath, will make any human heart stoop, and fill it with unutterable anguish, horror and despair. O! that they would therefore turn from such gloomy prospects, and attend to those luminous truths, which will pour a flood of light into their ravished minds, and give them that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

There is a larger number than these, perhaps, who are making swift and bold advances in the cause of infidelity, and leave no methods unemployed to discredit divine revelation, and subvert the foundations of Christianity. They need not tell the world their motives. Were they not convinced that the Bible contains the doctrine of eternal punishments, they would not wrack their inventions to find arguments to persuade themselves and others that the scriptures are a cunningly devised fable. Let this doctrine be erased from the Bible, and every deist would become

its votary, and exchange his Bolingbroke, Voltaire or Chesterfield for that sacred volume. It is this doctrine alone that compels them to renounce a book, which bears so many signatures of divinity, and which they are compelled to acknowledge contains the most excellent instructions, institutions and commands. But so *weak is their infidelity*, we presume they would rejoice to find the Bible on their side, to confirm their wavering hopes and feeble prospects of future happiness. And this is what the scheme of universal salvation proposes. It flatters them the Bible is their friend, and announces eternal felicity to them and to all mankind. Accordingly numbers of a deistical turn have become converts to this agreeable doctrine, and many others are eminently exposed to fall into the fatal snare. But this is flying from the iron weapon and rushing on the bow of steel. For if any discard the Bible because they imagine it does contain the doctrine of eternal punishments, or embrace it because they think it does not, they will infallibly meet with disappointment and ruin in the end. There is one way, and but one, in which they may escape the wrath which is to come, and that is, by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only foundation of hope, that God hath provided and revealed; nor can any other foundation be laid, which will not give way, when the winds blow, and the storms of divine wrath beat upon the guilty soul.

The sons of pleasure, who indulge in every sinful gratification, find it exceedingly difficult, in their serious intervals, to stifle their natural apprehensions of guilt and punishment, and therefore readily catch hold of any thing which promises them impunity in the paths of vice. The doctrine of salvation for *all men*

without exception, or distinction of characters, perfectly gratifies their hearts, and coincides with their reigning views and pursuits. Accordingly, when this is proposed to their belief, they will, if possible, yield their assent, and shake off those painful fears of the wrath to come, through which, they have all their life time been subject to bondage. But let them beware of this slender shelter. It will infallibly deceive and disappoint them. The agreeableness of the doctrine is a strong indication of its repugnancy to the gospel of Christ, which was never relished by persons of an immoral, profligate character. When John preached Herod was offended. When Christ preached the whole congregation was filled with wrath. And when Paul preached upon *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*, the loose and abandoned Felix trembled. And it is the genuine tendency of the doctrines of the gospel to convince profligate sinners that they are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. They may therefore be assured that the soothing doctrine of universal salvation is diametrically opposite to the truth as it is in Jesus. Let them not then listen to the pleasing delusion, and bless themselves, saying, we shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts, to add drunkenness to thirst. For the Lord will not spare them, but his anger and his jealousy shall smoke against them, and all the curses that are written in the book of God shall lie upon them forever. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: *But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*” “*Be not deceived: Neither fornicators.*

nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God."

There is another class of men whose case borders upon despair, and calls aloud for the prayers and compassion of every pious heart: I mean those who have renounced their former faith, and built all their hopes for eternity upon the slender foundation, *that no man can possibly be lost*. My friends, are you *certain* that without love, without faith, without holiness, you can see the Lord? Are you *certain*, notwithstanding all the divine threatenings, there is no wrath to come? Are you *certain*, that men cannot be under strong delusions to believe a lie, that they may be damned? Are you *certain* that you can appear before the judgment seat of Christ with safety? Are you *certain* that there is no meaning in this saying of our compassionate Redeemer, "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In a word, are you *certain*, it is absolutely impossible, that your precious and immortal souls should be lost forever? If not, what an amazing risk do you run, to suspend all your eternal interests upon a single point of *mere speculation*, which stands condemned by the concurrent voice of reason, of conscience, of scripture, and of the Christian world! But (to use nearly the words of an eminently great and pious divine) if you are determined to inquire no farther into the matter now, give me leave, at least, from a sincere concern, that you may not heap upon your heads more aggravated ruin, to intreat you, that you would be cautious how you expose yourselves to yet greater danger, by what you must yourselves own to be unnecessary, I mean, *At-*

tempts to pervert others from believing the truths of the gospel. Leave them, for God's sake, and for your own, in possession of those pleasures, and those hopes, which nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus can give them; and act not as if you were solicitous to add to the guilt of an infidel the tenfold damnation, which they who have been the perverters and destroyers of the souls of others, must expect to meet, if those divine threatenings which they have so adventrously opposed, should prove, as they certainly will, the most serious, and to them the most dreadful truths. If I cannot prevail here, but the *pride of displaying a superiority of understanding* should bear on such readers, even in opposition to their own favorite maxims of the *innocence of error*, and the *equality of all religions consistent with social virtue*, to do their utmost to trample down the truths of the gospel with contempt; I would however dismiss them with one proposal, which I think the importance of the affair may fully justify. If you have done with your examination into the promises and threatenings of the gospel, and each of you determine to live and conduct himself as if they were assuredly false, sit down then, and *make a memorandum of that determination.* "On such a day of such a year, I deliberately resolved, that I would live and die rejecting all *experimental* religion. This day I determined, not only to renounce all *vital piety*, but also to make it a serious part of the business of my life, to destroy, as far as I possibly can, all regard to it in the minds of others; in calm, steady defiance of that day, when the followers of Christ say, he shall appear in so much majesty and terror to execute the vengeance threatened to his enemies." Dare you write this, and sign it? I firmly believe that many a man, who would be thought an *Universalist*, and endeavors to increase

the number, would not do it. And if you in particular dare not do it, whence does that small remainder of caution arise? The cause is plain. There is in your conscience some secret apprehension, that these opposed, these rejected, these derided truths of the gospel may, after all *prove true*. And if there be such an apprehension, then let conscience do its office, and convince you of the impious madness of acting as if they were *most certainly and demonstrably false*. Let it tell you at large, how possible it is that *haply you may be found fighting against God*: That, bold as you are in defying the terrors of the Lord, you may possibly fall into his hands; may chance to hear that despised sentence, which when you hear it from the mouth of the eternal Judge, you will not be able to despise: I will repeat it again, in spite of all your scorn, *you may hear the King say to you, Depart accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

If any thing farther needs to be added, it is by way of direction, how to shun the baneful influence of these dangerous opinions, which it is the business of some, at this day, to propagate with great apparent zeal.

And here the first thing that occurs is, to search the scriptures, which are the infallible standard of truth and error. We should carry every doctrine, which offers itself to our belief, “to the law and to the testimony,” and abide that divine decision. The rule is perfect. The only danger lies in the misapplication, which indeed is too often the case. No corrupt principle of a religious nature, hath ever failed to press the bible into its service, and claim the sanction of divine authority. But though some disjointed sentences in the word of God may seem to countenance the most

absurd and licentious opinions, and their votaries may fly to this divine sanctuary for protection; yet the sacred oracles taken in their general connexion, fully reprobate every false scheme of religion that ever has been, or ever can be devised. They draw such a character of the Supreme Being, of Jesus Christ, of the Divine Spirit, of the human heart, and of the genuine nature and effects of pure and undefiled religion, that the *doctrines according to godliness*, may be clearly distinguished from all their counterfeits. The scriptures in general have a plain, determinate, consistent meaning, which may be clearly understood. Therefore no two opposite doctrines of religion can both be agreeable to the word of God; but one or the other must necessarily stand condemned by it. Hence, for instance, if the doctrine of eternal punishments be really *agreeable* to the Bible, as we have endeavored to show, then the doctrine of universal salvation is entirely *contrary* to it, and not one text that can be found, does, in its true sense, give the least degree of evidence in its favor. This being the case, there is all encouragement to search the scriptures, to see which of these two diametrically opposite doctrines is true. It would be strange indeed if this could not be determined by every *honest* inquirer. If any are in doubt therefore, we would entreat them to take heed to this sure word of prophecy, which is able to make them wise unto salvation.

In the next place, there is a caution to be used against the seduction of those who propagate corrupt and dangerous sentiments. Be not deceived by their pretensions to superior penetration and knowledge. Men of the strongest minds and most extensive literature have often committed the grossest blunders in their religious speculations, and then employed all their

learning and abilities to maintain and propagate them. Some of the enemies of divine revelation, and of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, have displayed shining talents and a profusion of learning, in pleading the cause of error, and attempting to shake the pillars of our holy religion. And many of their admirers appear to have been dazzled and allured into their snares by an implicit faith in their great abilities. But this betrays weakness. Great men are not always wise: They are liable to err; and therefore we should examine their opinions as well as those of other men, and admit them only upon the foot of real evidence.

Nor are we to be biassed in favor of men's licentious principles, on account of their amiable moral characters. It is a just observation of Dr. Brown, that men of strict morality have often disseminated the most licentious and pernicious doctrines. It is well known, that Epicurus, the father of doctrinal licentiousness, never lived up to his principles, but maintained a regular and exemplary life. Spinoza, the father of speculative *Atheism*, was a man of sobriety and apparent devotion. Lord Herbert, who was, if not the father, yet the principal advocate for *Deism* in the last century, appears to have had a serious mind, and a conscientious regard to duty. And we know that some of the advocates for universal salvation, are men of amiable natural dispositions and fair moral characters. But ought we hence to entertain a more favorable regard for atheism, deism, or any other licentious doctrines. By no means. Those principles are still to be shunned at the peril of our souls.

Nor again, are we to believe the propagators of error, though they throw out the most pompous and solemn asseverations of their sincerity, impartiality and uncommon intercourse with the Deity, and concern

for his glory. Though we scruple not their sincerity, yet we scruple the propriety of throwing out the profession of it, which can have no tendency to enlighten, but only prejudice the minds of the credulous. This, which we venture to call an artifice, is often employed by the advocates for universal salvation. Mr. White, in his treatise on the universal restoration of all sinful creatures to the divine favor,* makes the most solemn asseverations of his sincerity and sacred regard for the divine glory. His expressions are these, "And here I do in the fear of God most humbly prostrate myself before his divine Majesty, and in the deepest sense of my own darkness and distance from him, do with all my might beg of that Infinite Goodness I am endeavoring to represent to others, that if something like this platform and prospect of things be not agreeable to that revealed and natural light he hath given to us, that my understanding may be interrupted and my design fall, and that the Lord would pardon my attempt: and I know he will do so, for he hath given me to have no further concern for this matter, than as I apprehend it to be a most glorious truth, witnessed to both by the scriptures of truth and by the most essential principles of our own reason, and which will be found at the last opening of the everlasting gospel, to recover in that opening a degenerate world." Mr. Rely holds out the same lure to his readers, to place an implicit faith in the rectitude of his views, and the divinity of his doctrines. In a preface to one volume of his writings, he assures his readers that his discourses were delivered extempore, without any previous study or forethought, and flowed from his lips as they were dictated by the divine Spirit. For says he, I followed that divine direction given to the apostles, "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall

* Page 6, 7.

speak, neither do ye premeditate: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” How presumptuous is it for any man, at this day, to pretend to imitate the apostles in this respect, and especially for Mr. Relly, who in his writings every where ridicules all experimental religion, inward piety, holy affections, and Christian graces and tempers!

Error often employs such *artifices* as truth neither needs nor approves. They sometimes, however, prove successful, and deceive the inattentive and unguarded. Those who use them therefore are dangerous persons, and their corrupting influence is studiously to be avoided. Their doctrines are fatal if imbibed; and even when they are not fully adopted, they tend to harden the heart, and stupify the conscience. The bare thought that some maintain that all will be saved, begets a secret hope that possibly it may be true, and that there is not so much danger in *impenitence* and *unbelief* as many have long imagined, and pretended. Therefore to hear the *Universalists* preach, or read their writings, merely to know what they can say in defence of their errors, is like Eve’s listening to the reasoning of the serpent, and may, in the event, prove equally fatal. Accordingly the scripture characterizes false teachers, and warns you to avoid them. The apostle Paul, who was troubled with the perverters of the gospel, treats them with great plainness and severity. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” The apostle John directs men to have no intimate connexion with false teachers. “If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, that is the

doctrine of Christ mentioned in the preceding verse, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." And Solomon gives a similar caution and direction. "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that *causeth to err*." Thus you have not only the voice of reason, but the voice of God to warn you to shun the presence and influence of those that lie in wait to deceive.

The last direction is, to repent and believe the gospel. This will place you beyond the reach of all fatal errors. When your hearts are established with grace you will no longer be liable to be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines. When you yield cordial obedience to the divine will, there is a promise that you shall know of doctrines whether they be of God. When you embrace the gospel from the *heart*, it will be out of the power of Satan or any of his instruments to deceive you. When you sincerely love God, all things shall work together for your good, and prepare you more and more for the great, and glorious, and solemn scenes, which death, judgment and eternity will soon open to your view. But so long as you remain in a state of impenitence and unbelief, you are in imminent danger of making shipwreck, not only of your faith, but of your precious and immortal souls. Though you should escape every fatal error, and in speculation, clearly understand every doctrine of the gospel, yet if you hold even *the truth* in unrighteousness, you will certainly perish. An orthodox creed and a fair *external* appearance are of no avail, in point of divine acceptance, without a broken and contrite heart, and an *unfeigned love* of the truth. For *with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness: And *without holiness* no man shall see the Lord,

Therefore let the wicked forsake his way, and the *unrighteous* man *his thoughts*: And let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Nor is there the least excuse for a moment's delay. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Life and death are now set before you. This is the only day of grace and space of repentance you will ever enjoy. You are now placed between two vast eternities of happiness and woe. You are therefore of all the creatures of God, in the most critical, serious and solemn situation. Your life, or your death, your happiness, or your misery for a boundless eternity, is suspended on the slender thread of life. And death is advancing with rapid speed to seal up your account for the judgment of the great day; when in the view of the assembled universe, you must hear your doom, and either rise with the righteous to mansions of eternal bliss, or sink with the wicked down to regions of eternal darkness, horror and despair! Be intreated then, O sinner, to agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him, lest he deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing!!

NAMES

OF A FEW OF THE

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It was my intention to have published in this volume a complete List of those highly respected FRIENDS who have been so liberal in patronizing the "*Original Sermons*" as well as this volume; but owing to some circumstances, I defer it for the end of the *First* volume, which will be printed (extraordinaries excepted) in the course of the winter.

No. 50, Cornhill, Sept. 30, 1813

