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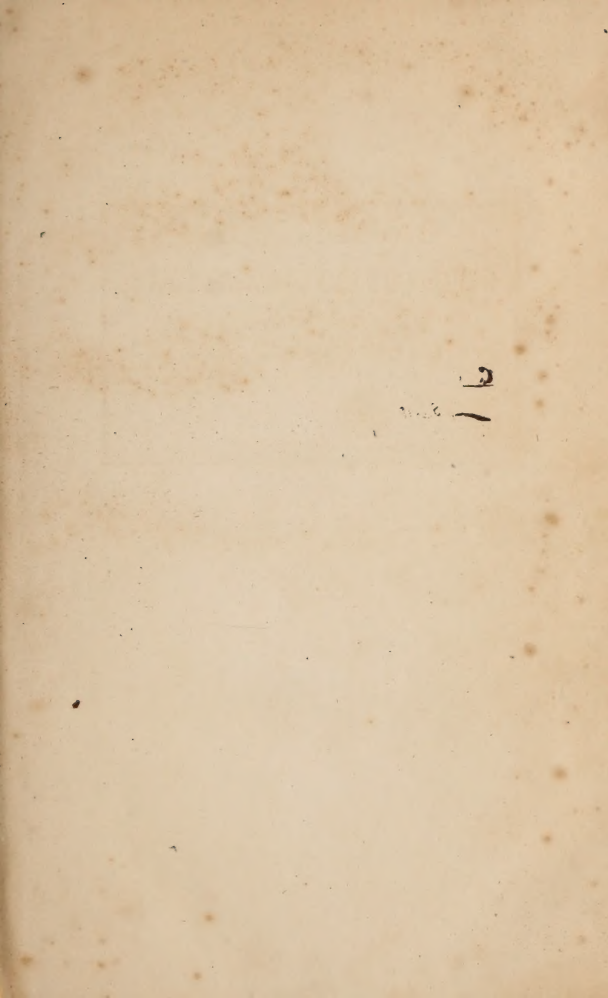
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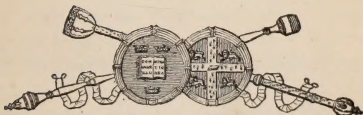
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THE  
COMPLETE WORKS  
OF THE LATE  
REV. PHILIP SKELTON,  
RECTOR OF FINTONA, &c. &c.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,  
BURDY'S LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

EDITED BY THE  
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ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN TO THE MAGDALEN HOSPITAL.

IN SIX VOLUMES:  
VOL. III.



J. F. Dove, St. John's Square.

LONDON :

RICHARD BAYNES, 28, PATERNOSTER ROW :

HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY; PARKER, OXFORD; DEIGHTON AND SONS, CAMBRIDGE;  
WAUGH AND INNES, EDINBURGH; CHALMERS AND COLLINGS, GLASGOW; M. KEENE;  
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REPORT

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IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE SENATE

APRIL 1869

ALBANY:

WILLIAM B. EDEY, PRINTER.



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### THIRD VOLUME.

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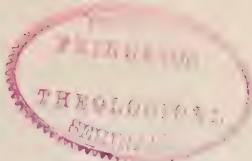
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**DISCOURSES**  
**CONTROVERSIAL AND PRACTICAL;**  
**A FORM OF PRAYER**  
**FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES ;**  
**REFLECTIONS ON PREDESTINATION;**  
**AND**  
**A SUMMARY OF RELIGION.**







## DISCOURSES,

CONTROVERSIAL AND PRACTICAL,

&c. &c.

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### DISCOURSE XLVIII.

RIGHT REASON SAITH, BELIEVE IN GOD.

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ROM. IV. 3.

*What saith the Scriptures? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

THE most important dispute at present among the professors of Christianity, is that about the authority of Scripture in revealing and prescribing, and the prerogative of reason in expounding and understanding the language of Scripture. They who call themselves the advocates of reason say, it is impossible for them to believe or obey any thing, though appearing to come from God, but that which is in itself agreeable to their own reason, whereby alone, they say, God hath enabled them to judge and determine between truth and error, right and wrong. Accordingly, when the plain sense of Scripture clashes with their reason, they claim a right to look for another, more agreeable to that, though less so to the words.

This, now, is called infidelity, deism, and dictating to God, by those who undertake the defence of that authority, wherewith, they say, the Scriptures are delivered to mankind. All the prerogative these men will allow to reason here, though it were the reason of a Newton, is that of a mere interpreter, whose sole business it is to find out the plain, natural, and consistent sense of God's words; and then believe or obey that sense, as the assertion or command of

God, though ever so irreconcilable to her judgment, had it been the assertion or command of any but God.

The former boldly maintain, God could never require this of us, because it is, in their opinion, destroying the nature he hath given us, is extinguishing his candle in the soul, and leaving us exposed to all manner of errors afterward; for what is there, but reason, to distinguish them from truth?

The latter as boldly insist, that when God speaks the common language of men, he means to be understood by all men; and that reason knows no principle, no truth, more to be depended on, especially in things above reason, than the word of God.

Which of these are in the right, will best appear by a fact exactly in point. This will be found in the instance of Abraham's faith, and the approbation of God, repeatedly given to that faith.

What that faith was, I shall, in the first place, shew from the Scriptures relating thereto.

Secondly, I shall shew, why it was counted to him for righteousness, that is, highly approved by God, as an act of saving virtue, having first laid before you the true meaning, or sense, wherein the word righteousness is here to be taken.

And thirdly, I shall prove, that his faith is recommended to us, not only as a pattern and model for ours, but as that very faith which will be imputed to all who have it, as righteousness, no less than it was to Abraham.

That we may, in the first place, clearly conceive what the faith of Abraham was, it will be requisite to attend a little to the trials it underwent, and the proofs it gave of itself, as set forth in the history of this patriarch.

The first proof given of his faith was, when God commanded him to quit his country, his kindred, and his father's house in Haran, and to remove into the land of the Canaanites, where he promised to 'make of him a great nation,' and 'in him to bless all the families of the earth.' The love of his country, his father's house, and his relations, was no hinderance to his obedience on this occasion. He did not set the comforts he enjoyed in a place corrupted with idolatry, in competition with the promises of God, but immediately renounced them all, and went into a foreign country, 'wherein none inheritance,' for the present, was given him,

‘no not so much as to set his foot on.’ But whereas God promised to ‘give it to him for a possession,’ and ‘to his seed after him,’ he went, relying on this promise, when as yet he had no child, nor any natural prospect of children, for his wife was unfruitful. On a renewal of this promise, some time after his removal, he rested satisfied, till God appearing again to him in a vision, and encouraging him with strong assurances of his protection, the patriarch modestly expostulated with the Lord on his being childless, and having then received a promise of issue, ‘he believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness,’ even then when the improbability of his having a son, arising from his own and his wife’s age, though very great, was not yet come to the height.

But about fifteen years afterward, when Abraham was now very near a hundred, and his wife ninety years old, God promised to give him a son by her; having received an assurance of this most extraordinary event with a mixture of joy and wonder, ‘he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God,’ and ‘being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able to perform.’

At this time, the promise, which God had given to Adam, ‘that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent,’ whereof, under the name of his covenant, he appears to have reminded Noah, both before and after the deluge, and wherewith he had once already formally confirmed the faith of Abraham, under the same name of his covenant, is now renewed to him, to his son Isaac, yet unborn, and to all his posterity by that son, still under the name of God’s covenant, with the sign or seal of circumcision added.

In due time, after this last promise of a son made to Abraham, Sarah actually brought him a son, whom he circumcised, and called by the name of Isaac.

The faith of Abraham, thus already tried and approved, is to be brought to a yet severer test than ever. Although the covenant, as we have just now seen, was established with Isaac as well as Abraham; although in virtue of that covenant, a promise was given, that great and numerous nations should descend from Isaac; and although in him a blessing had been repeatedly promised to all the other nations of the

earth; yet his father is commanded by God to slay and sacrifice this very son, now five-and-twenty years old, as yet unmarried and childless. And behold! Abraham builds an altar, by the express appointment of God on mount Moriah, where Christ our sacrifice was afterward offered up, lays the wood in order, and binding his son Isaac, places him on the altar and on the wood, stretches forth his hand, and takes the knife to slay his son. But when his hand is raised to give the fatal wound, it is restrained by the angel of the Lord, who provides a vicarious sacrifice in the place of Isaac.

Here end the trials and proofs of Abraham's faith; on which the 'angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.'

Such was the faith of Abraham, concerning which four things are to be remarked.

First, That being fully convinced, God had really uttered both the promises and commands, already mentioned, he never stayed to reason on the possibility of the former, nor on the rectitude of the latter. He had no doubts about the possibility of his begetting a son, when he was a hundred, nor of his wife's bearing a son, when she was ninety years old, howsoever unnatural this appeared to be, since God had promised it should actually be. On this he firmly relied, 'and even against hope,' as the apostle expresses it, 'he believed in hope.' He was equally far from doubting, whether God could make the posterity of his son Isaac as numerous as the stars of heaven, and bless all the nations of the earth in his seed, although that son was then to be cut off, before he had any children, 'accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.' And as to the rectitude of the matter commanded, he did not say, like a modern, is not God indispensably obliged to act by the natural and eternal law of justice? How, therefore, can he command a father to kill with his own hands, his good and dutiful son? Or

how can even the command of God authorize a deed so unnatural in me? No, he knew it his duty to do whatsoever God commanded, he knew God commanded him to do this, and he knew therefore that God had a right to command it, and consequently to be obeyed. He did not set up the dictates of his moral sense against the evidence of a revelation actually given, against the evidence of things not seen, neither was he prevailed with by nature to rebel against the author and God of nature. Howsoever astonishing the faith of Abraham, thus triumphing over the severest trials, may seem to some men, it was as far from a weak credulity, as his obedience, the effect of that faith, was from a slavish submission. Right reason was with him in all he believed, although ever so incredible to less rational men, for it was God whom he believed; and right reason was therefore with him in all he did, although ever so contrary to the feelings of flesh and blood in him, as well as in men less religious, for it was God whom he obeyed.

Secondly, It is carefully to be remarked, that those affections, which in corrupt and libertine natures prove too hard for the clearest evidences of religion, gave no obstruction to the faith and obedience of Abraham. He was a good man, and as such, no doubt, loved his country and kindred no less tenderly than other good men. Yet he forsook them all, and followed the commandment of God into a strange land, where he had neither friends nor connexions. He was a prudent man, and had all that regard to his worldly affairs and interests, which a prudent and honest man ought to have; yet, without the least regret or hesitation, without any other reliance than on the blessing and protection of God, and even without a promise from God of any immediate establishment among the Canaanites, he quitted a comfortable settlement at Haran, where his father had prospered, and he was growing rich, to sojourn in a distant country, at a time when that country was afflicted with famine. Abraham was also a man, in whom humanity and natural affection were as strong, as in any other man. His son Isaac was beloved by him with all that tenderness which the best of fathers feels for the best of children. Yet when God commands him to execute his son with his own hands, he raises the deadly weapon, and with a full purpose of obedience,

aims at the heart of his innocent, his beloved child, the comfort of his life, the prop of his old age, the gift of God, and the foundation of all his hopes. On this most trying occasion, he felt no libertine dispute between his rebellious affections, and the awful commands of God; or only felt it in a glorious triumph of reason, of faith, and of duty over these soothing sophisters of the heart, which unbelievers find it so difficult to refute or silence.

Thirdly, It is to be remarked, that, in all this, Abraham was the first confessor on record to Christianity, or the covenant in Christ Jesus; for to 'Abraham and his seed were the great and spiritual promises' of that covenant repeatedly made. This is clearly proved by St. Paul, who observes, that God in giving these promises to Abraham, 'saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ;' and farther, 'that God confirmed the covenant in Christ by promise to Abraham, four hundred and thirty years before he gave the law by Moses.' Hence it is, that the same apostle saith, 'God preached the gospel, or covenant unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' And hence also it was, that Christ himself tells the Jews, 'your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day' (that is, prophetically to see the time of my coming), 'and he saw it, and was glad.'

Lastly, It is worth observing, that the sacrifice of Isaac (for such intentionally it was) by the hands of his own father, was providentially designed by God to familiarize and predispose the posterity of Abraham, and through them the rest of mankind, to the future sacrifice of Christ, 'who was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to be crucified and slain, an offering for sin.' From the sacrifice of Isaac to that of Christ, there was time enough afforded to debate and settle this important point, that God, as an absolute legislator, could dispense with a law of his own making, and order a father to slay his son, or give up his own to be slain. Yet even at this day, there are some pretended Christians who dispute the dispensing power of God in regard to the law of nature, and consequently the authority of this record given by Moses, concerning the sacrifice of Isaac, although in so doing they destroy that of the whole Scripture. These men, however, in opposition to



the scheme of providence, from first to last, do but strike at the sacrifice of Christ through that of Isaac, for they can by no means digest the doctrine of the Holy Spirit by St. Luke, that Christ was or could have been 'slain by the determinate counsel of God,' as he was wholly without sin, nor the doctrine of the same Spirit by St. Peter, that 'Christ hath suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, being put to death in the flesh, that he might bring us to God.'

Let us now proceed, in the second place, to inquire, why this faith of Abraham was imputed to him for righteousness, and in what sense the word righteousness is here to be understood.

If by this word we understand nothing more than that goodness or virtue, which consists in a firm reliance on the promises, and a ready obedience to the will of God, a very short inquiry may suffice on this occasion; for Abraham believed and relied with all the cheerfulness and confidence that is due to the promises of infinite truth itself; and he obeyed with equal resignation. Now, in a confidence and obedience like his, there is undoubtedly the highest degree of virtue and goodness that human nature is capable of. His judgment was resigned, against all human appearances, to the promises, and his will submitted, against the bent of all his affections, to the commands of his Maker. This is virtue (and the piety, it is hoped, that gave rise to it, will not be allowed to spoil it) if there is any such thing as virtue in the world.

This, however, is not all that was meant by Moses and the apostle, when they said, that the faith of Abraham was counted to him for righteousness. No, as he believed in Christ, his righteousness was even the imputed 'righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe.' All men have sinned, not excepting even 'Abraham himself, and have come short of the glory of God;' but Abraham, as well as the rest of mankind, is 'freely justified by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood. Where is boasting then? boasting in our own righteousness? It is excluded.' As to Abraham himself, even supposing him to have been 'justified by works, though he may have whereof to glory, he cannot

glory before God,' because his good works were done through the grace and assistance lent him by God; and 'therefore what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom God will not impute sin.

Thus we see, that the righteousness of Abraham was his faith, that his faith was a firm reliance on the merits of his Redeemer, and that those merits obtained for him remission of sins, that is, acquittal, justification, and righteousness, in the sight of his judge. Had God removed Abraham out of the world, the instant this faith, and the good resolutions resulting from this faith, were confirmed in him, before he had time to reduce those resolutions to practice, we should no more have doubted of his justification, than we now doubt it, after all he did. But though no good works which Abraham did, could give him a right to pardon for his ill ones; yet those works, or at least a will and resolution to do them, were necessary to his faith, otherwise it must have been, what St. James calls a dead faith, and consequently incapable of justifying. 'Was not Abraham,' saith the apostle, 'justified by works, when he had offered his son Isaac upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.' Herein is no contradiction to the doctrine of St. Paul, who insists on the power of a principle or cause, whereas St. James insists on the necessity of the effect, in order to prove the power of that cause; and St. Paul does the same as peremptorily, whenever his subject brings it in his way.

St. Paul, to remove all dependence on that 'righteousness which is by the law,' and establish a firm reliance on 'the righteousness of Christ,' the sole righteousness whereby the punishment of sin actually committed may be averted,

and the reward of good works, though for want of opportunity, never performed, may be obtained; lays the chief stress on faith, as the great immediate principle in every true believer, by which the righteousness of Christ is brought home, applied, and imputed to his soul, as if it were his own, and by which also the free gift and grace of God are glorified in the salvation of every real Christian. But then this apostle in a thousand places, makes this faith the spring of repentance, reformation, and good works; if we believe in his doctrine, we must die to sin, and live anew unto righteousness. 'This,' saith he to Titus, 'is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, be careful to maintain good works; for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.'

St. James himself is not more full for the necessity of good works. He only insists that faith, as a principle of life and action must be proved by good works, as its true and natural effects, the very doctrine of St. Paul to Titus: he even forbids the hope of success to our prayers, if we 'ask not in faith,' and repeats it, that the faith of Abraham was imputed to him for righteousness, but observes, 'that his faith was made perfect by works, and that faith without works is dead.' I ask, however, did he expect good works without faith? No more, undoubtedly, than he hoped for fruit without a tree.

Having now seen what the faith of Abraham was, why it was counted to him for righteousness, and what we are to understand by this righteousness; it is time to shew, in the last place, that the faith of Abraham is recommended to us, not only as a pattern and model for ours, but as that very faith which will be imputed to all who have it as righteousness, no less than it was to Abraham.

Had the example of Abraham's faith and resignation been never recommended to us, it must have been nevertheless highly deserving of our imitation. To know it, and to admire it, is but the same thing in a good mind: and to know and admire it, without endeavouring to follow it, is impossible to such a mind. To believe in God, to trust in him, and to give up ourselves and all things that concern us, to

his wise and gracious disposal, is a conduct agreeable not only to reason, gratitude, and duty; but even to self-love.

Such a conduct, however, when blessed, rewarded, and applauded by God himself in our sight, acquires the force of a command. What he so highly approves of in one man, he must, we are sure, approve of in another, the circumstances being alike. But not to imitate that to the uttermost of our power, which God is so well pleased with, argues a stupid indifference to his will and pleasure.

As however this sort of stupidity, although of the grossest nature, is by no means uncommon, the Holy Spirit knowing that the most shining examples do not always strike our eyes in proportion to their brightness, hath not only set such examples before us, but frequently pointed them at us, and by his precepts called us to the imitation of them. The example of Abraham in particular he hath directly recommended to us; for immediately after saying, 'his faith was imputed to him for righteousness,' he adds, 'now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' We are 'therefore to walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham,' who is 'the father of all them that believe, that righteousness may be imputed to us also.' We ought to know, that 'they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham, and that the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed, so that they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.'

Thus you see, our faith must be the same in substance with that of Abraham, our precedent and father in believing. Its qualities must be also the same. It must be firm and lively. It must have the dominion over all our passions, affections, and interests, as it had over his. It must regulate our thoughts, prompt our words, and prescribe our resolutions, and actions, as it did those of Abraham.

His offering up his only Son was not more intended for a type of the great sacrifice offered by the heavenly Father

in his only Son Jesus Christ, than his faith, in all its parts and effects, was intended for a type and pattern of ours.

If he, through a firm persuasion that God best knows what every man ought to do, and hath an absolute right to determine what he shall do, subdued all his passions and affections to the will of God ; we, through a like persuasion, must subdue ours also to the divine will, must ‘deny ourselves,’ and, if we are called to it, must ‘take up our cross, and follow Christ.’ If he thus stifled the affections of his own heart, with a view, founded on the promises of God, to greater joys than the gratification of those affections could give him, and with an eye to his Redeemer, so we likewise, ‘denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’

If Abraham strengthened by his faith, and submitting to the will of God, renounced his country, kindred, and the lands he was actually possessed of, in a place corrupted with idolatry and wickedness, and travelled to a distant land, a land merely of promise ; we, in like manner, actuated by our faith, and renouncing the things of this present sinful world, ought to fix our eyes on the future happiness hoped for, and be ready, as often as God requires it, to ‘leave our houses, our brethren, our sisters, our fathers, our mothers, our wives, our children, our lands, for Christ’s sake, and for the gospel’s,’ in hopes of receiving ‘an hundred fold, now in this present time,’ as Abraham did, if such shall be the will of God, and with a certainty of eternal life in the world to come. You see how parallel our faith and duty are to those of Abraham, particularly in the resignation of our children, insomuch that every Christian, having, with Abraham, received the promises, ought, as he did, to offer up ‘his only-begotten’ son, in case God should require him at his hands ; ‘for he that loveth son or daughter more than Christ, is not worthy of him,’ nor of his Father, who surrendered him to death an offering for our sins. And as Abraham must have believed, against all human probability in the resurrection of the dead (for how otherwise could he have relied on the promises made to him in the posterity of that childless son he was going to kill ?) so it is necessary we likewise should

‘believe, not only in him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, that the righteousness which is by faith may be imputed to us also,’ but in the same doctrine of a resurrection, already past in regard to Christ, and yet to come in regard to ourselves, be this doctrine as mysterious as it will. As Abraham reasoned on the necessity of a resurrection in order to the hope of posterity by his son, before any instance of an actual resurrection had been given, or any promise (for ought appears) had yet encouraged that reasoning, so, now that both an instance and a promise are recorded, as assurances, that we shall rise again from the dead, our faith in an event so absolutely necessary to our entering into eternal life, hath every argument to support it, which the nature of that event will admit, and therefore is absolutely required. Our faith (no more than that of Abraham) is not to stagger at any degree of mysteriousness or improbability in the revelations or promises of God, for otherwise we cannot be the children of Abraham, nor believe as he did, nor be blessed with him.

Faith, you see, underwent no trial in Abraham, which it may not, one time or other, undergo in any believer. Nay, the faith of every believer is at all times tried, as that of Abraham was, though not always so severely. The promises of God are, or ought to be, always before our eyes, and in order to obtain the great things promised, there is always something amazing and unaccountable by reason to be believed, that the pride of our understandings may be humbled; there is ever something to be denied or subdued in ourselves that our rebellious passions may be mortified; something to be guarded against, or contended with, in the world; something too pleasing, that God hath forbidden, to be avoided; or something hated by a corrupt nature, that he hath commanded to be performed; some houses, lands, or kindreds to be left; some journey to an unknown place of promise to be undertaken; some darling Isaac to be offered up, whom in gratitude we ought to offer, since God hath offered his Isaac, or only Son, for us. And any one of these may require all the vigour of a lively faith in him who is so circumstanced. Hence we may see that the faith of a Christian never wants exercise, never wants opportunities of offering up sacrifices to God, of offering up on some occasions, such sacrifices as

require an equal degree of trust in God, and resignation to his will, with those of Abraham, when he laid his only son on the altar. The things we are to sacrifice are often as dear to us as Isaac was to him, and require the cord, the knife, and a stern and unrelenting heart like his, to make them proper victims for the altar of God. Now nothing but a lively faith, and a steady expectation of the glory promised to us in Christ Jesus, can give us such a heart; and no other faith but this, will be 'counted to us for righteousness.' That faith which can produce no effects like these, 'is dead,' for it is 'without works,' and may 'tremble,' with 'the faith of devils,' but it cannot hope, with that of Christians.

Thus ought we to reason and act under the single supposition of believing that the Scriptures are really the word of God, although we could not see either the fitness or benefit of injunctions so rigorous and hard to be obeyed, because it ought to be presumed, that there is sufficient fitness and benefit in every thing enjoined by God. But as in most cases the reasonableness of this obedience is, or may be, apparent to any considering mind, the heart that proves refractory is left without excuse. The severest precepts of the gospel are as far from being tyrannical, as the most indulgent. Their only tendency is to purify our corrupt affections, to raise them above the world, and to knit them eternally to God. Even reason and experience may teach us, that, without the benefit of such a discipline, we must for ever remain in our original impurity, and consequently incapacity of a union with the source of happiness. It is therefore only in a heart uninfluenced by right reason, that any opposition is given to the duty of imitating Abraham, either in faith or practice.

The Christian faith would be universally embraced, did every man find it as pleasant to perform its duties, as it is easy to believe in its evidences. But even among those who do profess it, and for such only this discourse is intended, the resistance given by a corrupt and refractory heart, saps its foundations in the understanding, and enfeebles it in its operations. Hence come all the disputes about its most necessary and evident principles, with all the doubts and cavils about its mysteries. One man finds it very difficult



to believe that God should command mankind to mortify those passions which he himself hath given them. Another cannot conceive himself obliged to believe in that which so great an understanding as his cannot account for. One is too refined to be good on hopes and fears. Another is too knowing to need a teacher, though sent directly from heaven. Either therefore there were no miracles wrought to prove the truth of Christianity, nor is there any rectitude and force in its precepts; or else if this conclusion is refuted by the profits derived from a profession of Christianity, and not to be retained if that is renounced; then another course must be taken, and the reason of these cavillers must be vested with supreme authority to explain the Scriptures, and give such a convenient turn to every thing, that nothing shall be left to contradict their opinions, or bear too hard on their passions and pursuits.

Our reason, say they, is the directing and ruling power of our nature. By this, in matters of religion, as well as in all other things, God requires we should be both guided and governed; and therefore can never be supposed to offer any thing to us in his word, which we cannot perfectly understand, much less to require any thing of us, which our own judgment does not approve of. Nothing therefore in his word can be mysterious; and if any thing contained in it, appears however to be so, it is the business of our reason to fit it with a meaning more familiar to herself. Neither can any thing there make that right, which our reason tells us is wrong; nor that wrong, which our reason says is right. If any thing therefore in the Scriptures appears to do so, it is the office of our reason to prove this to be but an appearance, and to find out some sense for the words, more easily digested by the understandings which our Maker hath bestowed upon us. Thus is the reason of these men set up by themselves above the word of God.

Both sides of a flat contradiction may as easily be true, as this deistical, can be a right plan, to proceed on in relation to religion. Your passions and desires so often solicit you to that which you know to be wrong, that it is just matter of wonder, how you can object to that restraint and mortification, when imposed by revelation, which the natural effects of those passions force common sense to have re-

course to. You know a thousand things to be true, which you can, by no means, account for; what then hinders you from believing a few more of a nature still more incomprehensible, on the authority of God's word? Why will you discipline your child or servant by hopes and fears, by rewards and punishments, and yet cavil at God for dealing in like manner by his, though you are sensible, that the sensations of hope and fear were as certainly made a part of your nature by him, as the rest of your passions and desires?

Reason is undoubtedly the ruling principle in man as to every thing that lies open to reason. But there are many things which do not; which reason, left to herself, can form no idea of. If at any time some knowledge of these should become necessary, what forbids you to receive that knowledge from God, and to close with it as unquestionably true and right, on the authority of his word, if you are sure it is his word? Your reason, you say, is the only interpreter you have of his word. True; but then your reason is only to interpret, not to dictate, not to cavil, not even to demur, when there is no contradiction. You know what is true and false, right and wrong, in some things; in others you do not. God perfectly knows the distinction in all things. Will you not submit your own opinion to his knowledge in some things? May not that be right in some things, and on some occasions, which you think wrong? Nay, may not the giver of all laws, who himself is subject to none, sometimes dispense with laws of his own making? If he may not, what will become of you, who have so often violated his laws, and can have no hope, but in dispensing mercy, for in an atonement you will not trust?

Besides, consider pray, that the faculty of reason, in different men, is endued with different degrees of strength, is more or less enlightened, more or less exercised, more or less biassed by their prejudices or passions; yet here as high prerogative is given to the meanest and most fettered understanding, as to the best. The reasoning faculty in all men hath suffered as great a crush from the fall, as any other faculty of the mind. In most men, the purer powers of the mind, imagination, memory, and judgment, but more especially the last, appear but too plainly, to have received a great diminution of their force from the corruption of human

nature; while the passions and affections have acquired, from the same cause, as great an addition of strength. Men so circumstanced are generally first moved by something which they love or hate, and then judge as they are affected. Hence they unavoidably will, and experience shews us, they actually do, explain the Scriptures in quite opposite senses, especially when they read under the influence of opposite principles, previously espoused; nay, and read with no other view, than either to rivet themselves in those principles, or to accommodate the Scriptures to them in their own imaginations. Thus two men shall have two creeds, contradictory from beginning to end; and each shall have a right to call his own the true creed, and father it on the word of God, which tells us, there is but 'one faith.'

God, no doubt, intended we should make a free use of our reason in reading his word; which, did we make, we could never materially differ about the articles of our faith, which is there set forth as one, and that with sufficient plainness. But let not every man, call that his reason, which is nothing else but his imagination, or at best his understanding, working under the guidance of his own favourite opinions and prejudices, perhaps even his unruly passions and affections.

Neither let him dare, even supposing his reason wholly unprejudiced and unbiassed, to say, this doctrine of Scripture I will not receive, because it appears unaccountable; nor that, because it seems unreasonable, for that is the same as to say, the God of truth is not to be believed on his word, unless the poor short-sighted wretch he speaks to, can demonstrate the consistency of what his Maker utters; or that the Almighty is not to be obeyed, but when his creature and servant can see sufficient rectitude in his command to make the matter of it obligatory, though it had never been enjoined. Nay, it is the same as to say, I do believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, but I will only believe such parts of that word, as square with my own judgment. That is, you believe what God says in general, but deliberate on what he says in particular, and sometimes doubt of it or deny it. But know you not, that your reason, as well as your will, is to obey when God speaks? Does not God command you to believe? And what can the obedience of reason consist in,

but in its submission to the infinitely higher wisdom of God? Or how can this obedience be ever proved or shewn, if you will believe nothing he declares to you, but so far only as you can account for its consistency, or demonstrate its truth? Know, vain man, that faith is obedience, and that, as Christ tells you, 'this is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent.' You profess yourself a Christian, but argue here as a Deist. You cannot be both. However, as a Deist, tell us, is there nothing too high for your reason in that natural religion, which you plainly prefer to revelation? Can you tell us, why infinitely communicative goodness suffered one half of eternity (for every moment equally divides it into two) to pass ere any creature was brought into being? Can you, without revelation, shew how infinite justice consists in the Divine mind with infinite mercy? Are you able to shew, how God certainly foresaw what every man freely does? The Scriptures apart, are you able to tell us, how it came to pass, that all mankind are corrupt, wicked, and mortal, although so universally and violently attached to happiness and life? Are you able to prove yourself, either a free, or a necessary agent? Till the difficulties of natural religion are cleared up by your reason, do not too hastily bring it for a test of the revealed.

Is it not enough for faith, that God asserts? Is it not enough for duty, that God commands? Is not this enough for the faith of a creature, utterly incapable of accounting for any thing? Is it not enough for the duty of a creature, altogether incapable of subsisting a single moment in a state of independence? What God says, is sufficiently accounted for by his saying it, and whatsoever he commands, is sufficiently authorized by his commanding it. He does not speak to puzzle, nor command merely to shew his power; and therefore all that the understanding and will of the most enlightened man on earth hath to do, when God either asserts or commands, is to believe and obey.

Thus thought the patriarch Abraham. He was a hundred years old, and his wife ninety, when God told him, she should bear him a son. On this most amazing declaration, he did not desire God to account either for the possibility, or the means, of performing the promise, which, in those respects, was perfectly mysterious and unintelligible to him.

All he understood, and this he did understand perfectly well, was, that God had promised him a son by Sarah; that from that son 'a great nation should descend;' and 'that in his seed,' by that son, 'all the nations of the earth should be blessed.' This was all God intended he should apprehend. This he did apprehend, and this he firmly believed, his reason not in the least presuming to interfere any farther, than fully to persuade him, that astonishing as the promise appeared to be, God was able to perform it, and that he would certainly perform it he did most firmly believe, 'and his faith was counted to him for righteousness.'

On an infinitely more trying occasion, more shocking to his understanding, and more grating to his most tender affections, when God, after all the promises of a numerous posterity by his son Isaac, commanded him to slay that very son with his own hands; he neither doubted concerning the performance of those promises, nor disputed the justice of the command. He never thought of asking, how God's performance and his obedience could be reconciled. If his reason intermeddled at all with the inscrutable mystery, it was only to satisfy him, that God 'could raise up his son from the dead,' as St. Paul observes, and fulfil the promises in him after his resurrection. The hope of a resurrection was all the relief his faith could possibly afford itself on the bewildering occasion. Yet what sort of a relief was this? To believe that his son should come to life again! a thing most incredible in itself! that had never yet happened! that had not (for aught that appears) been ever yet promised! or if promised, to be performed too late for the hope of posterity!

What now should our libertine Christian, our subtle artist at interpretations, have done, supposing him in Abraham's place? On his principles, he must at first have denied, that God had given him any such command, because truly he could have had no proof of this so strong, as he hath, that the eternal law of nature is indispensable even by the Deity himself; or that this palpable impossibility, Isaac shall immediately die, and yet Isaac shall have a numerous posterity, could ever be effected. No, he must say, God hath given me reason to judge in all things within the verge of my capacity, and my reason tells me, that if my son, now

childless, is put to death, he never can have any issue, and therefore I must be excused, if I do not believe it is God who promises the issue, and yet commands the death. Such absurdities my reason cannot digest, nor could God ever require it should. Much less can I suppose, the just God should order me to imbrue my hands in the blood of my own innocent son. By the indispensable law, he hath impressed on my nature, he hath obliged me to cherish and preserve the life of my child. He cannot, therefore, bid me kill him. He cannot give law against law, nor by any revelation order me to violate that law which binds himself as well as me. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' And can it be right to command any one to do that which is wrong? From all this, I conclude, that either I am deceived in fancying any one hath given me this cruel command, or, that thou who hast given it art the true God indeed.

But as God could easily refute this conclusion, and prove that he had a right to dispense with the laws imposed on his creatures, and that he himself had actually given the command, what then must the libertine Christian do? Will he obey? No, his eternal law is not to be dispensed with. He must not even will the deed. All the relief he hath left, is to screw some other meaning out of the words, which, what it shall be, or how he will manage the matter, he only can tell, who hath often performed exploits as extraordinary of the same kind; hath, for instance, demonstrated from Scripture, directly against the express words of Scripture, that there are more gods than one; and that we may pray to, and worship the creature, even as the Creator.

Should he, however, utterly disclaim all shifts of this kind, and declare, that did God appear to him, and actually give him the command in the same words he is said to have given it to Abraham, he would instantly believe and obey; we then ask him, does he not firmly believe the command was really given? If he does, what comes of the office he assigns to his reason, whereby, under pretence of only interpreting, he gives her authority to control and dictate to, the word of God? Is the supremacy he invests her with, more justifiable in any case, for instance, in that of the Trinity, or the incarnation of Christ, than in this? If in this it is

perfectly absurd and impious, how can he maintain it in other doctrines, wherein his principles will be much less distressed forward of it?

Is it at all so difficult, or so seemingly contrary to reason, to believe, that in God, who is infinitely more incomprehensible in his nature than in his promises or commands, there may be three persons, as it is to believe, that a man who is instantly to die childless, shall have a numerous issue; or that the sacrifice of an innocent son by the hands of his own father, can be most highly pleasing in the sight of infinite goodness? Surely it is not. Yet we see the faith of Abraham, founded on the promises of God, and his obedience rendered against nature, are repeatedly approved of in the strongest terms by the Holy Ghost, in a case where reason is utterly lost, and where the natural law is directly violated; and why approved? but because it was God who promised and can perform against all appearances of impossibility; and God who commanded, and ought to be obeyed against every tie of nature, if he requires it. Abraham believed that which to common sense is incredible; trusted in an event which mere reason pronounces impossible; performed an action, or willed it, which is naturally unlawful; and 'his faith was counted to him for righteousness,' because he believed in and obeyed God, which rendered his faith rational, and his obedience dutiful.

Attend to this, you who call yourself a Christian, and take the Bible for the rule both of your faith and practice, but 'lean, nevertheless, to your own understanding,' as often as that sacred book appears to oppose it. Instead of endeavouring to warp the Bible to your reason, submit your reason to the Bible, if you really believe it to be the word of God. Strain not for interpretations. Take plain assertions or declarations in their obvious sense. Consider what you read as a revelation, made by God, who knows all things, to you who know but few things, and those perhaps imperfectly, that you may bring your mind to this short infallible conclusion, if God and I differ, I must be in the wrong. Prepare your ear and your understanding for him who made, and may be safely trusted with both.

'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken;' and what he hath spoken, who shall disbe-



lieve or disobey? Shall opinion dispute, shall prejudice contradict, shall passion oppose, or reason sit in judgment, on his words? No, 'let us commune with our own hearts, and be still,' and know that he is God who speaks. 'Let all the earth keep silence before him.' He is truth itself, and great is his wisdom; and therefore he must be believed. His justice is infinite, his power boundless, and 'with him is terrible majesty;' and therefore he must be obeyed. 'Lo! he doth send forth his voice, and that a mighty voice,' in the holy Scriptures. At the sound of this voice, our ears have nothing to do, but to listen; nor our apprehensions, but to conceive his meaning; nor our reason, but to believe in the wisdom, truth, and goodness, of all he inculcates or commands. 'God is a sun' to all the world of spirits, and his word is the light of that sun to us. No previous opinions or prejudices must be suffered so much as to twinkle in the eyes of our judgment, when this 'sun of righteousness ariseth' upon our minds. No wild passions, nor inordinate affections, nor works of darkness, must presume to shew themselves in this light. No, when this sun ariseth, let these beasts of prey and violence 'lay themselves down in their dens,' till they are so tamed, that the child of God can lead them.

God promised, what reason, blind unpenetrating reason, deems impracticable; but Abraham believed, and so must we, or 'we tread not in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham.' God commanded, what nature deems unjust and cruel; but Abraham obeyed, and so must we, or our faith, if we have any, will not 'be imputed to us for righteousness.' Let us therefore believe, as he did; for after all the mysteriousness of some things which we ought to believe, nothing can be more truly rational. Let us also obey, as he did; for howsoever irksome this obedience may be to a corrupt and refractory nature, we have reason to know it is our highest wisdom for the present, and will prove our greatest happiness at the last. It is surely no great thing, after all, to submit our reason so miserably mistaken, and so shamefully erring, almost in every hour of our lives, to infinite unerring wisdom. Neither is it, if we rightly consider the matter, a very great thing to resign all we have, even the lives of our children, or our own, to that infinitely gracious Being, who

hath given up his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, that we may escape the torments of hell, and inherit the glories of heaven. If any man, however, thinks this is too much for faith to believe, or for duty to perform, I must tell him now, and God will tell it him hereafter, that heaven is too good for him. Let us therefore believe, with all our understandings, what God declares, and obey, with all our hearts, what God commands; for thus to believe is true wisdom, though we can by no means account for the matter of our faith; and thus to obey is our most reasonable service, though it should bear never so hard on our corrupt affections.

But as there is no effectual faith, no acceptable obedience, but what proceeds from thy grace, O Fountain of all good; so we most earnestly beseech thee, to teach us both to believe and to do whatsoever shall be most pleasing in thy sight, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Redeemer, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

The grace of, &c.

## DISCOURSE XLIX.

## CHRISTIAN FAITH IS FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY.

## MATT. XXVIII. 18—20.

*Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

*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 alway, even unto the end of the world.*

IN these words of our blessed Saviour, and those reported by St. Mark, chap. xvi. 15, 16, is contained the institution of baptism ; and with it is conveyed to a thinking reader, but briefly indeed, as the nature of the case requires, the whole sum and substance of the Christian religion. The words in St. Mark are these, ‘ He said unto them (the eleven), Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.’

On that fulness of power, both celestial and terrestrial, wherewith our Saviour, after his resurrection, was vested, he founds, you see, the authority whereby he institutes this holy sacrament ; and you will soon perceive also, that any less or limited power had been insufficient for so great a purpose.

It is likewise plainly apparent from the words repeated, that this institution is a covenant ; for salvation is promised to every man, not absolutely, but on the express condition of his ‘ believing and being baptized,’ and damnation threatened, in case he shall ‘ not believe.’

It is equally manifest, that faith is not more necessarily required of all Christians as a condition of this covenant, than obedience to the commands of Christ, for we are obliged ‘ to observe and do all things which Christ hath commanded his apostles.’

On the terms of this faith, and of obedience founded on this faith, our almighty Master promises ‘ to be with us his

church alway, even unto the end of the world.' How great the benefits of his gracious presence continually vouchsafed to the whole church, and every one of its members, must be, is easily conceived by the mind of a true believer. 'Without him we can do nothing,' nothing at least that is good; but 'we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us,' and 'whose grace is sufficient for us.' If he, to whom 'belongeth all power in heaven and earth, be with us, who shall be against us?' If he is always with us, then of necessity must we be always with him, and in him, even here, although as yet contending with the flesh; and hereafter, 'where he is, there shall we be also, partakers of his holiness, of his inheritance,' of the 'divine nature,' and consequently of that rest, that peace, that joy, that crown, which he hath prepared for them that love him. Such are the promises, and such the part of God in this covenant.

A commission to bestow Christ, and impart eternal salvation, to all men, requires, you see, unlimited power and authority in him who grants it. None but the Almighty can either forgive us our sins, or fit us for forgiveness. Accordingly, it is in the name, and by the authority, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that is, of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, that we are commanded to be baptized, or received into that covenant of mercy and peace which Christ hath procured for us by, and established in, his precious blood, which he therefore calls 'his blood of the new covenant.'

Having thus a little opened the nature of baptism from the words of the institution itself, I intend to lay out the remainder of this Discourse entirely on the form prescribed by our Saviour for the administration of this sacrament, contained in these particular words, 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' considered, however, chiefly as applied to this weighty and solemn purpose of the covenant.

In order to awaken those who hear me to a fair and diligent inquiry into the true import or meaning of the words mentioned, it will be necessary first to shew the high importance of that meaning, be it what it will.

After observing to you, that some men, with equal impiety and absurdity, regard the words of this most awful in-

stitution as little more than words, and a mere empty form, it will be proper to call you, who, I trust, are otherwise minded, to a serious and respectful consideration, that no terms or expressions used by Christ himself, be the occasion what it will, can possibly contain any thing less than the most important meaning, which the nature of the subject, or of the occasion, calls for; and that still, as the dignity of the occasion rises, so the importance of his words, being supposed, as they certainly ought to be, to rise in proportion, demand a suitable degree of attention and veneration from all who hear or read them.

These things feelingly laid to heart, let me beseech you, in the next place, to consider, what that occasion or purpose is, to which the words are applied.

First, They are applied to that awful covenant, which contains all the rules whereby we are to think, speak, and act, and whereby our consciences are to be regulated, during our whole lives. Every article of the Christian faith, and every duty of the Christian life, being hereby bound on our consciences in a solemn promise made to God himself, that is, by a deliberate and awful vow, we cannot suppose the very words, which on God's part authorize this covenant, can be less than infinitely important.

Secondly, The words are applied to that covenant whereby all men are to be judged at the last day, before the throne of God, and in the sight of the whole intelligent creation, for all the thoughts, words, and actions, of their whole lives; and, of consequence, whereby they are to be adjudged to eternal happiness or misery. No words, used by Christ on such an occasion, can surely be of less than infinite importance.

Thirdly, The words are applied as the essential form, both of institution and administration to that covenant of mercy and peace with an offended God, no otherwise to be appeased, which was obtained by the reconciling blood of Christ, the only begotten Son of God himself. If, therefore, justification instead of guilt, and peace, eternal peace, instead of enmity and war, with Almighty God, can give importance to the covenant itself, the covenant must undoubtedly give equal importance to the very words of its institution.

Fourthly, Those other words of our Saviour, which accompany these, 'he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned,' must unquestionably impart to these all their own force and importance; for nothing can be more evident, than that the faith here required must be a faith in the meaning of these words of the institution, and that he only who believes in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose name he must be baptized, can be saved.

Not only the strict conjunction of this declaration with the form of the institution, but the nature also of the thing, fully proves the justness of this assertion, whether we consider the use made of the form, or the persons mentioned therein. If the very form itself, whereby all the benefits of baptism are formally granted, is not believed, those benefits can, in no sense, be expected, a disbelief of this being the same as a renunciation of the covenant. Again, in no sense can any hopes of pardon or salvation be entertained, without a firm belief in the persons, whose names, and whose joint authority, give the institution itself all its force.

Now, it is impossible to believe any thing, but so far as we understand it. In order, therefore, to be so baptized as to receive a title to the privileges and benefits of the Christian covenant, all Christians must know who the Father is, in what sense, and for what reason they are baptized in his name; for otherwise, although it is eternal life to believe in him, they cannot possibly believe in him as they ought to do. Who the Son is they ought likewise to know, not only because they are baptized in his name, but because they are, in a peculiar sense, baptized into him, that is, into his body, the church, and into his death. He who knows not these things, how can he be said to believe in the Son? And lastly, who the Holy Ghost is, every Christian ought to know, both because he is baptized in his name, as well as in those of the two other persons, and likewise because it is 'by him we are all baptized into one body of Christ,' and baptism itself can avail nothing, if it is not the true 'baptism of the Spirit, through whose sanctification God hath chosen us from the beginning to salvation.' It is by the adoption of the Spirit, sealed to us in baptism, that we

call God our Father; and therefore no man can rightly believe, or be effectually baptized, without knowing who the Holy Spirit is.

If the apostles, and after them the whole Christian ministry, were obliged by the express command of Christ to 'teach all nations,' and then (but not till then) 'to baptize them;' were they not, of all things, to teach them what baptism or the covenant is, what it is into which they were to be baptized, and who they are in whose name the covenant is granted, and to whose service they are thereby so solemnly consecrated and sealed?

But farther, it is by no means sufficient for a Christian to know only that the 'Father is he from whom are all things;' that the 'Son is he by whom we are redeemed;' and the 'Holy Ghost he, by whom we are sanctified;' that is, to know these three persons in their offices relative to mankind; no, the Christian ought to understand in what sense it is that baptism is instituted and administered jointly in the name of all the three; whether, as they are here joined together without any marks of distinction, he ought to believe in all the three equally, and receive the covenant with equal respect to, and trust in, all the three; whether he, in effect, covenants by baptism with one only, or three parties; whether he is to worship each by prayer, thanksgiving, love, and dependence, or not; and if he is, whether he ought to regard one of them only as God, or the three as three distinct Gods, or all the three, as constituting one only God. And the reason why his faith ought to be built on no less knowledge than this, is plain, not only because the Scriptures have made frequent and ample declarations on all these subjects, for his information; but because, without knowing these things, he may worship that for God, which is but a creature, or treat that as a creature only, which is really God; or whether he is to believe in one only, or three Gods, may be altogether at a loss to know. As some of the errors just now mentioned are most abominably idolatrous, and the rest horribly profane; and as either the one sort or the other are fitted to lead the world into all manner of wickedness; we may conclude, in the first place, that the word of God must be very plain and determinate on such subjects; and in the



next, that it is our indispensable duty, fairly and diligently to examine it, in order to a thorough information in points, wherein the whole system of that faith, that worship, and that obedience, to which we are bound by our baptismal vow, is founded.

On the whole, it cannot be less than absolutely necessary, that all Christians, that is, all who by baptism take on them the profession of Christianity, should know the Father, from whom they, the whole universe, and the true religion itself, derive their very being; that all Christians should know the Son, or 'Christ, and him crucified,' and that they should, with St. Paul, 'count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord;' and that all Christians should know the Holy Spirit, by whom the prophets, apostles, and even Christ himself, wrought all their miracles, who inspired all the penmen of the holy Scriptures, and who, by his grace, regenerating and sanctifying the whole church, finishes the great work of salvation.

Having said enough to prove the importance of this knowledge, and to shew the necessity of it, in order to baptism and the Christian covenant, it is now time to shew, in the second place, what it is, and who those persons really are, in whose name we are baptized.

It is agreed on all hands, that the first is true, real, and eternal God, and that God, or the divine nature, is incomprehensible. But whether, either the second or the third person, is as truly and really God, or not, is disputed.

Had nothing farther been revealed in holy Scripture concerning these two persons but what is intimated in the form of baptism, we must have concluded, that as to the mere act of covenanting, we ought to judge the authority of all the persons to be equal in that act, since they are mentioned simply, and without any marks of distinction, in the form itself. If a covenant is made between three contracting parties, thus simply mentioned, on the one side, and a single party on the other, the last will never be able to see any reason in such covenant for his depending more on any one of the three for the performance, than on the other two; if this covenant is a voluntary grant given in the joint name of all the three, whereby the other single party is to hold a va-



luable title, or enjoy considerable privileges, that single party thus endowed, will never be able to see any reason, why he should think himself more obliged in gratitude to love any one of the three, than the other two. And farthe, if in consideration of this tithe, and these privileges, he is by virtue of the covenant bound to any services, thus simply contracted for in behalf of all the three, he will never be able, from the tenor of such a covenant, to see a reason, why he should serve or obey any one of the three parties, preferably to the rest.

This reasoning would be sound and just, although the covenant should run plurally in the names of three persons granting and covenanting on the one part; but grows still stronger when it is expressed singularly in the name of all the three, for, in this case, either a unity of nature or authority, or rather of both, as it is irrational and impious to admit the one in this case without the other, infers a unity of gratitude, love, dependence, and obedience, that is, one worship, due from the other covenanting party, to all.

It is farther to be observed, that as the authority whereby we are baptized into this covenant is one, and the name also whereinto we are baptized (such is the expression in the original Greek) is one name, so consequently, in plain construction, that name ought to stand for one being, that one being which constitutes the first and second persons, John x. 30, and includes the third, namely, 'the Spirit of the Father,' Matt. x. 20, and 'the Spirit of the Son,' Gal. iv. 6, 'which three are one,' 1 John v. 7.

If therefore the Christian covenant is the gift of God, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived, all persons who are baptized, are taught by the form of the covenant itself, to render to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, an equal degree of dependence, love, and obedience, unless what is not distinguished in the form, is plainly distinguished elsewhere in the word of God. If such distinction is not elsewhere made, it will follow from the authoritative form of the covenant itself, given by God himself, either that the Son and the Holy Ghost are, each of them, true and real God, or that the true and real God hath solemnly authorized the worship of two creatures upon a level with himself, because, for any thing that appears in the covenant,

the dependence, love, and obedience contracted for in that covenant, must be equal in kind and degree, must be the very same, and must be the highest that can possibly be paid, inasmuch as they are confessedly due from all Christians, by virtue of the covenant itself, to the true and real God. To ascribe a covenant like this to the God of all majesty and truth, whereby God and two creatures are to be believed in, loved, obeyed, and worshipped on a level, is, I think, as high an instance of absurdity and blasphemy in one, as the enemy of God could inspire. But, to avoid the wickedness of supposing, that God, contrary to his own declaration, hath actually 'given his honour to another,' to two others, to two creatures, and 'commanded all men to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father,' though infinitely different in dignity of nature; it will be our business carefully to inquire, whether these scriptural expressions are not to be taken in the common obvious sense of the words; whether the terms, 'God,' and 'worship,' when applied to the Father and the other persons, are equivocal; and whether the Father hath any where in his word, either from himself, or by his Son, or his Holy Spirit, taught us to make the important and necessary distinction between his own divine, and their created natures, and between the love, dependence, and worship, which we ought to pay to him alone, and the respect he allows us to pay to two of his creatures so highly dignified. I call this an important distinction, because, of all things, we ought to know the object of divine worship; and I call it a necessary distinction, because, without it, we might be tempted 'to turn the truth of God into a lie, and to worship the creature,' rather than 'the Creator.' Now nothing was easier than for the Scriptures to tell us, once for all, that although Christ and the Holy Ghost are set forth in very exalted lights by revelation, yet we are to know, that neither of them is God, nor to be worshipped by prayer as God; or at least, that they are but inferior delegated Gods, and to be worshipped only as such, only as mere representatives of the one true and supreme God. This would have prevented all doubts and disputes on the most important point by far of our whole religion; and this, I say it again, and beg it may be well considered, was as easy as it was absolutely necessary.

If therefore neither the second nor the third person in the Trinity is God, nor to be worshipped as true and real God, the Scriptures must roundly and plainly tell us so, or they cannot be the word of God, for 'God neither deceiveth, nor tempteth any man.' I beg it may be farther considered, that as mankind, from the beginning, and throughout all ages, have been wonderfully prone to worship the creature, as well as, or even more, than the Creator; and as God, throughout the Scriptures, hath left no expedient unemployed to prevent this unhappy and damnable apostacy of men; we might by all means expect to find the characters of the Son and the Holy Spirit, supposing them only creatures, set forth in those Scriptures in the lowest lights their real natures could with truth admit of, rather than in such as are too high. Yet here, in the very institution of baptism, in the solemn form of the new covenant, in that strict and guarded form of words which introduces us to, and comprehends the whole of the Gospel, they are set forth as equal with the Father, equal in authority, equal in their respective contributions to the work of our salvation, and consequently as equal objects of our faith, our gratitude, our love, and our adoration; and in other parts of Scripture are frequently styled God.

But if, after all, there is any room left for doubt about this matter, to the Scriptures at large we ought to go for the farther explanation of a form so short, that we may see, whether their Divine Author hath therein actually represented the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as one only God; or given us reason to believe that we have in baptism covenanted for forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation, equally with God and two creatures, with the one only infinite Being, and two infinitely inferior beings, and that by the express appointment of God himself.

Now, it is evident, at first sight, to every Deist, and indeed to every thinking Christian, that God could not possibly have done the latter; and his word, if candidly consulted, will glaringly prove, he hath actually done the former.

We shall readily own indeed, that Christ frequently speaks of himself, and is spoken of by the apostles as subordinate, and in some sense, inferior to the Father. But, at the same time, nothing can be more plain, than that he is

only subordinate, as every son should be to his father, and only inferior in respect to his human nature. This hath been a thousand times fully proved ; but we shall see presently, that it needs no proof.

We likewise as freely confess, that the Holy Ghost is sometimes spoken of in Scripture, with marks of subordination, as sent by the Father and the Son, and as not speaking of himself, but speaking whatsoever he heareth, and as taking that which belongeth to Christ, and shewing it unto the disciples. That these things derogate by no means from his nature, but only shew that he acts voluntarily in subordination to the Father, the fountain of the Godhead, and to Jesus Christ, the proprietor, by right of purchase, of all things, hath been often clearly proved, though here again I venture to say, there was no necessity for such proof; for,

In respect both to the Son and the Holy Ghost, it is to be observed, first, that the holy Scripture nowhere denies either of them to be God ; and secondly, that, in many places, it affirms each of them to be God. If that can be made appear, then it will follow, that no obscure or indirect expression, though found in the same Scriptures, can be so interpreted, as to prove either of them not to be God, in contradiction to the plain and positive affirmations of God ; it will also from hence appear, that the equality wherewith they seem to be proposed in the form of baptism, is a true and real equality, both of nature and authority. If it shall likewise be proved, that the word of God denies the being of any God, or any object of divine worship, but one, whom mankind may fall down before, and to whom they may offer sacrifice or prayer ; then it will necessarily follow, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are not three distinct Gods, but one only God ; and lastly, it will necessarily follow from the express affirmation of God, and from his positive institution of baptism, that we are consecrated, in that solemn sacrament, to the service of the ever blessed and holy Trinity, by faith in a mystery which we may easily understand, so far as it is proposed to our apprehensions, but can never account for, because the divine nature is incomprehensible to all created minds. Whosoever hath so much sense, not to say modesty, as to confess that God is incomprehensible to his mind, will find no difficulty in a conse-

quent confession, that there may be some distinction in God, whereto the personal distinction among men bears a just analogy or resemblance; nay, and that if a man, as the Scripture tells us, is made in the image or likeness of God, and if in each man, as may be easily demonstrated, there are a bodily and vegetative nature, enlivened by two souls, an animal and a rational, united into one person; there may be in God three distinct persons, or, which is the same thing in respect to our faith, a distinction like that between three men, without affecting in the least the unity of the one indivisible divine nature.

Now if the Scriptures any where deny the Son or the Holy Ghost to be God, let the opposers of their divinity shew the passage, and we have done; but this is impossible.

On the contrary, that the Scriptures represent the Son as God, is manifest, and the Arians do not, cannot deny it. St. Paul says, Rom. ix. 5, 'he is over all, God blessed for ever.' St. John calls him, the 'Word,' and says, i. 1, 'the Word was God.' Christ, John viii. 58, calls himself 'Jehovah,' and in the first of the Revelations saith, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' Now, as none but one can say this, he who says it here, must be the same with him who says, Isaiah xlv. 6, 'I am the first and the last, and beside me there is no God. To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him,' 1 Cor. viii. 6; but then this one God is the only Lord, and this one Lord the only God; for Moses, Deut. vi. 4, and Christ, Mark xii. 29, say alike to Jews and Christians, 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.'

This text, wherein St. Paul distinguishes between the Father, who is one God, and the Son, who is one Lord, gives no true occasion to the Arian of that triumph which he makes in his application of it. If the Father is called one God, though without an article in the Greek before *εἷς θεός*, and the Son, one Lord, without an article before *εἷς κύριος*, we claim no advantage from it; but do believe the Father to be the one God, and the Son to be the one Lord, for there is but one God, and one Lord; nay, we go farther, and allow, that the Father is peculiarly here styled, the one God, and the Son, as peculiarly, the one Lord. But whe-

ther the Father and the Son are hereby contradistinguished from each other, so as that, negatively, the Father is not Lord, nor the Son God, in the same sense of God and Lord, is the question which must be decided by other places of Scripture; and others there are many, wherein the Father is called Lord, and the Lord, and the one Lord; and wherein the Son is called God, the God, and the one God. 'Who is God, or Elohim, save the Lord or Jehovah?' saith David, Psalm xviii. 31; the answer is, and must be, none, no being. 'The Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else, no other God. So then, the one Lord is the one God.' This is the language of both Testaments, of the law as well as of the gospel, in more than one hundred and fourteen places, where the great Being is called the Lord God, and often in direct distinction from all other beings. This blasphemous contradistinction is wholly taken away by our blessed Saviour, Mark xii. 29, quoting Deut. vi. 4, in answer to one of the scribes, who asked him this important question, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Christ says, 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:' and, ver. 30, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.' And, ver. 31, 'The second is like, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: there is none other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Matt. xxii. 40. In this great and signal passage, the summary of law and gospel, wherein the foundation-stone of all religion and morality is laid, wherein the two objects of all love, and consequently the sole object of all acceptable adoration, is fixed and precisely determined, wherein distinctions, if at all requisite, become absolutely necessary, no distinction between the Lord and the God is made, but on the contrary, the one Lord is made the same with the one God, and the Lord our God is set forth to us as the one only Lord, the one only self-existent Being, or Jehovah, the one only Lord or power, to whom all love and obedience is due. If then Christ is peculiarly styled the one Lord, as the Arian acknowledges, nay, insists he is, by St. Paul, what hinders the same Arian

from confessing, that Christ is the one God, since the law, the gospel, and Christ himself, have said it? conceit and blindness.

A cloud of other passages might be cited for the same purpose, but any one of these had been enough.

Indeed his saying, as he does at the institution of baptism, that 'all power in heaven and in earth is given unto him,' is sufficient to prove his divinity; for if all power is given him as an only son, and as the son of man, by the Father, and we therefore conclude him in some sense subordinate, we must thence also conclude him truly God, for otherwise he could not, in any sense, become almighty. This conclusion is greatly strengthened, by the words with which he finishes the institution, 'Lo, I am with you to the end of the world,' where he evidently sets himself forth as the Jehovah, the one necessarily and self-existent Being, as well as in the eighth of the Gospel according to St. John, where he saith, 'Before Abraham was, I am;' for no other, but the one self-existent Being, can properly and truly speak of himself in the present tense, as having heretofore been, and as hereafter to be. Well, surely may we be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, since thereby the 'devil or enemy is cast out,' Mark xvi. 17, 'remission of sins' preached, Luke xxiv. 47, 'and salvation given, with an exclusion to all other names under heaven,' Acts iv. 12.

That the same Scriptures represent the Holy Ghost as God, is also manifest; for, although none but God is eternal, yet the third person is called, Heb. ix. 14, 'the eternal Spirit.' The Psalmist believed him to be omnipresent; for he says, speaking to God, Psalm cxxxix. 7, 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit?' He is called 'the power of the Highest,' Luke i. 35. 'All Scripture,' we know, 'is given by inspiration of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 16, who must therefore be the Holy Ghost, because 'the holy men of God,' who penned the Scriptures, 'spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21. And Zacharias calls him, who spake by these penmen or prophets, 'the Lord God of Israel,' Luke i. 68—70. 'Well spake the Holy Ghost,' says St. Paul, 'by Isaiah the prophet,' and then quotes a passage from Isaiah, wherein the speaker is called 'the Lord' by Isaiah, and 'the Lord (or Jehovah) of hosts by the Seraphim.' St. Paul calls all



Christians the 'temples of the living God,' because 'the Spirit of God dwelleth in them,' 2 Cor. vi. 16, compared with 1 Cor. iii. 16, and with 1 Cor. vi. 19, where our body is called 'the temple of the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.' St. Peter says, 'Ananias in having lied to the Holy Ghost, had lied to God,' Acts v. 3, 4. St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 15—17, descanting on Exod. xxxiv. 34, calls the Lord, or only God, there spoken of, 'the Spirit,' whose 'ministration,' he says, 'is glorious.' If the Lord is that Spirit, then the Spirit is that Lord, and the one only God, for 'to us there is but one God,' and 'one Lord,' as I have already observed to you from the words of St. Paul in the former epistle to these Corinthians.

Now, the one God is the one only Lord, and the one Lord is the one only God, as you have just now heard from the words of Moses quoted by our blessed Saviour. This is exactly agreeable to the words of David, who expressly calls 'the Spirit the God of Israel,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3. 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me; the God of Israel said.' Well surely may we be baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost or Spirit, since Christ himself was baptized by him, Mark i. 10; since 'without his baptism we cannot enter into heaven,' John iii. 5; and since 'by this one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,' 1 Cor. xii. 13, namely, the body or church of Christ, ver. 27.\*

\* From the twelfth to the eighteenth verse inclusive, of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, as the whole passage stands in the Hebrew and our English version, a full and clear proof, that the Holy Spirit is God, might be drawn, did not the Septuagint and St. Paul seem to oppose it. In this very remarkable part of the prophecy, immediately after expressly calling the Messiah, the Lord God, and describing his future office as the great Shepherd, God, by his prophet, saith, 'Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, &c.? Who hath directed the Spirit (רוח רuah) of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him, &c.? Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing, &c. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him, or in his presence, less than nothing.' From these awful and emphatical questions God draws this conclusion: 'To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' that is, since the Spirit of the Lord is infinite in wisdom, power, and greatness, how can you think of representing God by images, or comparing any thing to him? From hence God proceeds to expostulate with mankind: 'Have ye not known, &c.? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, &c. that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.' The reasoning, we see, turns alike on the Spirit, and on God, therefore so much of it as relates to the Spirit must be inconclusive, if the Spirit is not God.

But St. Paul, quoting a small part of this passage from the Septuagint, saith, Rom. xi. 34, 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his coun-



In these, and other the like passages of Scripture, divinity is both directly and by necessary consequence ascribed to the second and third persons in the Holy Trinity. And yet the same Scriptures sufficiently assure us, there is but one God, who is the sole object of that divine worship, to which those Scriptures allow any toleration.

‘Is there, saith the Lord,’ Isa. xlv. 5, 6, ‘a God besides me? yea, there is no God, I know not any. I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me: that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is none else. I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.’ Isa. xlviii. 12. ‘Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts; I am the first, and I am the last, besides me there is no God. Unto thee (Israel) it was shewed,’ saith Moses, Deut. iv. 35, ‘that thou mightest know, that the Lord he is God, there is none else besides him. I,

sellor?’ and 1 Cor. ii. 16, ‘For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him,’ or rather, ‘that shall instruct him?’ By this means the sense seems to be considerably different from that which is universally understood to be contained in the Hebrew. Be the sense, however, of the passages what it will, it must unquestionably be the true sense of the Hebrew; for here the Holy Ghost, citing the Septuagint version, confirms its rectitude, and is himself an infallible interpreter to us. *Εγνώ*, hath known, and *νοῦν* mind, are the only words, which appear to break in on this argument for the divinity of the Holy Ghost. Grotius hath observed on Isaiah xl. 13, that probably the Septuagint, by *ἔγνω*, meant scire fecit, made to know, adding his opinion, that St. Paul used the word in the same sense, and that what follows in this passage of Isaiah, and we may say too, in that of St. Paul, explains the word in, or rather restrains it to this sense, for even the apostle subjoins, ‘or who hath been his counsellor?’ On the word *νοῦν*, mind, a still farther occasion of doubting may be taken, as mind and spirit seem here to differ in signification. But I would ask, wherein do the spirit and mind of the Lord, or God, differ? Are they not one and the same? And may not this word have been used here by the Septuagint and St. Paul, instead of *πνεῦμα*, with an eye to the third person in the Platonic Trinity, as well as *λόγος* is used by St. John in regard to the second? St. Paul’s introduction of these words, and the context in the Epistle to the Romans, particularly, ‘who hath been his counsellor?’ and the words, ‘or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?’ found in the Alexandrian Manuscript, but not in the common copies, seem to favour that construction. *Εγνώ νοῦν*, in his application of them to the Corinthians, may bear either sense, perhaps may require both. He says so much of the Spirit of God, as knowing the things of God, as dwelling in us and teaching us those things, that nothing can be more natural, than to translate *νοῦν* by spirit. Were we nevertheless to understand the apostle as saying nothing in either of these places, but what the English translation plainly and simply intimates, we must acknowledge the accommodation here is not greater than in some other texts of the Old Testament, as they are cited in the New. Neither, after all, interpret these words as you will, can that interpretation destroy the force and tenor of my argument, built on the passage of Isaiah, wherein so much is said, over and above these, of the spirit or mind of the Lord, of his power, wisdom, and greatness, and wherein the argument drawn from those attributes concludes as directly for the impossibility of representing God by images, as if God had been put for mind, or spirit, in the thirteenth verse, that we cannot, without the impiety of admitting a solecism in God’s own words, avoid the force of the proof.

even I, saith the Lord,' Deut. xxxii. 39, 'am he, and there is no God with me,' that is, 'no other God.

Nor can there be with us, if we are truly Christians; for St. Paul says, 'to us, there is but one God,' 1 Cor. viii. 6. And our blessed Saviour, quoting the law, Matt. iv. 10, saith, 'Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' pursuant to the first commandment; whereon all religion and morality are founded, and wherein the same Lord or God saith, 'Thou shalt have none other gods before me.'

Since, therefore, the Father is, on all hands, acknowledged to be God; since the Son and the Holy Ghost are plainly spoken of in holy Scripture as God; since there is but one only God, one only object of divine faith, worship, and obedience; and since here in the form of baptism the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are proposed, without any distinction, as equal authors and parties to the covenant, and as equal objects of our faith, love, dependence, and obedience; it necessarily follows, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are that one only God, one, not only in name, authority, and testimony, but in nature and substance also; for each is God, and there is but one God, 'who is a jealous God, and giveth not his glory,' the peculiar glory of his divinity and worship, 'to another.'

But the Arians and Socinians tell us, the word, God, in Scripture, hath several meanings. Two or three, we confess, it hath, for it is applied to the true God, to potentates, and to false gods. But can these men shew us, that it is applied in two infinitely different meanings, that is, that it signifies indifferently, either the one infinite eternal God, or a finite and bounded creature, when it signifies the object of our adoration? They do, indeed, impiously attempt to shew this, and in so doing, only attempt to shew, that God prevaricates with the world on the very first article of all religion, and equivocates even on his own name; the former, in the words of a covenant of his own solemn proposing to all mankind; and the latter, in his first commandment, and in numberless other passages of his word. What success they have had, I leave it to the knowing; or what success they ought to have had, I leave it to every plain and honest Christian to judge.

It is now to be observed, that the Christian religion, and the Christian covenant, are but one and the same thing; that the whole of this religion, the whole body of our faith, by which alone we can be saved, is virtually, or by necessary consequence, comprehended in the form prescribed for baptism, or the ratification of this covenant; for he who believes in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must believe in what each hath done, said, or suffered, for his salvation; that there is no difference between knowing God, as he is revealed to us in his word, and knowing his revealed religion; and that therefore, as Christianity is the only true religion, the doctrine of the Trinity, as here laid down from Scripture, must be the only true Christianity; or else we covenant in baptism for something different from Christianity, or only for a part of it; and covenant by our faith, and on our vows, for the pardon of all our sins, and for eternal life, with some one else than God. Let the Arian answer for this, if he can, to his friend the Deist, and if he satisfies him, we promise to be satisfied too. But let no set of men who call themselves Christians, contrive systems of Christianity, and carry on arguments within the church, which in their consciences they know, every one without must condemn as gross nonsense, or something worse.

What then is Christianity? Is it not a covenant granted by, and made with, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, whereby all we ought to dread may be averted, and all we ought to desire obtained, on condition of our faith in, and obedience to, the Holy Trinity? and is all Christianity, or the whole of our religion, summed up in a faith placed formally and equally on the one eternal God, and two infinitely inferior beings, and in an obedience, rendered due by a solemn vow to the only God, and two creatures? If ours is the only religion that seems to recommend itself to the assent of a rational man by the genuine signs of divine truth; and if this religion, closely examined in its great essential, proves itself thus essentially absurd and impious; must not the Arian become a Deist, and that Deist an Atheist? Reason, thus setting out, knows not where to stop in the shocking progress. Let the world think what it will of our religion, it consists in a belief of the Father, the Son, and the

Holy Ghost, as one only God, one only object of love, dependence, and obedience, that is of divine worship.

The great and comfortable doctrines of redemption, as voluntarily wrought by Christ in the sacrifice of his blood, and of sanctification, as voluntarily wrought in us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which call upon the grateful heart for the utmost returns of love and trust; these doctrines, every where so strongly inculcated by the word of God, prove the Son and the Holy Ghost to be truly God; for, surely, if they thus freely concur in the blessed work of our eternal salvation, we ought in gratitude to love each of them as much as the Father, that is, with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength; and being baptized into the name of each, as the uncompelled author of our salvation, we ought to trust to each for the performance of every thing promised us in the covenant, as well as to the Father. Now, is it to be conceived, that God, who every where takes such infinite care to guard against the worship of the creature, should authorize us by the very form of the covenant, by the very nature of our redemption and sanctification, and by the concurring tenor of almost the whole Scriptures, to love, trust in, and adore, two creatures, as entirely, as ardently as himself? No, it is impossible; it is hideous and blasphemous to suppose it. Hear, O Christian, the 'Lord thy God is,' not only 'one God the Father, of whom are all things,' but also 'one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things,' and into whom you are baptized; and 'that one Spirit who taketh away the vail of darkness' by his inspirations, to whom you 'owe all your Christian liberty, and by whom ye are all baptized into one body of Christ.'

Is, therefore, your love and confidence to be divided? God forbid. These three are one; one, not only in nature and substance, but likewise in love, in mercy, in truth, towards you. He is one God who hath created, redeemed, and sanctified you, and into whom ye are baptized. Him bless, him adore, as not more mystical and incomprehensible in his nature, than in his love.

If you are a truly rational man, you cannot make a difficulty in believing the most mysterious doctrine on the authority of his word, for you know he is truth itself. This I

say to you the rather because he hath used you to mysteries, by giving you a nature exceedingly mysterious, and by placing you here in a system of mysteries. You see, you breathe, you eat, you drink, you live on, nothing but mysteries; mysteries, every one of them, as hard to be accounted for or comprehended as the Trinity. While he gives a dignity to your nature by thus feeding and surrounding you with wonders, remember, he, at the same time, and by the same means, preaches humility to your bounded understanding, inasmuch as he hath made it impossible for you to comprehend, either what you yourself are, or how you are subsisted.

Can you, after all this, stumble at any thing merely mysterious in regard to his nature, who is altogether mysterious and incomprehensible to the highest angel of light? Is it harder for your reason to believe in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, than it was for that of Abraham to believe, that he should have a numerous posterity by his son Isaac after he had put him to death, when he was yet unmarried and childless? Or is it harder for you, in consequence of your faith in the Trinity, to submit your inordinate affections to the several precepts of the gospel, in order to eternal life, than it was for Abraham to give up his parental affection, pursuant to the divine command, and slay his son with his own hands on the distant, and probably incomprehensible, prospect of having an innumerable issue by a son at that instant to be cut off? Consider, if you cannot follow Abraham, although at so great a distance, in his faith, you cannot follow him in his practice, the effect of that faith; and if you can neither imitate the faith nor works of Abraham, you cannot be one of his children, who is the father of all the faithful; nor can you be gathered into his bosom, when you leave this world.

Consider this, and God give you understanding in all things, through Christ Jesus our Saviour, to whom, in the unity of the ever-blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE L.

[PREACHED ON EASTER SUNDAY.]

CHRISTIAN FAITH DEMONSTRATED BY THE  
RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

## ACTS XVII. 31.

*He hath appointed a day in the 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.*

Two things are more especially observable in these words, first, that God will, at a certain time, known only to himself, try and pass sentence on all men by his Son Christ Jesus; and secondly, that sufficient assurance of this his intention hath been published to all men by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. As to the rewards or punishments to which, on that occasion, we shall be doomed, they are represented in many other parts of Scripture in terms expressive of somewhat inconceivably desirable or dreadful, which is never to have an end.

It would not only prevent all possibility of virtue, but throw every community into confusion, were each man tried, sentenced, and rewarded, or punished, immediately upon every good or evil action. In all kingdoms and communities, therefore, stated times are appointed for this purpose. In the kingdom of God particularly, men are suffered to live such lives as they think fit, with very moderate temporal encouragements to virtue, and discouragements to vice; and sometimes, in appearance, the contrary, till death finishes their state of trial. After this, assurance is given, that they shall be raised again to life, as Christ was, and shall all appear before his judgment-seat, that every 'one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.'

This is the great assize of God's kingdom, wherein all

men shall be tried by unerring wisdom, sentenced by divine justice, and rewarded or punished according to their deeds. The good man under oppression may think it long to wait till that day for justice; but this he is to consider as the trial of his faith, and the exercise of his patience. The bad man may encourage himself in his wickedness by the distance of that time; but 'the triumphing of the wicked shall be short;' for, at most, it can last no longer than his life; and what will that be to the length of his punishment? God in his wisdom defers the reward of the good, that his virtue may be perfected and known; and in his mercy, the punishment of the guilty, that he may have time to repent. Sometimes, however, he interposes by judgments on the one, or blessings on the other, which shew, his eye and hand are always over us.

As, for certain reasons too well and too commonly understood to require being told you on this occasion, the doctrine I have here laid down is much more apt to terrify than to please; so there are some that refer the whole of our rewards to the pleasure we find in doing good, and of our punishments, to the distaste and uneasiness we perceive in doing evil actions. These, they say, prevent the necessity of future rewards and punishments, and do ample justice on the spot in regard to all parts of our moral behaviour.

If God and the king would be pleased to declare this, that is, would they be pleased to assure us, that henceforward for ever no sort of notice shall be taken of what any man shall think, speak, or do, in regard to God, his neighbour, or himself; it would certainly save a great deal of trouble to law-makers and judges, and would be fine news, not only to the thief and murderer, who still dread the gallows, but also to the defenders of this notion, and to all legal oppressors, tricksters, drunkards, whoremongers, and hypocrites, who fear the future judgments of God, but could settle matters with themselves on a comfortable enough footing, had they nothing to deal with but their own consciences. The news, however, would not be so welcome to a good man, who would not, or to a weak and poor man, who could not, take advantage of it; the news, I mean, that



all the rest of the world is to be let loose on them with impunity.

But let conscience tell the truth, and say, whether her decisions are always just ; whether she is not for the most part overpowered by the pleasure proposed in doing evil, or enjoyed in reflection after it is done ; and whether, if divine justice, heaven, hell, and human laws, were out of the question, her rewards would be equal to the glorious deeds and sufferings of some good men, or her punishments adequate to the horrible crimes of others.

I utterly deny that a man of no hopes in another life could possibly persevere in doing good, even to death, in spite of all a tyrant could do to him by his most barbarous persecutions. But supposing the hopeless hath already done it, will any one in his senses say, he hath been sufficiently rewarded ? For my part, I think, instead of being rewarded, he is severely punished, for doing good. Poor virtue ! if she can no better encourage her most zealous votaries ! On the other hand, this tyrant, without fears in futurity, would soon, perhaps immediately, after the murder mentioned, eat, drink, and laugh as usual ; for we see he does so, although under some fears of a future reckoning. Nay, we see him in a few hours so perfectly easy, and, soon after that, so apt to boast of what he did, perhaps to repeat it, and even to build a prosperous scheme of worldly wealth and honour upon it, that we cannot help saying, if there is no judgment to come, he is rewarded for being wicked.

Whatsoever may be said to prove that virtue rewards herself, yet I can never think, vice, if she could help it, would be willing sufficiently to punish herself ; the character of her impartiality is not so thoroughly established. On the contrary, when she is hampered with a troublesome conscience, instead of turning executioner on herself, she is infinitely more apt to shelter one sort of wickedness in having recourse to another. Drunkenness, of all vices, re-prieves the greatest number of criminals, and is very charitable to the rest of the confederacy.

Rewards, however, should be conferred, and punishments inflicted, not so much for the sake of justice in regard to what is past, as with an eye to the encouragement of good,



and the prevention of bad actions in time to come. In this respect, the mere rewards and punishments of reflection, when religion is out of the case, are still more deficient than in regard to justice itself.

How little is to be hoped from such reflections in order to the reformation of him who may, or may not make them, we have already considered ; and as to the reformation of others, that is wholly out of the question. The pleasure a man takes in doing good, and the remorse he feels on doing evil, are generally known only to himself, and therefore can have no effect on the rest of mankind ; whereas it is the business of divine justice to let the whole world see, by an open distribution of rewards and punishments, what it is to please, or offend God ; to do good, or to do evil.

Did virtue appear to the eye of our present nature always so beautiful, and vice always so ugly ; and were every good action so fully rewarded, and every evil one so amply punished in the doing, as some men would have us think, all legal distributions of good or evil had been utterly useless. The laws of our country had surely been wholly impertinent in threatening the blackest crimes, which we should be most apt to abhor, with the most terrible punishments, and encouraging us to the best actions, which we should be most apt to love, by proposing their best rewards ; nor had they both threatened and promised, after all, so often in vain.

But the whole world hath found by sad experience that human nature is prone to sin ; that ‘ the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually ;’ that ‘ the heart’ itself ‘ is desperately wicked,’ so that no one can know it, and that therefore it must be hired to good by large premiums, and frightened from evil by the most terrible punishments.

If the understandings of all men, as our libertines insist, were able always, when unbiassed by education, clearly to distinguish between the good and evil action ; and if their hearts, as they say, found nothing but pleasure in the former, and pain in the latter ; it were surely a wonder, how so many bad actions, and so few good ones, come to be done. Why is the truly good man so great a rarity, that he passes for a saint or hero ? And why do all ages and

countries so abound with bad men, that no laws sufficiently strict, nor punishments sufficiently severe, have ever yet been invented to guard against crimes the most abominable and shocking? In the writings of a libertine, men are fine creatures, lovers of virtue, and haters of vice. But if a writer of this stamp happens to make one in that body from which we have our laws, he is as ready as others to punish robbery and murder with death. How good we are in his book! how wicked in his statute! how much at variance is the one with the other! As a libertine writer, he thinks it sufficient to give us our consciences for legislators; but as a framer of laws, he turns us over to be rewarded or punished by others in consequence of our actions, that is, to future rewards and punishments, as if we were quite another sort of people. On his principles, God is not allowed the same privilege this man claims to himself, of promising rewards to good actions, and threatening bad ones with punishments. Yet men are certainly the same in regard both to the laws of God and man. If, however, Christianity is to be run down, then its sanctions are to be struck off as useless or slavish, and the moral sense or conscience can do every thing; but if the purse is to be secured, or the throat defended, then the gallows and the gibbet are not too great an addition.

Thus necessity, which some say hath no law, compels even the adversaries of every law, but that of nature, to become lawgivers themselves. The truth is, these measures arise out of our very nature, which cannot direct or support herself without foreign and additional aids.

Should any community frame a system of laws, but assign neither rewards to obedience, nor punishments to rebellion, who would not laugh at the absurdity, although the matter of those laws should, in other respects, be never so wisely considered?

If in God's kingdom the subjects should be encouraged to esteem themselves wholly unaccountable, should have no reason to hope for any reward, but such as they could confer, nor to fear any punishment, but such as they would inflict on themselves; what would become of either his authority, or our obedience? What would become of our

virtue and happiness? Surely he who made us, could never propose to govern us by methods wholly unsuitable to our nature, and by ties that have little or no hold of us.

True, indeed, he never could, he never did. He deals with us as with men, according to the nature he hath given us. He sets good and evil before us, because he hath made us rational and free. He sets heaven before those hopes, and hell before those fears, which he himself hath impressed on our nature. If we choose the good, there is glory and eternal life proposed as a reward equal to the importance of virtue. If we choose the evil, disgrace and misery for ever are prepared for us, as a punishment due in justice to our wickedness. The one will be inflicted, or the other conferred, as the grand expedients to keep the moral world in order for ever. To determine this in regard to every man, God, who knows every thing, and can forget nothing, hath appointed a time for judgment, in which, at the destruction of this world, the whole race of mankind are to be summoned before his throne, and there to stand issue in the sight of infinite knowledge, justice, and power.

These arguments for a future judgment, drawn from the attributes of God, and the nature of man, ought to have their weight with reason, were there nothing farther to prove the point. But God hath thought fit, in a matter of this infinite consequence, to furnish us with another, which leaves no room for doubting wherever it is known. This is the resurrection of our blessed Saviour, who, on that account, is set forth to us 'as the first-fruits of them that sleep,' and are to be raised to new life; so that his rising again from the dead is proposed to us, not only as a sufficient proof that God can raise the dead, but also as an assurance, that he will actually raise the whole race of mankind, in order to a final judgment. No ordinary event, no assurances in mere words, could have satisfied the world, that all men shall live again, and be judged for their past lives. Nor would even the miracle of our Saviour's resurrection have done it, without having been more amply attested than any other fact. This amazing fact was foretold long before Christ was born, was repeatedly promised by himself, and fixed for the third day after his death. His adversaries, apprized of it, took effectual care to prevent

the possibility of a pretended resurrection. When he actually arose again, and gave full proof that he was alive, his witnesses every where preached his resurrection as the highest proof of his gospel, and as a pledge from God of our rising again to the future judgment. For doing this, they were persecuted both by Jews and Gentiles, with the utmost cruelty; but death itself, in its most dreadful circumstances, was not able to frighten them from the duty of preaching Christ risen; for they were fully convinced, that they themselves should rise again in like manner, and rise to an eternity of happiness and glory for thus faithfully attesting the resurrection of their Master. Here now is satisfactory evidence, both from reason and revelation, of a judgment to come, and of a just retribution, to be dispensed in the sight of the whole intelligent creation, for all the thoughts, words, and actions of all mankind.

On this footing only can the government of God's kingdom be supported against the rebellious passions of mankind with sufficient strength and majesty. Take away these sanctions, and his laws lose all their force; for such is the nature of his subjects, that they never consider right as good, till they are convinced it is profitable; nor wrong as evil, till they are satisfied it is hurtful. Nay, and as pleasure often lies against right, right must be made exceeding profitable, or it will not be chosen; as sensual pleasure and worldly gain are often on the side of wrong, it will not be avoided, if it is not made exceedingly hurtful. God knowing this hath annexed rewards of the highest value to good, and punishments of the greatest severity to bad actions. Thus our Maker, Governor, and Judge, deals with us according to our nature.

Now we must take care to deal with him according to his; and what his nature and will are, so far as the performance of our duty depends on the knowledge of them, he hath sufficiently informed us by his word. Let us then attentively consider, what a ruler and judge we have to deal with.

In the first place, we should consider, that there is no such thing as absolute secrecy in the universe, for God is present every where and knows all things. He is not like our earthly judges, at a distance from us. 'He is within us

and about us. In him we live, and move, and have our being. If we climb up into heaven, he is there; if we go down into hell, he is there also; if we take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall his hand lead us, and his right hand shall hold us.' In all transactions, he is ever on the spot, and needs no witness, as the judges of this world do, to prove us innocent or guilty. No darkness can screen us from his sight. 'The darkness and light, to him are both alike. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. The word of God is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him,' with whom we have to do.

'Whither then shall we go from the presence of him,' who is present every where? Or where shall we hide from that piercing eye, to which the darkness is no darkness, to which the night is as clear as the day; to which a veil, a lock, or a wall, is neither bar nor hindrance; to which the hills, the mountains, and the whole globe of the earth are perfectly transparent.

As he knows, so he for ever remembers, all that hath passed. Not a single thought is ever lost. Time, like space, is all present with him. His 'records therefore are sure,' so that 'there is nothing hid, that shall not be revealed,' nothing hid at present from the world, that shall not be revealed or laid open before the eyes of angels and men. This should be well considered by him who would not plot against his prince, or contemptuously trample on his decrees, if he knew that prince was listening to him, and looking at him from behind a curtain.

In the second place, the subjects of God's kingdom are to consider, that their judge is not to be blinded by bribes, or biassed by interest, as the judges of this world are too often found to be, but 'righteous in all his ways.' 'His righteousness, like the strong mountains,' is never to be shaken; 'his judgments,' like 'the great deep,' are never to be exhausted. 'Doth the Almighty pervert justice? Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?' Yes, 'the works of his hands are verity and judgment. He shall judge the

world in righteousness. The work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways; Yea, surely God will not do wickedly; he regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards.'

Let his subjects lay this to heart, and act accordingly. There is no defence against the justice of God, but the merits of Christ, and the Christian covenant. But how can that covenant protect those who have lived and died in the transgression of it? Or what hopes can he found on the merits of Christ, who despised the offers of mercy and peace, through Christ, while Christ was in his mediatorial office? This office will cease at the day of judgment; and Christ, the state of trial being over, will seat himself on the throne of justice, and assume the awful character of judge, of a judge from whom no secrets can be hid, and from whose sentence justice only can be expected.

In the third place, as our judge is wisdom and justice itself, so is he almighty and irresistible. His will is no sooner issued, than executed throughout the universe. 'It is the Lord God omnipotent that reigneth over us. He is mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against him, and prospered? He removeth the mountains, and they know it not; he overturneth them in his anger. He shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble;' nay, 'the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. The thunder of his power who can understand? Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, the deep, and the earth, and all that therein is, shall be moved, when he shall visit; the mountains also, and the foundations of the earth shall be shaken with trembling when the Lord looketh upon them. He is a great God, a mighty and a terrible, from whose face the earth and the heaven flee away. He alone is to be feared, for he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?' If the whole world, the whole creation, is as nothing in the hands of our judge, what should every particular offender think of his condition, in case he should fall as such into those hands? It is true, the mercy of God is infinite, and extends over all his works. But to those who abuse it, or presume on it to the encouragement of themselves and others in wickedness,

he will be found a God of vengeance only, and will shew his goodness to the rest of his creatures in making dreadful examples of such desperate criminals.

God, you perceive by his own express declaration, 'hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him up from the dead.' The grave will be no sanctuary to the wicked, nor prison to the righteous; for 'Christ will reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet,' and death as the last. Justice requires a future judgment; God's sacred promise is plighted for the preparatory resurrection. Accordingly at God's appointed time, a trumpet shall be blown by his angel, the sound whereof shall be heard in the grave, and rouse the dead to new life. What music shall that sound bear with it to the ears of the good! What horrors to those of the wicked!

The first object presented to our opening eyes, on that prodigious occasion, will be the throne of God, raised high in the air, adorned with infinite magnificence and lustre, and beaming light, to which that of the sun is darkness. The host of celestial powers, extending in shining ranks, will surround it on both sides, and fill the whole prospect of heaven. The great book, wherein the lives of all men are recorded, will be laid open; and the judge in whose face and person will appear a majesty infinitely surpassing all the glory of this preparation, seating himself on the throne, will order the whole race of mankind to stand before him; and, having thus arraigned the species, will proceed to the grand and final trial. The angels of light will be ready to conduct the blessed to that heaven of happiness and glory, which will present itself to our eyes from above, while those of darkness will wait to hurry the souls of the wicked to the horrible pit of fire, which will open its dreadful mouth from beneath. Then shall the heart of man beat with such a force as his present mortal frame could not possibly support. How shall even the best of men bear the thoughts of any uncertainty, when so much is at stake, when God judges, when the whole creation is looking on, and when heaven or hell is to follow the decision? How shall men less virtuous bear the rack of doubts suspended between hope of heaven



and dread of hell to all eternity? But, above all, how shall they, whose guilty consciences afford them no glimpse of hope, behold that king of heaven and judge of men, whom they have offended; that glorious kingdom, out of which they are immediately to be excluded for ever; and that shocking lake of fire and darkness, wherein they are forthwith to be plunged under an impossibility of redemption to all eternity?

Represent now to yourselves this trial, with all its important circumstances, of a judge so wise, so just, so powerful; of a reward so inestimable, and punishments so dreadful. Try if you can possess your reason with a firm belief of it, and your hearts with a deep and lively sense of it; and then tell us, whether you can at the same time entertain a train of sinful thoughts, and form wicked resolutions. If you find you cannot, consider with yourselves, how infinitely you are concerned, to make that impression deep and lasting. As God's servants and subjects, we are accountable for every thing to him, and therefore should never forget that we are to account. Howsoever pleasingly the things of this life may amuse us, and stifle the expectation of being hereafter judged by almighty God for what we do, yet they will not always be able to shut our eyes against so awful a prospect, nor will momentary pleasures make us amends for the loss of endless happiness. Whether therefore we regard ourselves as accountable to God, or our own souls, for our lives, no scheme of life can become us as rational creatures, but that which proposes justification before the throne of God, as its chief end and aim. By this point we ought to steer; and whenever we lose sight of it, we have nothing to guide us through a troubled ocean of temptations and dangers.

This world passes fast away, and in a little time shall be no more. Blessed is he who runs his course through it, like a passenger, and stays not to amuse himself with things of little moment on the way, but hastens towards a more lasting and happy place of abode; who knowing that the eyes of his judge are always on him, always fixes his eyes on his judge; who watching carefully over all his thoughts, and every part of his behaviour, mortifies the deeds of his flesh, and dies to a vain and vexatious world. Blessed is he,



who, by often supposing himself in the agonies of death, learns 'to die daily,' and to look on his dissolution as a thing familiar and welcome, when it actually arrives. Blessed is he, who, by often supposing himself just newly arisen from the dead, and brought to trial before the judgment-seat of God, learns to rise, above the corruptions of his sinful nature, to a thorough newness of life; learns to 'rise from dead works, to serve the living Lord;' learns, by perpetually settling accounts with his conscience, to prepare his audit for the great day of account.

This man truly lives, lives with infinitely more satisfaction and comfort, than can possibly be tasted in all the wealth, pomp, and pleasure of an uncertain and perishable world. This man shall meet death with a joy, equal to the terrors of the wicked. This man shall behold the face of his judge with rapture, while others 'call on the mountains to hide them' from that awful countenance. This man shall receive that happy sentence, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' This man shall be 'caught up into the clouds with Christ and his angels,' at that time, when this world, once a scene of triumphant wickedness, but now all in flames, shall be perhaps turned into a place of punishment for those who loved it more than God, and insulted him with a gross abuse of all his inferior creatures, bountifully bestowed upon them.

Now to 'him who killeth and maketh alive again, who shall raise us up at the last day,' to the King of heaven, and Judge of all the earth, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LI.

## BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS.

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ST. MATT. VII. 15, 16.

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

THE religion revealed to us by our blessed Saviour, and his Holy Spirit, could not have been discovered by observations made on ourselves, or the world we are placed in, as other sciences are; nor does it naturally spring up in our minds, like instinct or desire; but approves itself, as soon as it is known, to right reason, as a system of truths, necessary to a thorough reformation of our corruptions, and a perfect government of our passions. Hence appears the necessity of instruction, and consequently of teachers, in order to the knowledge of Christianity.

But if such a reformation and government, and of course the real happiness of individuals, depend so absolutely on the knowledge of our religion; the happiness of every community, must, unquestionably, rest on the same foundation. The community can be neither better, nor happier, than the several members, whereof it is composed.

And, whereas, howsoever pure and clear the necessary religion may spring from its original fountain, there is danger of its being considerably corrupted or obstructed, if the channels, through which it passes, are not sufficiently clean and open; it must undoubtedly be the concern, indeed the most important concern, of all individuals, and of every community to see, that their religious teachers be men of wisdom and integrity, proportionable to the great ends of their office. Where religion is not imparted, the very soul of virtue, and the source of happiness, are wanting. Where it is perverted in the conveyance, an evil spirit, instead of a soul, is infused, and new enormities, whereat even the corruption of nature startles, are produced.

Now the danger, in both respects, is much greater than can be apprehended, before the idleness, the wrong-headedness, and what is still worse, the wrong-heartedness of mankind, among whom our teachers must be chosen, are well considered. The idle man will not labour in the office of teaching proportionably to the dulness or inattention of his hearers. The wrong-headed, especially if he is conceited (and a thousand to one he is highly so), will distort every thing he conveys; and like an uneven glass, present all awry to the understandings of his disciples. The wrong-hearted will add to, diminish, or change, whatsoever message he is charged with, according as the times, the occasions, the humours of his flock, or his own worldly interests, shall tempt him with views, detached, either from the original truth of religion, or the edification of mankind.

These causes of apprehension are not more plain to our experience, than it is, that numbers of men, thus, unhappily minded, crowd daily into the ministry, with views of gain and ease only to themselves, and often with principles directly contrary to those they solemnly declare for at the entrance. One half of these give themselves little or no trouble about the duty of instructing their people; and the best wish we can form of the other, is, that they were as idle. But strange as it may seem, it is, to the full, as true, that many are found more active in spreading such opinions, as they themselves have renounced, than others are in propagating those principles, on which they believe eternal salvation to depend, and which, for that reason alone, if we may credit their sincerity, they undertook the sacred office. By what equally preposterous and wicked turn of mind it is, that truth and idleness, deceit and diligence, are thus unnaturally linked together into these moral monsters, is as difficult to account for, as it is to develope the other mysteries of iniquity, contrived by the great deceiver.

Thus circumstanced, however, the men, who are at all concerned for the salvation of their souls, ought surely to be on their guard, ought to watch over their own hearts, and ‘try the spirits’ of their teachers, with the utmost circumspection. If there are many who trade in heresies, ‘making merchandise of men’s souls;’ if ‘many grievous wolves are gone out into the church,’ to worry at once its members and

its provisions ; and if these wolves have subtilely concealed the rapacity of their nature in the sheep's clothing, in order to get in among the flock, and devour the unwary ; the caution given by our blessed Saviour in my text, must be of the last consequence to every simple and well-meaning Christian. The safety of his soul depends on his being ' aware of false prophets ;' that is, on his being apprized, in the first place, that such there are, and in great numbers too, who, with art and cunning not easily seen through, lie in wait for the unguarded mind, in order to steal into it, under the disguise of truth, such errors, as subvert, wherever they are received, the whole faith and practice of a Christian ; and, in the next place, on his knowing how to detect and distinguish these false prophets from the true.

That such there are (for by the word prophets, here as well as in many other places of Scripture, the teachers of religion are to be understood) our Saviour's warning, and our own knowledge of the world, are sufficient to convince us. He desires his true disciples to beware of them, foreseeing, that no age of his church militant should be free from these corrupters of the truth, and foretelling, that ' many false prophets should rise, and deceive many.' St. Paul foretold the same event, when he said to Timothy, ' Know this, that in the last days perilous times shall come,' times productive of men, who have a ' form of godliness' (some of the sheep's wool), ' but deny the power thereof,' who, ' as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, do also resist the truth ; men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith.' Our own knowledge of the times we live in may satisfy us, that these prophecies are but too well fulfilled, otherwise why so many teachers contradicting one another on the fundamentals of our religion ? We are sensible, surely, they cannot all be in the right, and that truth neither needs, nor admits, the artifice and sophistry practised by some of these controvertists.

But, being convinced, that there are such false prophets or teachers among us, as we are here cautioned to beware of ; and that ' they go about by subtlety to deceive us ;' how shall we detect their arts, and how spy out the wolf within the sheep's clothing ?

That this clothing does not always fit the wearer ; that,

in time, it grows too thin and tattered to conceal him ; and that, to a narrow inspection, it discovers shrewd signs of a counterfeit skin, I shall presently endeavour to shew.

But, first, let us take into consideration the method pointed out by our Saviour of detecting the false prophets, of whom he warns us to beware.

‘ By their fruits,’ saith he, ‘ ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ?’

Now, it is a question with some, what sort of fruits our blessed Instructor means, whether the doctrines or the lives of such as pretend to teach others.

It is certain, the appearance of innocence and goodness in a religious teacher are very apt to infuse a strong prejudice in favour of that which he inculcates, and as certain, that the contrary appearance usually produces a contrary prejudice. The sheep, being so commonly given for an emblem of innocence, and the wolf, for that of wickedness, do naturally seem to point out this interpretation. For a farther confirmation of this construction, it is observable, that the words, ‘ their fruits,’ are applied to the teachers, not their doctrines or principles. Besides, it is, with great shew of reason, presumed, that the wisdom of Providence will generally employ good and honest men for the conveyance of religious truths, and leave it to fouler vessels to carry heresies.

Whether this is a right way of thinking, or not, it is nevertheless so rooted in the minds of all men, as never to be dislodged ; and therefore ought to be carefully laid to heart by every one who conceives himself to be a preacher of truth and righteousness. Few, we know, will take him for a sheep within, who is a wolf without ; or believe, that the same man can both preach the will of God, and practice that of his enemy.

It is equally certain, however, that Christ, by ‘ the fruits of the tree,’ intended to furnish the most simple sort of Christians with a plain and distinct mark, whereby they might know the nature of the tree itself. Now, it is a matter of no small difficulty to one unable to search his own heart, to search those of other men, and find out, in the midst of disguises, whether they are to be classed among the virtuous, or the vicious. To me it seems a much easier task

to discover the truth or falsity of their doctrines by the use of sound reason in a diligent perusal of God's word; especially, if the doctrines have been tried on others beforehand, and either healed or poisoned the minds into which they were admitted. It is a fact, not to be questioned, that very bad men, such as Balaam and Judas, have been authorized by God himself to deliver and preach the most sacred truths. Nor is it less apparent to the experience of every man, that others, believed by all their acquaintances, or at least taken by the general opinion, to be men of very good lives, have nevertheless been strenuous preachers of error and heresy; for, most evident it is, that men of very good characters, as well as a looser sort, have appeared among the foremost champions of opinions, equally important, and wholly repugnant. How shall the simple in this case choose his guide, if he hath no other rule to go by, but the lives of such as offer their service? Is he to halt between two opinions, till the day of judgment comes, and shews him which of those opinions had the advantage in point of exemplary teachers? To what purpose is the word of God laid open to him, if he may not 'search the Scriptures, whether the things' delivered to him 'are so indeed,' as they are delivered, or not? If he is to pin his faith on the mere appearance of morality in a teacher? It is acknowledged, Christ calls the fruits, whereby we are to judge, the fruits of the prophets, or teachers, and not of their doctrines; but then it should be noticed, that this figure, in putting the teacher for the thing taught, is the same with his putting the disciple for the doctrine learned, when he explains the parable of the sower. 'That' (seed) he saith, 'which fell among thorns, are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares,' &c. Yet the seed is the word of God. He uses the same figure also in the parable of the tares: 'Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.' The tares, it is true, are put for bad men, in the parable, and are said 'to be sown by the devil;' that is, their bad principles and sins were infused into them by the enemy, who can, in no sense, be understood to have created the men themselves, without running into downright Manicheism. Most true it is, the argument of God's employing none but good men in his ser-

vice, proves nothing, because brought to prove too much; for, as all men are sinful, as none is good, Providence, if tied to this rule, must have given us angels for teachers, and not men 'of like infirmity with ourselves.' Providence, therefore, instead of being complimented by such reasoning, is really arraigned for placing his treasures 'in earthen vessels,' and not in golden shrines.

We commit no mistakes in attempting to gather fruits from plants we are well acquainted with; we do not, for instance, look for grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles. But if foreign plants, as yet unknown to us, are imported and propagated in our country, as some of them may produce fruits, nutritious or medicinal; and others, poisonous; it will be more prudent to let them be tried on swine, before we venture to make a meal on them; at least it will be a safer way to smell and taste them in extremely small quantities, ere we trust them, in larger, with our constitutions. Thus, without too great a risk, we may know the tree by its fruit.

In like manner should the teachers of all religious doctrines be judged of. They who teach us such as have been already revealed, and found by long experience to be productive of virtue and happiness, may be safely listened to. But, if both the teacher and his doctrines are new to us, for that very reason they are to be suspected, till they are tried on those who greedily swallow every thing; or, at least, till their agreement or disagreement with known truths, with unprejudiced reason, and, above all, with the holy Scriptures, is better examined. By these rules we may canvass the new opinions with others better versed in such matters than ourselves; and by observing what effects they have on the preacher himself and his disciples, more especially, how, on giving a little into his principles ourselves, the state of our own minds is altered for the better, or the worse, is warmed, or cooled, to God and goodness, may, without too great a risk to our faith and salvation, 'know of the doctrine,' and consequently of the man, whether either 'is of God;' since all our care and inquiry is only to find out the will of God, that we may do it. And what is his will in the caution before us, but that we should be careful to discern the false teacher from the true, and avoid



him? Who, then, is the false teacher? He, no doubt, who teaches that which is false, erroneous, or seductive. Were not this our Saviour's real meaning, he had not applied the epithet, false, to the prophet or teacher, but rather to the man, whom it must have fitted in its full propriety. He, therefore, certainly points at that teacher, who, not as an angel, or a man, but purely as a teacher, is to be branded with the name of false, on account of his false doctrine, of whom we are to beware. It is not ours to 'judge the man. To his own master he standeth or falleth.' Neither are we, by any means, so much concerned with his life and morals, as with the nature and tendency of his principles, which, if right, may lead us, through saving truths, to perfect happiness; and if wrong, through pernicious errors, to eternal misery.

If we consider what it is we are to receive from a religious teacher, as we gather fruit from a tree, we shall find, it is his doctrine, that which he teaches; and that, on only examining this a little, we may easily perceive whether it is confirmed or contradicted by the word of God, just as we distinguish an haw from a grape, and know that this is the fruit of a vine, and that of a thorn.

But, that the fundamental articles of our religion, both in regard to faith and practice, are fully and clearly laid before us in holy Scripture, the same Scriptures do strongly maintain; how otherwise could St. Paul have said to us, as well as to the Galatians, 'If we,' the apostles, 'or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' Where now are we to find this gospel, but in the word of God? And if, notwithstanding the holiness of a heavenly angel, and of an inspired apostle, both are to be accursed, in case they give us any thing else for gospel than that which God himself hath given us in his word; why is the supposed righteousness of any preacher whatsoever to be set up for a test of truth, and a proof that his doctrines must all be perfectly sound?

If bad principles, that is, principles that naturally tend to relax the ties of religion, and tempt me to be vicious, should have made this teacher virtuous, it might seem a miracle to my understanding; yet miracle though it should

be, I am not to be carried away with it, for it was, long ago, foretold, that 'the false prophets should shew great signs and wonders;' and none greater, I am sure, they can shew, than a life of piety and virtue, planned on anti-christian principles, which is the same as the production of good fruit from an evil tree.

What then, you will say, is the disciple to sit in judgment on his master? If the taught is to examine the soundness of his teacher's principles, must he not have more knowledge than that teacher? And if so, why such a teacher?

A man may possibly know whether the principles of another are sound or not, who is not near so learned. In each leading article of faith or practice, one plain sentence of Scripture may enable him to do this; or, if one is not sufficient, there are a hundred. David found the truth of what I am saying, experimentally; 'I have more understanding,' saith he, 'than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.' When God is the chief instructor, there is an effectual check upon the documents of lower teachers. A plain understanding is, by no means, the worst commentator on the simplicity of the gospel. Although learning is a necessary qualification in a translator of the Scriptures, and a teacher of Christianity, yet are the learned to be heard with caution, on account of the infinite contradictions and extravagancies, which their refinements have introduced into this most sacred branch of knowledge. These are 'the wise men after the flesh,' and 'the vain disputers of the world,' on whom St. Paul sets this characteristic mark, that the plainer Christian may not be led astray by their specious subtilties. As the present times abound with such, the counsel of our Saviour, 'to take heed how we hear,' was never more necessary.

But, had the simpler and more illiterate hearers nothing else to guard against, than the fancies and refinements of learned men, there would be the less danger of imposition. They have artifice also, and that of the deepest and darkest kind, to apprehend in many of their teachers, on whom the sheep's clothing sits so well, and looks so natural, that it is very hard to discern the ravenous wolf, the wily fox, the mimic ape, that lurks within.

Let us however examine this clothing a little. Perhaps, on a nearer view, it may be found less genuine, than it seems at first sight. If the very disguise should betray itself, either by exhibiting hair, instead of wool, to the eye ; or by falling off, on a reasonable freedom of hand, the inspector will start back from the apparent beast, which it now conceals.

Here now it is to be noted, that this clothing, like all other dress, put on more for show than utility, is neither uniform, nor always the same, but varies according to the times, and is now of one fashion, and then of another, as may be most conducive to the designs of the wearer. In one age it is a pretended zeal for orthodoxy ; in another, high respect for the outworks of religion ; in another, scrupulosity of conscience about the gnats of opinion and practice ; in another, a puritanical ostentation of righteousness ; in another, bold pretensions to the gifts of inspiration, prophecy, and miracles. Of these, and such-like, the antiquaries of controversy have preserved a large wardrobe, torn from the masquerading teachers of former centuries in the many unsightly scuffles about the very principle of peace and love.

In this age and country, the sheep's clothing consists of high pretensions to liberty, charity, morality, and veneration for the holy Scriptures. Fine indeed ! and fit, not only for a real sheep, but for an angel of light. It is more than the wolf can want, and sufficient to conceal the infernal deformity of Satan himself, should he have occasion to 'transform himself into' one of those heavenly beings. As, however, we are commanded 'not to judge by the appearance, but to judge righteous judgment,' let us go a little closer, and inspect the particulars.

And first, as to liberty, or rather, in this case, Christian liberty, the skin here seems to be so well gathered about the wearer, and the wool so artificially stuck on, that none, but a practised eye, can discover whether he is a sheep or wolf. He teaches, that the gospel having set us free from the bondage of ordinances, and enjoined us an internal or spiritual service, we can in nothing act more like Christians, than in withdrawing our attention and dependance from outward usages, and fixing both on that which is truly

essential, and necessary to correct the heart ; nor than in freely following the sense and reason, which our maker hath given us, and which Christ hath often called us to the use of, in the search of religious truths. How right and just is this !

But when, as if in pursuit of these principles, he goes farther, and under a pretence of decrying ceremonies, he is for explaining away, or vilifying the sacraments, as external and superstitious ; and for annulling the ministry, as burdensome and tyrannical, it is easy enough to perceive the wildness of the wolf, who kicks at every sort of discipline, by the first ; and his voracious teeth, by the second, which water at the wealth of the church. No less remarkably does he discover himself, when, encouraged by the gospel invitation to a generous freedom of thought in religious matters, he sits in judgment on the plainest dictates of God, and, forcibly wresting the Scripture, bends them to those of his own reason. Here the violence of the wolf, the cunning of the fox, and the irreclaimable wildness of both, are united to pollute religion in its fountain, and to pervert every article of Christian faith. Now, if we do not take all this for an exercise of true Christian liberty, we are charged by them with breach of Christian charity ; and so the second part of the shēep's clothing is used to fasten on the first, and prevent its being torn away in order to a manifest detection.

Charity, which is the most lovely and exalted of all the Christian virtues, and which our blessed Master hath therefore assigned as the distinguishing badge of his disciples, is aped by the wolf with infinite art, and paraded off to prodigious advantage ; and as between charity and zeal, whenever so little misunderstood, there appears to be a sort of natural opposition ; the zeal of an orthodox advocate for Christian faith, though moderate enough, is run down and ridiculed by the wolf, as an incendiary and persecuting spirit, and that with such unhappy success, as to have extinguished, in the generality of professed Christians, the very appearance of regard for Christianity. This dead sleep affords a fine opportunity for the sower of tares ; nor does he neglect to seize it with all that zeal, which he so loudly decries in his opponents. Thus zeal is blamable and uncharitable

only when it is exerted on the side of truth, though herein undoubtedly is its most affectionate exercise towards men, and its most pleasing proof of itself in the sight of God, if the propagation of religious truths is of any consequence to the happiness of mankind, and if the blessed martyrs were not the most mistaken bigots, that ever laboured or died for a worthless cause.

It must be confessed, indeed, that the real principles of the wolf sit too loose on him, to admit of any sufferings, or even worldly losses, on their account, in their abettor; and therefore he hardly ever attempts to make proselytes by open declarations of, or arguments for, his opinions; but insinuates them under the mask of received truths by the basest equivocations. A fine sort of divinity, no doubt, that can be neither preached, nor heard, but in double entendres! Is it not most unchristian, most uncharitable, in us to expose it? However, that the wolf, under all his smooth words of charity, benevolence, social affection, &c. and under the oily appearance of meekness and moderation, is still a wolf, may be easily perceived by the home, but secret stabs he gives to the reputation of those who stand foremost in the controversy against him, and by the infinite pains he is at to keep them down, as men who would set the world on fire, were they in power. How artful is this species of persecution, which consists in imputing a spirit of persecution to others. How very artful this method of throwing cold water on the zeal of others, that his own may draw all the fuel to itself, and have leave to burn alone! If the world will not see the wolf here, nor shun him for being a wolf, but is resolved rather to wish for deception, let it be deceived. I beseech God, however, to preserve every well-meaning Christian from the virulence of the reigning moderation.

As to morality, or the third particular in the sheep's clothing, it sounds so like virtue, which is absolutely required by the gospel, as the principal ingredient in Christianity, or rather, as the grand effect of all its principles, that a wolf, howsoever equipped in other respects, without this, could never look like a sheep. To this therefore he affects to lay claim, as his peculiar distinction, and thereby to throw the odium of indifference for good works on the

orthodox. Allowing him now to be as good a man as his neighbours, and better, his modesty will not suffer him to say he is; do not we insist, as strongly as he, on the necessity of a good life, and on the performance of good works, in order to salvation through Christ? What then becomes of his distinction? Why, he denies faith to be as necessary, though, by the very constitution of the gospel, faith is made the principal work of God, and the fountain of every Christian virtue, the good tree, the tree of life, which is known by the good works or fruit which it produces. Yet the wolf, here too plainly discovering himself, declaims against faith as mere idle speculation, at best; and, disputing the doctrines of the Trinity, of the satisfaction, and of God's grace, as errors, advances a system of moral philosophy, rather his own too, than that of the Scriptures, as one thing needful. What a wonderful juggle is here? Will it go down with common sense, that the word of God, because it calls us to repentance and newness of life, hath repealed its own principles of virtue, and sent us for both to mere morality, which, as with a brand, it calls 'the vain philosophy of the world?' Do you not see the pride of the wolf in his claim of heaven on the merit of his own works, while the most harmless in the flock of Christ, after doing all the good he can, is commanded to own himself but 'an unprofitable servant,' inasmuch as he can never repay the price laid down for him by the lamb of his salvation, in, and through whom he humbly hopes for pardon only on the best life he can lead? Either Christ and his apostles were but maligners of human nature, and teachers only of the sourest sort of untruths, or he must surely be a false prophet, who, in compliment to our virtue and his own, bids us trust, that the few 'filthy rags' of our righteousness, mangled by great defects, and stained with gross mixtures, should atone for our many enormities, or entitle us to celestial crowns.

Notwithstanding the great stress laid on morality by the wolf in sheep's clothing, which so plainly tends to sink the necessity, and consequently the credit, of revelation; he nevertheless pretends to the most profound veneration for the holy Scriptures.

This he insists, as we do, is the word of God, and the

rule of faith and practice. But he differs with us in maintaining, that it is the only lawful and warrantable creed, in contradistinction to those confessions of faith, that have been framed by general councils, or particular churches. These, he says, are the works of men uninspired, and therefore should have no authority. Nor have they with us, any farther, than as they may be supported with plain proofs from Scripture; and we think it as lawful to express God's meaning, in forms like these, by words of our own, as it is to translate his word from the original into other languages, or to preach on it from the pulpit; especially as we cannot, by any other means, so well find out, whether they who demand communion with us, or ordination to the ministry among us, are real Christians or not.

But the false prophet, or teacher, in declaiming for the Bible, as the only creed, does it merely because he thinks he can, with greater ease, warp this to his own opinions, than the creeds of human composure, which he therefore protests against, because, though he swallows, he cannot so readily digest them, as is manifest by their rising so often on his stomach. That this is really his reason, may be clearly gathered from what hath been already said under the heads of Liberty and Morality, which, if true, shews he makes no difficulty of preferring his own understanding to the so highly venerated word of God. This is farther evident by his actually denying, that the whole Bible, though he will subscribe to the whole, is the product of divine inspiration; without being able, or at least willing, to point out which part of it is the word of God, and which the words of a mere man. What are the principles of this teacher reduced to? He considers faith as bordering too closely on credulity; he looks on the creeds of the church as erroneous, and will profess his faith, if the temporalities of the church tempt him not to do it by her creeds, by subscribing the Bible only; and, behold! he believes the Bible only in part; treats those parts of it which he pretends most to venerate, as a nose of wax; wrests them to his own sense by artful and arbitrary interpretations; draws but little, by way of illustration, from thence, into his short philosophical, or rather finical harangues, which he gives us for sermons, and less still by way of proof; keeps heaven and



hell, the great scriptural sanctions of the divine law, as much out of the view of his hearers as possible, because, with the deist, he considers them as destructive of his favourite liberty and morality, as too coercive truly ; and because he suspects, or even disbelieves, the eternity of future torments. He knows the apostles, ‘ by the terror of the Lord, persuaded men.’ He hears God saying to Isaiah, in reference to a people not more affectedly delicate, nor more hardened in wickedness, than this which we are to rouse, ‘ Cry aloud ; spare not ; lift up thy voice like a trumpet ; shew my people their transgressions.’ But then he hears these people, on the other side, saying, unto the seers, ‘ See not ; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.’ The false prophet I am speaking of, equally forgetting that he is the messenger of God, and that all softenings of his message are cruelty to the people, accommodates his address to their inclination, not their wants, nor the intention of his master ; and, as if there were no judgment to come, no heaven or hell to follow, no motives to reformation and holiness to be drawn from a dying Saviour, nor from the shocking thought of crucifying him afresh by perseverance in sin ; contents himself, and his Laodicean hearers, with prettily, but coolly, parading on the beauty of virtue, the deformity of vice, the social affections, the fitness of things, the dignity of human nature, and the moral sense ; principles canted up by the deists, as sufficient for the correction and government of our passions, in opposition to the Christian sanctions. What, but fallacy, can be learned from teachers so false ? As here the tree may be known by its fruit, so the fruit may as easily be known by its tree. No man in his right senses will go to such thorns for grapes, nor to such thistles for figs ; from whence he can expect nothing but trash for his understanding, and a wound to his conscience. If it is still insisted, that wickedness is the fruit or sign of a corrupt and false teacher, pointed out by our blessed Saviour, surely one, whom we know to be guilty of the grossest prevarication in matters of religion, in case he presumes to teach religion, must be such a teacher, must be even self-condemned, as the apostle intimates. How

then can he be approved and followed by the well-meaning disciples of Christ?

Yet, after being thus detected, must he still wear the fleece, and pass for a Christian? Must he even shrowd himself in the simple and seamless garment of Christ, for which he hath cast lots with the more avowed enemies of that master, whom it is his part to hail, as it is theirs to buffet; while the whole of his teachings exhibits, to a discerning eye, nothing better than a manifold patchwork of deistical shreds, artfully tacked together with a scriptural thread? Will not you, who know, but in part, the truth of what I have been saying, look a little closer into the principles of such teachers, lest you should give yourselves up to the guidance of such an artful deceiver, under the mask of an honest and faithful instructor.

Or, if these are too short-sighted or careless to examine any part of the way before their leaders, will not you, at least, who know both the way and the leaders, who are sensible every thing I have said is founded on truth and experience; will not you disdain the very thoughts of suffering your better understandings to be imposed on by the arts, already seen through, with no wiser view than that a loose heart may have loose opinions to countenance its corruptions? they who choose deceitful teachers, knowing them to be such, 'are deceivers of themselves.' Now, by choosing, I mean, not the electing of this or that person into a parish or congregation, but the lending a favourable ear to one teacher rather than another, and reading his published performances preferable to such as recommend the contrary principles. That there are many pretenders to free-thinking, who thus open their minds to one set of religious notions, while they shut them against another; and that they often do this, in order to a greater liberty of indulging their passions, and pursuing their worldly designs, is too evident to be disputed. These men are intentional imposers on themselves; and only single out a leader for their purpose, to aid them in the goodly work of self-deception.

But pray consider seriously, you, whose conscience says to you, 'Thou art the man,' where this disingenuous way of quacking with your understanding, and giving yourself

up to such undertakers of the soul, as I have been pointing out to you, is to end. The wolf has no sooner got possession of your mind by means of his specious disguise, but he enters into a close alliance with his relations, your passions and desires, encouraging these, and relaxing the strictness of the religious tie, till at length, without the least alarm to your now stupified conscience, he drops the fleece of innocence, and stands confessed, a beast of prey. Here now commences the reign of the wolf in all the arts of rising to wealth and grandeur, by fraud, force, oppression, and in an outrageous riot of sensuality ; which forbid your mind, once to fear or forbode a change. But, O, how soon does that change arrive ? Nature cannot long support, nor will God long spare, a course so violent, and so contrary to true religion. The wolf that was permitted, nay, invited, to deceive, is now employed to torment you. While infamy, sickness, pain, beat heavily on you from without ; your wolfish principles and passions tear you within ; your anger blown up to rage for want of vent in revenge ; lust burning in the oven of your impotence ; jealousy driving your understanding to distraction ; and envy eating, like a viper, into your heart, shew you what fruits are to be expected from the thorn and thistle. This, however, is but amusement to the fury of your returning conscience, which reddening her iron scourge in the furnace of your enormous guilt, and raising her hand as high as heaven, at every stroke lashes and stares your soul into despair. This, too, is but a trifle, compared with that which death and judgment bring along with them, wherein all conception, and therefore all description, are left far behind.

Thus have I laboured, God is my witness, in the bowels of charity, to rouse you, and bring you with an open ear and feeling heart, to the admonitions of our blessed Master, ‘ Take heed how you hear ; beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ? ’ Do men hope for better than insipid and unwholesome haws from that thicket of their own bewildered understandings, and the perplexity of those interfering passions, whence their new teachers invite them to pick up a meal of mere morality, by far less nutritive of real goodness, than of

licentious and irreclaimable irregularities? They may be assured, if here only they look for instruction, they shall be left of God 'to eat the fruit of their own ways, to be filled with their own devices,' and to be 'taught with the thorns' of their own wilderness in a severer manner than the men of Succoth under the hands of Gideon. Is it their choice to feed themselves from the thistles of human invention and corruption, covered, indeed, with the intricate leaves of Arianism, but ripening, at the head, into the flying seeds of deism, which carried 'by every wind of doctrine,' spread a crop of pernicious opinions, as often as they fall into a soil suitably predisposed? What is their judgment? Nay, what is their taste, if they prefer the product of these plants to the fruit of the true vine, that 'tree of life, whose very leaves heal the nations?'

God of his infinite goodness, teach us all here to seek the nourishment of our souls, that we may 'have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life,' and that both 'he who soweth, and he who reapeth,' may rejoice together in Christ Jesus, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LII.

### STAND FAST IN THE FAITH.

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1 COR. XVI. 13.

*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong.*

THESE words breathe a spirit so truly military, that, had we not found them in an epistle, we should have been apt to imagine, the apostle must have uttered them at the head of an army, at a time when the enemy was near at hand, and a battle very soon expected.

This now was really the case; and every Christian who reads them, in part mistakes their meaning, if he does not

consider the faith here mentioned, as the cause of God and his own soul, and that soul, hereby roused to vigilance, fortitude, and vigour, in the maintenance of a cause so infinitely important, against an enemy, seldom absent, inconceivably artful, and implacably embittered.

Although we should have perfectly understood the apostle, had he only exhorted us to 'stand fast in the faith,' yet we should not have so clearly conceived, how this was to be done, if he had given us this precept by itself. On the other hand, had he only said, 'watch ye, quit ye like men, be strong,' his words must have been, in a great measure, unintelligible to us, and we should have been wholly at a loss to comprehend, why, or to what purpose, our vigilance and resolution are thus called up, as it were, to action.

But, on viewing the whole text together, we find the inspired writer considers us, in respect to the principles of our holy religion, as men carelessly sitting, or lying fast asleep, whom he therefore rouses with a 'watch ye,' and calls us to our feet with a 'stand fast in the faith.' After this, he speaks to us as if we were already in a posture of defence, and had the weapons of our warfare in our hands, 'quit ye like men, be strong.'

Being thus called up, as it were with a trumpet, to contend for the faith, and to guard it against the enemy and his attempts, we ought to know what the faith itself is, who is the enemy, and what is the nature or method of his attack.

First, As to the faith, it is a firm belief and trust in the Holy Trinity, for into this were we baptized, with a promise, that 'whosoever believeth shall be saved,' and an assurance, that 'whosoever believeth not shall be damned.' But whereas to say, we firmly believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but do not entirely believe in all, these three divine persons have revealed to us, nor submit to all, they have enjoined us, would be gross absurdity and contradiction; our faith therefore necessarily extends itself to the whole of God's word, so delivered to us, as to leave no room to doubt, whether he himself was the author of it, or not.

If then believing in God, we must of consequence believe in his word, it will naturally follow, that our perusal is to suit itself to his revelations, so as to give the closest attention to those things, whereon he hath laid the greatest stress,

firmly believing all he says, but meditating chiefly, and applying our faith more especially, to that which he is pleased to repeat most frequently, to explain in the greatest variety of lights, to urge in the strongest terms, and support with his most engaging promises or most dreadful threatenings.

Every ordinary reader of the Scripture will perceive, I mean no more but the doctrines of one only God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin, and admission into the joys of heaven, on the terms of the new covenant; namely, a deep and sincere repentance in regard to all sins past, a lively faith in God's mercy through the saving merits of the great sacrifice Christ Jesus, and that ardent love of God and our neighbour, which the holy Scriptures set forth as the comprehensive perfection of all Christian duty.

He can see nothing, who cannot see that these are the points chiefly insisted on in holy Scripture, nay, that the whole was written principally, if not only, clearly to teach, and firmly to establish the belief of these points; and that therefore, without a settled faith in them, it is in vain to talk of being a Christian.

This therefore is the faith, into which we are by baptism enlisted, wherein we are 'to stand fast,' wherein however it is impossible to stand at all, without attending to, and believing those other doctrines that lead to, follow from, or are otherwise necessarily connected with, these; such, I mean, as relate to the attributes of God, the natural blindness and weakness of man, the divine ordinances or sacraments, the resurrection of the dead, whereof Christ was the first-fruits, a judgment to come, and endless happiness or misery to follow.

And this is the faith, wherein that we may stand fast, we are to watch, to 'watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation,' that particular kind of temptation, which proceeds from, or at least always works in, 'an evil heart of unbelief;' to 'quit ourselves like men' of resolution and sense, who are no longer children, 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine;' and to 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.'

And surely no other thing, we can possibly be possessed

of, so well deserves to be contended for, because on the purity and firmness of this faith all our title to forgiveness of sins, to peace with God, and to the eternal enjoyment of him and heaven, is founded. This 'is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.' By this our 'affections are raised from things on earth,' from the vain and vexatious things which are under the sun; and placed 'on things above, on rivers of pleasure,' and on 'that glory which shall be revealed,' when we shall be able to comprehend, and fit to receive it. If the things above so infinitely surpass those below, it must be our highest wisdom and our greatest happiness, 'to walk by faith, and not by sight; to look, not at the temporal things which are seen, but through the eye of faith at the eternal, which are not seen.'

But that we through the eye of faith may have the clearer view of the happiness and glory promised, and that we may walk more steadily, or run more swiftly towards them, it is requisite this eye should itself be clear and sharp, not dazzled by any fundamental errors, nor darkened by the interposition of this world between it and the light of God's word. It is on this account, but not on this alone, that we are so earnestly called on by the Holy Spirit to watch against those errors, as distempers of the eye itself, and against the world as too apt to eclipse that eye by coming between the sun of righteousness and the soul. There is, I say, another reason for the earnestness of this call. We have an enemy, incessantly employed to pervert our faith, and turn our whole attention, through our senses, our appetites, and our passions, on the things of this present world. To work us to one or other of these ends, or perhaps both, he employs such arts and instruments as it is very difficult to guard against.

As the points to be believed, whether in regard to the past or future, are, in a great measure, mysterious, incomprehensible, and wonderful, he applies to our reason, or rather to the pride we take in a supposed superiority of our reason, to persuade us, that men of understandings so uncommonly refined and delicate, ought not to submit to the belief of facts, contrary to the course of nature, or of doctrines, above the comprehension of the most elevated thinkers; and by this artifice, so extremely fit to flatter our va-



nity, tries to fill us with a contempt for the whole of our faith in revelation.

If through the assistance of Almighty God, and our own humble reflections on the narrowness of our understandings, which cannot possibly comprehend either God, or his unsearchable ways, we escape this snare, and still think it but reasonable to believe some things, for which we cannot account, on the testimony of him who is truth itself, and will not deceive us; his next attempt, is to corrupt that faith in our minds, which he cannot totally destroy. And here also he pleads with our vanity, that if we will not entirely relinquish the word of God, we ought not at least to swallow in the lump all the constructions put on it by men who pretend to the sole right of interpretation.

On this rational foundation he builds another principle, more plausible than true, that in matters so mysterious as some articles of faith are acknowledged to be, no particular construction can be necessary, and therefore, as to such articles, different men may safely hold different or opposite opinions. This once admitted, the believer grown bold with the word of God, as if God could not, or would not, make himself intelligible on any subject he thought proper to reveal, gives himself an unbounded liberty of interpretation, even on points of the greatest consequence.

Thus, under the pretence of interpreting for themselves, some among us wrest the Scriptures to a sense agreeable to their own prejudices, but directly opposite to the express and manifest meaning of the Holy Spirit. For instance, we meet with numbers every day, who in conversation, through the press, and even from the pulpit, endeavour to prove by Scripture, that we ought to worship more gods than one; that Christ did not suffer for the sins of men; that the grace of God is but a mere invention of the learned; and that the torments of hell will not be eternal, either in respect to the devils, or the souls of wicked men.

But in case the enemy fails in this attempt also, and we cannot be prevailed with so grossly to abuse our own understandings, or impudently to put what constructions we please on the word of God; his last art of this kind is then employed to turn aside our attention from the object of faith; from God, from heaven, and consequently from the

exercise of meditation, devotion, and religious vigilance, to the pleasures of the flesh, to the profits and pomps of this world, and consequently to such a scheme of life as is fitted to the pursuit of these alone. By this means that faith which can neither be wholly overthrown, nor in part corrupted, may be rendered absolutely useless; and this will serve the purposes of our enemy more fully than absolute infidelity could do, because it is worse to act against faith and conviction than not to believe at all.

Besides these, the enemy hath another method of attack, whereby he gives a deeper wound to our faith, than by those, and at the same time greatly promotes these artful drifts in the minds of men. He knows, it is not vanity alone that makes men wish to have no other governors, but themselves. He knows, we have sensual desires, and furious passions, extremely impatient of restraint. To these he offers liberty, but under a mask of reason, as to men who think themselves more rational than all other men. ‘Why,’ whispers he, to a dissolute heart, ‘will you believe that God could have forbidden you a full enjoyment of those sensible pleasures, which he hath fitted the world to yield you, and you to receive? How can you suppose he hath planted a tree so beautiful, with fruit so fair and inviting, just before you, for no other purpose but to try your obedience, in case he shall forbid you to touch it? Can God forbid by religion, what he invites you to by nature? But farther, are you not a free being? Is not your nature ennobled with moral dispositions, with a love for virtue on account of its own beauty, and an abhorrence of vice on account of its own deformity? As this is the case, surely it is altogether slavish in you to submit to, and arbitrary in your master to impose on you a set of duties, wholly mercenary, as those must be, which are to be rewarded, if performed, with endless happiness. Is it the property of a free being to stand in fear of extreme misery, for every transgression? Is that virtue, which is performed through hope of reward, or dread of punishment? of endless punishment, to be inflicted for the temporary lapses of a weak nature? If you consult your reason, and every thing else within you, that hath any sense of feeling, you cannot imagine an indulgent God could ever lay on you so severe a law, a law, too tyrannical to be

obeyed by a free, and accompanied by a history of facts, too extraordinary, and requiring faith in mysteries, too incredible to be believed by a rational being. Be not afraid to think freely, and then you will not fear to act as freely, for what is the use of thought, but to direct the will? Or of the will, but to resolve what shall be done?"

Here are the very 'depths of Satan.' Here is the doctrine, which his instruments print and preach up in all places to 'the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,' who greedily listen to them with every desire of a corrupt heart, and all the conviction of a wrong head, which will not stay to consider there are no distinctions made here between moderate enjoyments, which God permits, and such as are excessive, which he may possibly forbid as hurtful to human nature, and destructive of human happiness; no distinctions between that degree of liberty, which may be safely allowed to a bounded, nay to a corrupt and dissolute nature, and that licentiousness, which such a nature is by no means to be trusted with; no regard had to the violence of our passions, which the natural love of virtue and abhorrence of vice are utterly unable even in the best minds, nay, which the hope of heaven and the fear of hell, added to those moral dispositions, cannot always restrain in any one mind; so far are they from laying too great a bias on the side of virtue. No, enjoyment without check, liberty without bounds, and natural morality, though so feeble in itself, without a future judgment, without rewards and punishments, are pleaded for; and therefore, because the corrective part of religion is not agreeable to a mind that is, or wishes to be, lawless, the doctrinal part must be false; for if a free being ought not to admit of confinement, neither ought a rational one ever to believe what he cannot account for. It is true, the neighbours of one, who holds these opinions know to their cost, that he ought to lie for ever in chains; but what is that to him? He will not chain himself, nor suffer even his maker to do it, unless by force. He himself knows, he can neither perfectly comprehend nor account for any one thing in nature. And what then? Is he therefore to believe in God and Christianity, because they are both unaccountable to him? Does he not swallow the unaccountable in lower things because they tend to the gratification of his desires?

But will it follow that he ought as readily to believe in God, when he orders a bridle for those desires? This is a consequence he cannot digest. Would God be pleased to give this man a religion peculiar to him alone, and tell him, he had made it his duty to follow his own inclinations in all things, and to as great lengths as he pleased, to possess himself by fraud, or otherwise, of all the wealth he could lay his hands on, or to get drunk twice a day, or to make as free with every woman he met, as if she were his own wife, according to the particular turn of his mind; though I cannot help thinking, this would be the most incomprehensible of all religions, and that he himself, on some occasions, might think so too, yet we can hardly imagine he would make any objections to it, either on that account, or because it was imposed by way of command. No, he would say, God knows best what every one should do. We are not to examine the fitness of his dispensations, but to take it for granted, that every thing he prescribes is right, though never so irreconcilable to our notions of right and wrong. Thus, I verily believe, would Christianity be vindicated in all its miracles, mysteries, rewards, and punishments, by the generality of those who now object to it, could it, in any consistency with the purity of its principles, make one mystery more, and indulge their inclinations.

The arts of the enemy to destroy the faith, to prevent, or defeat the good ends it aims at, are seconded by others of a like nature, which his instruments employ in undermining all its most necessary articles. To stand right with the world, they make large professions of sincerity, warmly declare for an honest freedom and candour, in religious inquiries, and even call on God to attest the purity and disinterestedness of their intentions, nay, to assist them in their labours. And yet, if you hear or read them out, you will find, all they say is made up of artifice and sophistry, too gross to pass on people of any discernment, but well enough fitted to blind and mislead the ignorant or unsuspecting. When a conduct so full of low design and deceit is compared with their canting professions and hypocritical prayers, just now mentioned, the wretch, who is capable of being staggered in his faith by such detected impostors, must, we may conclude, have wished to be deceived, before

he lent an ear to their arguments. What sort of a mind is it, that can thus, in one instance, so basely shuffle with men, and so impudently prevaricate with God. Or what notion can we form of his mind, who knowing this disputant to answer the character I have given of him, will have no one else for his guide in matters of religion.

But the guilt and infamy of all these artifices is redoubled in him, who taking holy orders on him from the hands of our bishops, who promising solemnly at the altar to teach the doctrines of our articles and no other, who solemnly subscribing those articles with the three creeds confirmed by them, and more solemnly still, if possible, declaring in the face of God and the congregation, when he is inducted into a living, his unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer; yet disputes, preaches, and publishes performances calculated to overthrow, were it possible to be done, the very first and most fundamental principles contained in that book, and in those articles and creeds. And, as if in all this he had not given sufficient testimony of a mind ready to commit the most detestable sacrilege by the vilest prevarication, the man, compelled by his office, and by his love of ill-gotten wealth, reads the aforesaid creeds, and the Litany which begins with an express invocation of the Holy Trinity, reads them almost every day, and every day disputes or writes against the Trinity as a doctrine, which no man of sense or conscience can believe in; reads them as truths, and prays by them as proper forms of reasonable service, and rails at them as impious, unscriptural, and wicked; reads, prays, and rails; but eats on, and struggles hard, by all sorts of arts and means, and by again and again repeating the same declarations, subscriptions, &c. to provide for himself a richer meal.

If we duly consider the double dealing and dissimulation of these false teachers, with the parishes committed to their care, with the church of Christ at large, with God himself and his holy religion, we shall be convinced, the esteem they are in, and the attention wherewith they are heard or read by the world, present us with the blackest spot in the character of this age. Were the arts of these teachers so well covered, as not to be seen through by the sensible part

of mankind, some apology might be made for the times, as imposed on by deceivers, too guarded and too refined to be detected. But the fact is quite otherwise. The horrible prevarication and artifice of the men under consideration, are thoroughly discovered, and perfectly well known, known to those who, probably on that very account, choose them for their guides and directors in matters of religion. Hence it is manifest, that the teacher and the taught are of one turn of mind, that head answers head, and heart, heart, as exactly as if they had been tallied to each other by the grand impostor.

What now, in such times as these, and amidst so many snares, is to be done by you who are yet uncorrupted in the faith. Hear ye the words of Christ; 'he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' Faith, you see, is the necessary means of your eternal salvation, the only road to heaven, the only tie that can unite you to God, his sign in you, and your plea for the performance of all his promises. But you will say, what is the faith? And I answer, humbly, diligently, fairly search the Scriptures, and you will know; for 'he that runs may read it there.' Hear the Holy Spirit, 'there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though the apostles or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, than that which hath been 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.' Hear the Holy Spirit, who foresaw your danger, and therefore cries aloud, 'watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong.' 'Watch ye,' for the enemy is near, and steals on you under a variety of unsuspected disguises. 'Stand fast in the faith,' for if you fall through a loose, a feeble, or a fickle turn of mind, you fall from your vow, from your God, and from all reasonable hope of salvation. 'Quit ye like men' of resolution, who will not suffer themselves to be 'driven from that hope which is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, by every wind of doctrine,' though it should never so often shift from point to point, and blow with all the fury the prince of the air can give it. 'Be strong,' be firm in yourselves, as men who have neither lightly espoused, nor will lightly divorce

the principles of eternal life. And as there is no depending entirely on your own strength, 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' Like true champions for the best of causes, 'put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.'

'Save yourselves from this untoward generation,' a generation 'who set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit is not steadfast with God;' who remember indeed that 'God is their rock, and the high God their redeemer; nevertheless they do but flatter him with their mouth, and lie unto him with their tongues,' as you hear, when they repeat the litany and the creeds, for 'their heart is not right with him,' neither 'are they steadfast in his covenant. There is no faithfulness in their mouth,' so that you cannot depend on their preaching, which is contradicted by their praying, from whence you may, you must conclude, whatever their outsides be, their 'inward part;' observe, I beseech you, 'their inward part is very wickedness,' if to pray one thing from without, and to preach the contrary from within, may, in such times as these, be called wickedness.

Hear what the wise man says, 'Woe be to the sinner that goeth two ways.' Therefore 'go not in every way. Winnow not with every wind. Be steadfast in thy understanding.' Hear a yet wiser counsellor. 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Listen not therefore to those who call him and the Holy Ghost angels, and say, they ought to be worshipped as gods, by divine appointment; but remember what the fountain of truth forewarns you of, 'let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. Gird up the loins of your



mind. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' Resist also his 'false teachers, who privily bring in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, and through covetousness with feigned words making merchandise of you. Know this, that grievous wolves have entered in among you,' from other professions; and that 'also of your own selves have men arisen speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them;' therefore watch, for 'such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness. Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised; and henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.'

'In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird,' or as in the Hebrew, 'in the eyes of any that hath a wing,' for it may see and fly from the deceit. Your eyes are open. You may easily see the net, and as easily escape it, if you please. Listen only to the word of God, who saith, 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.' If you are not determined to be deceivers of yourselves, neither the great impostor, nor all the other deceivers who have entered into the world, will be able to insnare you. 'Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware, lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. Grow ye rather in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

To this end, and 'for this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love,

may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.'

'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that ye ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'

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### DISCOURSE LIII.

#### ON CONFIRMATION.

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1 COR. XVI. 13.

—————*Quit you like men, be strong.*

IF by the pains taken with you, the younger part of this congregation, in the nurture and instructions of your ministers and parents, you understand the nature of baptism and confirmation; you will be at no loss for the application of those words to yourselves.

Lest however you should, in any degree, be still ignorant of these matters, I shall,

First, a little explain them to you, and then endeavour to assist you in the application of my text.

In baptism you are called out of this vain and sinful world, washed from sin, and gathered into the church or family of God, by a covenant of peace, made between him and your soul, through the blood and mediation of Christ, wherein God, on his part, promises to receive you as one with his Son, as his own adopted child, and the heir of an eternal kingdom, infinitely more happy and glorious than all the kingdoms of this world, were they united in one; and wherein, encouraged by these high and interesting promises, you, on your part, solemnly vow to renounce, abhor, and make war on, the devil, the world, and the flesh, those enemies of God and your souls; rightly to understand, and firmly to believe, all the chief articles or heads of the Chris-

tian faith ; and so to understand and observe the commandments of God, as always to do that which he requires, and to abstain from that which he forbids, therein.

Here now is all you are to account for as a Christian. Here is the rule you are to live by. Here is the rule you are to be judged by. Remember, you have by a vow made it your own rule, and put your eternal salvation on the careful observance of it.

So great is the change made in you by baptism, that, from the alien and enemy of God, from the outcast of heaven, you are become the brother of Christ, and the son of God ; from the heir of that curse, which fell on the first Adam and all his posterity, you are become a joint heir with Christ, the second Adam, of all the happiness and glory, which almighty love can bestow upon you. You are no longer the same creature. You are a new creature. You are dead, and have passed from death unto life. You are dead to this world and sin ; and your life is hid with Christ in God. ‘ Know ye not, that so many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death ; that you were buried with him by baptism into death ; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so ye also should walk in newness of life. Reckon ye therefore yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin ; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

Now, as to confirmation, several things are to be considered in it ; first, that it is not a sacrament according to the notion and doctrine of our church, nor can be esteemed on a level with the sacraments agreeably to the word of God ; secondly, that it is a holy rite, practised universally by the apostles, bishops, and Christians, not only of the first and purest ages of the church, but in all ages, from thence to the Reformation, when some of the Protestant churches thought fit to discontinue it, on account of the superstitious ceremonies added to it in less enlightened times, which, blessed be God, did not prevent ours from retaining a rite, in some sort necessary, at the same time that she pruned away the new-fangled additions ; thirdly, that in this rite the Christian, who was baptized an infant, confirms the baptismal covenant, made in his name, by taking on himself all its sacred obligations, from whence arises what I call the neces-

sity of the rite, wherever infant baptism takes place; and fourthly, that herein the Spirit of God, communicated by the laying on of the bishop's hands and prayer, confirms the Christian, now come to years of discretion, and well acquainted with the terms of the covenant, in the renunciation, faith, and obedience, engaged for by vow, when that covenant was entered into.

Here is a short account of baptism, and of its confirmation on the part of every sincere Christian, when arrived to the requisite time of life. As to the too early practice of baptizing, confirming, and administering the eucharist, all at once, even to infants, when a bishop was present, and of using oil in confirmation, the Scriptures do nowhere countenance it; our church therefore rightly disowns it, and consequently we are in no sort concerned, on this occasion, to trouble ourselves with it.

No; but that which you, my dear young people, are infinitely concerned in is, to make your full advantage of the ordinance you are going to perform your part in; a thing impossible to be done, but with hearts seriously set to perform your part of the covenant, that the Holy Spirit having ripened your good resolutions with his grace and guidance, 'every one of you may grow up unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and that you henceforth may be no more children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but may be able to quit ye like men, and to be strong, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.'

Do not hope that the Holy Spirit will, by his grace alone, and without your concurrence, enable you to renounce, to believe, and do, as you have vowed. If it is but little you can contribute to the work of your own salvation, that little, however, must be done, or we cannot see how you can be saved. You are commanded to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, though you are, at the same time, comfortably assured, that it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do. But why a command from your Maker to do somewhat, if you are by nature able to do nothing?

Some, it is true, too much magnify the natural power of man to do good, and to justify himself. These men talk as

if they could do every thing, and would thank, not God, but their own virtue, for heaven. Others there are, as ready to level all mankind with brutes, or rather mere machines, wherein there is no self-power of acting; who, in short, can do nothing, at least that is good. Not far from the middle between these extremes, are placed the moral powers and capacities of man. Somewhat he can attempt; nay, somewhat he can do. He can meditate. He can watch. He can pray. He can resolve. God only can give effectual force and vigour to these acts or endeavours. Man can plough, harrow, and fence. God alone can dispense the seed, the sunshine, and the rain of his grace, and bring the harvest to perfection. A man is not to lie down on his back, call for the daily bread of his soul and body, set open his mind and mouth, and expect it in a shower. No, he must up and labour, and be thankful to God if he gives the increase, which, in case our own endeavours are not wanting, he never fails to do. If, having done all you can, you come to God, as at this day, in a due sense of your own weakness, and his goodness, he will infallibly help you. But, if you do not come, how can you hope for his assistance?

Undoubtedly your weakness, in regard to the work of your salvation, is deplorably great, and it will be the first step towards the attainment of the strength you stand in need of, to be thoroughly sensible of that weakness.

Look deeply therefore into yourself, and sharply back on your past life, that you may fairly judge, whether you are that wise, resolute, and worthy being, you are sometimes vain enough to think yourself. Reflect how often you have been miserably mistaken in the plainest points, or gone wrong, when the way lay open and direct before you. Have you been able to judge or believe, on a thousand important occasions, as you ought, or as your true interest and real happiness required you should? Nay, even when God or man had taught you to judge or believe aright, how seldom have your heart and resolution been able to second that judgment, or to follow that faith into action, as a barely rational creature, not to say the disciple of God, should have done! Consider farther still, whether even your consciences misled themselves, have not often misled you, or oftener, when they have distinguished good from evil to you, have failed

for want of power over you, steadily to affix your choice to the good.

Having, on the footing of your own experience, put yourself to a fair trial in these particulars, you will find you are a very weak, perhaps too, a wicked, a despicable, and miserable creature; not wiser than Solomon, who drivelled into the adoration of a stone; nor more righteous than David, who fell from a resemblance of God's own heart, into adultery and murder; nor more firm or faithful than Peter, who forswore his God and Master. You will perceive, 'that you are not sufficient of yourself to think any thing as of yourself; that you can do nothing without Christ.'

From the melancholy apprehensions, arising out of these mortifying reflections, you are revived by these comfortable declarations of the Holy Spirit, 'that your sufficiency is of God, and that you can do all things in Christ, whose grace is sufficient for you.'

Behold then, God, this day, if you are properly disposed for the reception of so inestimable a gift, offers you his Holy Spirit by the hands of his appointed servant, first to guide you into all truth, that is, to assist your understanding, that you may judge aright; then to assist both your understanding and heart, that you may believe aright; for faith, a truly Christian and lively faith, is not of yourself, it is the gift of God; and lastly, so to enliven and invigorate your conscience, that you may resolve and act up to the name and character of a real Christian, to the character of a candidate for eternal glory.

In baptism you was made, and are now going to be confirmed the child of God. If you consider yourself as his child, take care to be dutiful and obedient to your heavenly Father. If danger of sin approaches, or your enemies come upon you, run and cry, and louder still, in case you fall. You was safely lodged in your Father's house, how came you out into the way of mischief? into the street or broad way of the world? You stole out to play, or to snap up some glancing bauble, and now are in danger of being swept away by the crowd, or trodden under foot by the gallopers and coaches that hurry downward on that road to destruction. You are lost, if you cannot recover your Father's door. Rise therefore, run for your life, and cry. If you do this

with all your might, your Father will send out one to quicken your motion, and pull you in again.

By baptism you was enlisted into the army of Christ, the captain of your salvation. But that was done for you by sureties when you was yet a child. You are now going in person to be attested and sworn into his service. You are going to be trained to the exercise and discipline of a Christian soldier; to put on the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, and the girdle of truth; to take the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit, at the armory of God. You are going in a little time to be fed at the table or magazine of your Lord with the bread of life. Religion, truth, virtue, heaven, Christ, God, your soul, all are to be fought for. See that you behave yourself in a manner worthy of such a cause and such a captain. Keep close to the standard, and firm in your rank. It is safest fighting in a body. Single combat hath more of danger in it. Forsake not, therefore, the assemblies of the faithful, as the manner of some is. Join warmly in family devotion, and in religious conversation with the more pious part of your neighbours. Above all, go constantly to God's house and table. Here is no mixture of folly or sin in what is said, as too frequently there is in other meetings, even of the better sort of Christians. Here your converse with God by prayer, and he with you by his word. Here you may kindle your devotion at the fire of others, and light your candle at those which shine around you. You may take a useful example from the army of your enemy. He, you see, keeps up the spirit and discipline of his service by assemblies in those churches of his contrivance, playhouses, gaming-houses, taverns, drums, &c. in higher life; and in fairs, horse-races, cock-fights, dram shops, whiskey-houses, in lower life, where his veteran soldiers, and raw recruits, meet to exercise one another, in lying, cheating, swearing, lewd jesting, infidel haranguing, and sneering at religion, and, in all these, giving vogue and fashion to wickedness. Thus it is that the enemy prepares for battle. In assemblies of an opposite kind, and by exercises of a contrary nature, but still in assembling, and by exercising, must you prepare on your part. Nothing in your power is able to give you so much skill, strength, and courage, in the spiritual warfare.



If, however, at any time you grow faint-hearted because of the destruction that wasteth at noon-day, remember the promise of God, that though a thousand fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, it shall not come nigh thee. God is at thy right hand, and thou shalt not be moved. See how the good Christians of your acquaintance advance steadily on the enemy, and put to flight the armies of the aliens ! See how the martyrs break through fire and blood to take the kingdom of God by violence ! Above all, see how Christ, your captain, lays round him with his cross, levels whole ranks at once with every stroke of his two-edged sword ! His almighty hand rises to heaven, and crushes to hell, at every blow. How can you be dismayed, or draw back, in such company, with such a leader, and such a prize in view ? Shew the proof of your armour, and the vigour of your feeding, by the glorious spirit of your charge. Quit you like a man, be strong.

You are now come to that very important, and indeed dangerous time of your life, when, both your reason and passions almost on the borders of maturity, there arises from thence a sort of necessity, that you should choose your master and your way, not only for the remainder of your days, but even for eternity also. You cannot be long indifferent. The cast and character of your life must now be fixed in such a manner as not to admit of any great change without extreme difficulty, nay, without perhaps a frightful risk in regard to the safety of your soul. It is a common and just observation, that such as men are in the earlier part of their lives, such they generally continue to be till death. It seldom happens that the good boy makes a bad man ; and seldomer still that a wicked and disorderly lad is reclaimed into a virtuous and regular man. Of so great consequence is it to begin well, that the boy, a few singular cases only excepted, fixes a course of life for the youth ; the youth for the man ; and he for the angel, whether of light or darkness.

Come, then, my dear young pupil, choose your master and your way.

A master you must have, a servant you must be, as you are but a creature, and therefore, by natural necessity, a dependant being. God, by right of creation, is Lord and

Master of all. But the evil spirit sets up, by rebellion and usurpation, as to himself, and by permission from God, in order to your trial, for an absolute mastery and dominion over you. The question now is, whether you will have God for your Lord, or submit to be a slave to the devil? Your reason finds no difficulty in this choice. You readily cry out, I will obey God and fight against the devil. But does your heart always say so too? Do you not often yield to the motions of sin in your corrupt heart? And what is your heart, thus in motion, but an engine, wrought by the evil spirit, and played off against God and his law? 'Know you not, that to whom you yield yourself a servant to obey, his servant you are to whom you obey?' Or know you not, that as often as you commit sin, you obey the devil, and are, so far, actually his servant? You must choose your master, therefore, with all your heart, as well as with all your understanding. God, for his part, disdains a divided servant, and a trimming service paid partly to him and partly to his enemy. He commands you to love him with all your heart, and his goodness to you demands it entire. You cannot, surely, think of obeying him with but a half of it.

Well, you renounce the devil, that monster in the creation, that despicable slave to sin, that infernal tyrant to the wicked, whose sole intention it is to insult Almighty God through you, and to make you as foul, as vile, as miserable a rebel, to all eternity, as he is himself. Him, therefore, and all he tempts you to, by the world, and the corruption of your own fleshly nature, you persevere to renounce and abhor.

And God you are resolved to serve with a steady understanding, and an undivided heart. You will serve him who hath the sole, the eternal right to rule over you, as him who gave you being, who bought you with his blood, who comes, as this day, an almighty ally, to join you against the enemies of your soul; him whose service is the only perfect freedom, honour, happiness, of all his rational creatures; who is in himself infinitely good and lovely, infinitely great and glorious, and means nothing by his dominion over you, but to make you, for ever, good, lovely, great, and glorious, like himself. It is very well; but you must never forget

whom it is you profess to serve, and how he is to be served, namely, in spirit and in truth, with a warm, watchful, and resolute spirit, and with truth agreeable to your professions, with fidelity conformable to your vows. If you begin well, your work is half done, and the necessity of a sorrowful repentance, or the dreadful danger of sinning, and never repenting, may be happily prevented. It is better never to be ill than to be cured, were the spiritual medicine ever so infallible; but, alas! we know of no such medicines for a soul, far gone in the mortal disorder of sin, and perhaps incapable of the application. ‘Remember, therefore, your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them,’ and God too shall say, he hath no pleasure in them. Give your heart to God while it is yet young and tender. Offer not your first-fruits to the devil, and think to put God off with the chaff and refuse of old age. ‘Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. Watch, for you know not what hour your Master cometh. Pray without ceasing, for your sufficiency is of God, and of him only.’

Choose now your way too, my dear children in Christ. There are two ways before you, one called the narrow way, and the other the broad. This leads downward, that upward. You see they set out, both of them, just from your feet, but go wider and wider from each other the farther they advance, till it becomes a long and painful journey to cross over from the one to the other, in regard to the unhappy traveller, who may have entered into the wrong road at first, and proceeded in it, till his day is wearing towards an end. This broad way here gives room for many travellers abreast. It is smooth and easy to the foot. Its hedges are flowery, and loaded with fruit as fair to the eye, and as delicious to the palate, as that which hung on a certain tree in the midst of Eden. The pleasures and profits of this world may be picked up in the shape of guineas and diamonds at every step. The air richly perfumed, breathes in soft music on the ravished ear. This is the reason, I suppose, that the passengers here, instead of soberly walking, are observed to dance down to the wanton measures, in pairs, while some, fast asleep, are carried along in gilded

coaches. On each side are palaces for inns, where there is entertainment for man and beast, with pomps, pleasures, and riches, promised on every sign. Such is the broad road at the end next you ; but farther onward it grows narrow and craggy. You meet with thorns and briers among the flowers. These decrease, and those become more frequent. Some base money, or counterfeit stones, are thinly scattered on the road. The air becomes harsh. The music is often intermixed with groans and yells. The passengers, enfeebled by surfeit and satiety, drag their limbs with labour, though the road lies wholly downhill ; and they in coaches are kept awake by the gout and stone. Here the inns are filled with drunkenness, rapes, broils, bloodshed, murder, remorse, and terror. Here gaming-houses and jails, apothecaries' shops and tombs, turn the road almost into a street. A little farther down, a frightful pair of stairs, formed for the greater part of precipices instead of steps, throws the travellers into a bottomless gulf, too shocking for the approach of description. Hear, therefore, ye youth, the voice of him who cries aloud, ' Go not in the broad way which leadeth to destruction.'

No, enter in at the strait gate, and take your journey upward in the narrow way, narrow only at first to those who come over from the broad, but, from the beginning, open, and easy enough of entrance to you, in whose yet untainted minds goodness is not altogether unnatural. You are not yet swoln by habits of sin to so great a size, as to make your entrance very difficult. It is but of yesterday that you ceased to be one of those innocents of whom Christ saith, ' of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Pass in resolutely among the thorns and roses of this way, rather than among the roses and thorns of that other. Herein, the higher you ascend, the air will grow clearer, the light stronger, and your prospects still larger and more beautiful. This world, with its trifling persons and insignificant things, grows less and less to your eye, till you see it but as a dark and disagreeable lump of confusion ; while the heavens open to you, and the things above, as you approach them, begin to look larger and more illustrious to the eye of your faith, till you see them as they are in themselves, all lovely, all great and glorious, such as the unregenerate eye hath

not seen, the unregenerate ear hath not heard, and the unregenerate heart hath not conceived, nor can conceive. On the other road, every pleasure enfeebles. Here every pain invigorates. There the travellers, forming themselves into a community of miscreants and reprobates, help to hurry one another downward, and the great deceiver, redoubling their weight, increases their power of plunging still deeper and deeper: but the faithful Christians on this road, joined in a communion of saints, lend their hands and shoulders to help one another upward, as often as this or that traveller grows weak, or the hill too steep for him to climb; while the Spirit of God spreads a plentiful table for his refreshment, takes him to repose in his house, and sometimes sets him forward in the fiery chariot of Elijah. Here a conscious sense of virtue, an ardent love of God, a burning zeal for his service, and a heavenly ambition, shall inspire you with courage, and teach you to glow at the sight of danger, nay, even to rejoice in tribulation, especially if brought upon you for your fidelity to so gracious a Master. But move a little farther up to the point of victory, where tribulations and persecutions shall be left behind; where triumph and exultation shall begin; where you shall be crowned, and surrounded with the natives of heaven, with saints, martyrs, Christian heroes, angels, archangels, principalities, powers, thrones, through the loud hallelujahs of whom, you shall pass into the immediate presence of your God, your Father, your Saviour, your Comforter. You shall see him. You shall see his countenance all covered with smiles and love. You shall hear him say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

Enter ye, therefore, in at the strait gate, and travel ye in the narrow way, which leadeth to life. Think it not too much to encounter with some difficulties, and to struggle patiently for a short time, that you may live for ever in joy unutterable, and glory inconceivable. Remember you must be a partaker of Christ's holiness, perhaps, in some measure, of his sufferings, before you can be a partaker of his joy.

And now, my dear children, whom I have faithfully laboured to train up in the way that ye should go, 'I bow

my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, through all ages, world without end. Amen.'

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## DISCOURSE LIV.

[PREACHED ON CHRISTMAS DAY.]

### THE FAITHFUL AND ACCEPTABLE TRUTH.

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1 TIM. I. 15.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*

To one, from his childhood, made familiar with the doctrines of our holy religion, and with this in particular, that Christ came to redeem the sinful race of mankind; or to one who does not know who Christ is, whence, or to what sort of a world, he came, or how wholly unworthy we were of such a visit; my text will seem to introduce itself with too great an air of pomp and importance; the porch will appear too spacious and too magnificent for the building. 'This is a faithful saying,' big with divine truth, and absolutely to be depended on, that cannot be disputed, or so much as doubted in the least, without obstinately shutting the eyes of reason, and questioning the truth of God's word. This is 'a saying worthy of all acceptation,' worthy, on account of the light and conviction it brings with it, to be received by the understandings of all men; and on account

of the equally comfortable and astonishing work of salvation it sets before us, to be embraced with all the warmth of their hearts, and all the force of their affections; with a transport of gratitude and wonder. What now is the saying? Why, 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Now, I do insist on it, that, simply as the matter of this saying is here expressed by the apostle, it is impossible for the eloquence, nay, for the imagination of men or angels, to do it justice. This will easily be made evident, before we have done.

In the mean time, let us observe a little the faithfulness and worthiness of this saying. Faithful and true it must be in the highest degree, if the prophecies of God to all men, through Adam, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, and a cloud of other witnesses, are all fulfilled, as they really are, in the truth of this saying; and if our Saviour hath fully proved, as he certainly did, by infinite miracles, openly and every where performed in the face of unbelievers and enemies, that he came directly and immediately from his Father to save the world. The reason of mankind, and their total inability to reform or save themselves, loudly cry out for such a Saviour. The prophecies, the miracles, together with the inimitable wisdom, humility, patience, and goodness of Christ, do still more loudly proclaim him to be that very Saviour, so that reason ceases to be reason, if it does not receive this saying with an entire conviction of its truth, as the fundamental article of saving faith.

Hence again appears its worthiness of all acceptation, so far as reason and the understanding are concerned to judge of its truth. So far as the heart and our affections are called upon warmly and gratefully to close with it, as the most important and comfortable of all truths, we have only to consider, who Christ Jesus is, whence, and whither he came, whom he came to save, from what, and by what means.

First, then, let us seriously consider who Christ Jesus is. 'In the beginning,' that is, from all eternity, 'he was with God, and was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. By,' or rather in, '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. He is the first and the last, and besides him there is no God. He is the alpha and the omega, the Almighty. He is God over all, blessed for ever.'

No created being was able to save us. The new creature required the omnipotent hand of its Creator, as well as the old. But had the power of a seraph, or all the seraphim together, been sufficient for this work, they had been unfit objects surely of that adoration, of that highest degree of love, wherewith the sense of our redemption ought to be accompanied in the hearts of all men. Nor is it at all to be supposed, without a flat contradiction to the very first principle of all true religion, that God would suffer any inferior being to carry off from himself such love, or such adoration, in the minds of all mankind, whose love he hath courted with infinite proofs of goodness and mercy, and whose worship he hath confined to himself by the most dreadful threatenings.

We see now to whom it is that we owe our salvation; and, in seeing this, it is easy to conceive the returns that are due for it. No mere man, no angel, no cherub, no seraph, was able to save us. God only could do this. God alone hath done it; and our gratitude, in the acceptance of this saying, 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save us,' should rise to as high a proportion as possible, with the dignity of his person who saved us.

In the second place, we are to consider, whence Christ Jesus came. He came, not only from the throne, and from the glories of heaven; from that throne, whereon he reigned over all the hosts of heaven, and from the loud hosanna's of those exalted beings, who were created by him, in him, for him; but what was infinitely more, he came from the bosom of his Father, from love unbounded, from love equal to his infinite merit. In our acceptation of this saying as a truth, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save us, we should feelingly figure to ourselves the glory and happiness he relinquished, the power and majesty he abdicated, and, above all, the inconceivable, the infinite enjoyment of his Father, wherewith he had been transported from all eternity, which he exchanged for his anger, that he might give scope to mercy, too mysterious and astonishing for the comprehen-

sion of angels, yet not above the belief of a reasonable man, who is not too wise in his own conceit to credit a mystery, nor too good to need an atonement, for he knows he is a mystery to himself, and finds he is loaded with sin. His understanding is not become his idol, so as to have eyes that cannot see, and ears that cannot hear.

Thirdly, we are to consider, whither he came from all this happiness, and glory, and majesty. He came into this world. O miserable! O amazing reverse! He came into a world full of pollution and wickedness, full of treachery, cruelty, and oppression; into a world obstinately shut up against the light of his wisdom; hardened against all the tenderness of his love, exemplified by every instance of goodness, patience, compassion; and in open universal rebellion against himself, against him, whom angels feared, whom all the thrones, the principalities, the powers of heaven obeyed! That we might not be struck blind with his light, nor perish at the approach of his majesty, he veiled both in the 'tabernacle' of human flesh prepared for him. 'He took on him the form of a servant,' so that 'there was not even any comeliness in him, that we should desire him.' God came incarnate to save a race of incarnate souls, that the mystery of our own composition might prepare us for the belief of his. 'The word became flesh, and dwelt among us,' that our very senses might receive the person and doctrine of our Redeemer. We see him, we feel him, we converse with him, as a plain man, 'who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person.' We try his patience with our ignorance and stupidity. We shock his sensibility with the hardness of our hearts. We tease and affront his wisdom with our impertinent questions, with our saucy expectations, with our self-interested requests. Oh, had we but stopped here, and not proceeded with our indignities to infinitely more grievous excesses! But this is not the place for such reflections. Here it is that we ought to search and find out the knowledge of ourselves, that in that knowledge we may the better perceive the entire acceptation with which we ought to embrace this saying, 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save us sinners.'

For, in the fourth place, he came, not as might have been most reasonably and naturally feared, to judge and condemn

the world, a guilty and reprobate world, but to save them, despicable and odious as they are. If the dutiful, the faithful, the just, the chaste, the grateful, had been in danger, our Saviour's visit and assistance had furnished a much smaller occasion of admiration and thankfulness. But he came to save sinners, you the rebellious, you the treacherous, you the iniquitous, you the unclean, you the thankless; to save sinners, whereof I may more truly say, than Paul did, in the words immediately following my text, that 'I am chief.' The wealthy may disdain an alms; but with what acceptance ought the debtor to snatch at the payment of all he owes? with what acceptance ought the prisoner to leap at the price of his freedom? with what a bound ought he to spring from the loathsome place of his confinement, when his bailsmen comes to pay off his bonds?

Fifthly, we are next to consider, with the most awakened attention, what Christ Jesus came into the world to save us from, namely, sin and its punishment. We are by nature slaves, 'sold under sin,' corrupted, polluted, it may be, hardened, in sins of the most abominable and dangerous kinds. We are surrounded with darkness, but we like it because our deeds are evil, and require it. We are covered with nastiness, but delight in it, because it is both natural and habitual to us. There is but one who can enlighten the paths, and cleanse the ways of beings, so wedded to impurity, and therefore so impatient of the light; so destitute of light, and therefore so insensible of their own impurity. None can save, that is, reform and reclaim us, but Christ, who comes by his word, by his sabbaths, by his sacraments, by his ministers, and in all these, by his spirit, to call us to repentance and newness of life; to call us out of the world, that treacherous enemy, whom we foolishly and desperately love; to call us out of the flesh, that in-bred betrayer, whom we cherish with greater indulgence and tenderness, than our lives; and he comes to put us on our guard against the snares of that apostate angel, who labours continually to make us as foul, as black, as malicious, as wicked, as miserable, as 'shameful beings, every way, to all eternity, as himself. Is not such a visit, are not such labours, worthy of our utmost acceptance? Are we not tired of our sins; are we not frightened at their effects? will we not embrace

him who comes to deliver us from so shameful, from so dangerous, from so grievous a slavery? A man lying fast asleep, in the dark, on a bed of filth, and on the brink of a dreadful precipice, is not, at first, pleased with him who rouses and gives him light; but he no sooner sees the condition he is in, than he blesses the hand that disturbed him, and lays hold of it, that he may be drawn to a distance from his foul and dangerous situation.

But he comes also to save us from the punishment of sin. Were the sinner exempted by the intention of God, and the natural course of things, from all apprehensions of suffering on account of his sins, his indulgence to the inclinations of a corrupt nature would prevent his ever having any thoughts of quarrelling with sin, merely because it is sin. But whereas sin and misery are inseparably linked together by their own nature, and by an unavoidable course of things, if providence do not interpose; and whereas 'God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness,' and condemn the wicked to punishments inconceivably severe and dreadful; the guilty have reason to take from hence the most fearful alarm. He hath sinned, perhaps grievously sinned, nay, it may be, is in the utmost danger of persevering in his sins, though he knows, at the same time, that 'vengeance lieth with sin at the door.' What shall he do in this deplorable distress? He cannot reform himself. Well, but Christ, as hath been shewn under the preceding head, hath come to do that for him, that is, effectually to aid his weakness. Yet still the dreadful question returns, how he shall be delivered from the guilt and punishment of his sins, already committed, which no repentance can undo, or atone for. Why, here too Christ comes to take both the guilt and punishment of sin from all who shall use their best endeavours to second the motions of his holy spirit, in order to a truly Christian faith and a thorough reformation. Of all our weaknesses or faults, I know none of worse consequence than this, that we either cannot or will not, form a right notion of the rewards or punishments which are set before us. The criminal is hanged, because he does not rightly conceive that sort of punishment, till the instant of his suffering; and the obstinate sinner perishes for ever, only because he knows not what hell is, tell he goes thither.

If we set before our eyes the tortures and horrors of that extreme, that eternal misery, we must inevitably have endured, had not Christ taken our guilt on his own head, and atoned for all our sins, we shall perceive, we shall feel, how exquisitely sweet, how highly important, how every way 'worthy of all acceptation,' is the saying, 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' especially if,

In the sixth and last place, we consider, by what means he came to save us from the punishment of our sins. Divine justice requires, that no sin shall go unpunished. Either therefore we must suffer for our own sins, or another, sufficient for so great a purpose, which no mere creature can be, must suffer for us, must suffer death, the original wages of sin; must suffer it by divine appointment, and yet voluntarily. Now, no one, but the son of God, was sufficient for such a purpose. None else had 'power to lay down his own life,' for none else had a life of his own. None else could offer up a sacrifice of dignity equal to the guilt of all our sins. Neither 'the cattle upon a thousand hills,' nor their immediate possessors, nor the hosts of heaven, belong to themselves, or have any property, strictly speaking, of their own. The divine nature alone is the universal proprietor. From this nature therefore alone could a proper offering be made. But the divine nature is purely spiritual, and incapable of death or any other suffering. Our redeemer therefore and our sacrifice, must have been man, as well as God, or he could not have suffered, at least, in the offending nature, which appears to have been necessary. 'Wherefore when Christ cometh into the world, he saith,' unto the father, 'the sacrifice and offering (of beasts) thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, lo, I come to do thy will O God.' And what was this will? Why, that the son of God should take on him the frail and miserable nature of man, that he should be 'born of a woman' in a low and indigent condition; that he should be hated, despised, and 'persecuted of men,' during the whole course of his life, that he should be 'arraigned, accused, spit on, buffeted, scourged, crucified between two thieves.'

And was it for this he came, as at the present season? What matter of wonder, and of love, on the part of man-

kind ! As the highest of all beings, his birth is proclaimed by 'a multitude of the heavenly hosts ;' while, as the lowest of men, he is 'born in a stable,' and 'cradled in a manger !' Heaven and earth belong to him, 'yet he hath not where to lay his head !' The eyes of all things wait upon him for their sustenance, but he himself works at a common trade, or depends on the poorest of mankind for his own ! He silences the winds, he smooths the billows, he awes the storms, and—is despised ! He heals the sick, and—is hated ! He gives sight to the blind, and—is persecuted ! He speaks as never man spake, and—is called a madman ! He raises the dead, and—is tortured to death himself ! Whether shall we stand more amazed at him, or ourselves ?

But where is our gratitude and our love, if this amazement does not make way to them both ? Nay, whither is banished the common sense of rational creatures, if after hearing, if after firmly believing all this, we can be any longer wedded to our sins ? From our own nature he springs ; by our own hands he is scourged ! By our own hands he dies ! and in his last agonies mixes his blood and prayers together for us ! Can man behold his death with indifference and contempt, while every being in heaven, with infinite admiration, beholds him trampling under foot, and triumphing therein, over death, and hell, and all the powers of darkness ? Is it possible, that man, thinking, sensible, generous man, can be an unconcerned spectator of this transaction, undertaken and perfected for the salvation of man alone ?

If now, 'this is a faithful saying,' and too fully proved to be rationally questioned, 'that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' surely it must be 'worthy of all acceptation.' What then is the acceptation, wherewith we are to receive it ? No doubt, as hath already been observed, with all the conviction of our understandings, and all the warmth of our hearts. There is no reason why we should be more incredulous to the wonders of infinite mercy in the work of our redemption, than to those of infinite wisdom in that of the creation. Is it not reasonable, that mercy should go as far to save an immortal, as wisdom, to accommodate a temporary being ? And if our convictions, as to the truth of our Saviour's coming, are perfectly rational, how is

it possible, that our gratitude, in regard to the end of his coming, should not be warm in proportion to the clearness of those convictions, and the boundless mercy of that end? But are we stupidly to sit still under this conviction and gratitude, while eternal goodness comes thus to visit us? Should we not go forth to meet him with a spirit and turn of mind, correspondent to those with which he comes? Yes, as he came to us from the happiness and glory of heaven, so we should go out, from the pleasures and pomps of this world, to him. As he came with great humility into this world to speak and act as a servant, so should we go into his church with not only lowliness of mind, as frail and wretched creatures, but with broken hearts, as abominable sinners. As he was born for us of an heavenly father, and of a pure virgin, so must we be born anew to him of the spirit, and of pure and virgin hearts; we must 'be born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' As he came into the world, not to gratify the desires of his fleshly nature, nor 'to do his own will but that of his Father;' so should we go into his kingdom, not to please ourselves, nor to do our own will, but to please and obey God. As he came to suffer and die for us, so should we go to mortification, 'and a death unto sin.' As he came with no other view, than to save us, we should go to him with no other view, than to be saved by him. By his birth of a woman he came in general to all men, and comes by his spirit, his word, and ordinances, particularly to every man, but each of us in particular must go to him, or we shall never meet him. He came from heaven into this world, that we might go from this world into heaven. He became 'the son of man,' that we might become the 'sons of God. He humbled himself, and took on him the form of a servant,' that we might be exalted 'into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He became flesh,' that we might become spirit. He 'became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.' He took our nature upon him, that we might take his, and become 'one with him, as he is one with the Father.' As he hath 'emptied himself, that all we may receive of his fulness' he should receive of us the pleasing fruits of that which he hath sown in our hearts, glory for mercy, and grace for



grace. Surely it is impossible, he should taste these with an higher relish, than a grateful heart perceives in paying them. But as Christ the treasurer of these fruits, lays them up for those who offer them, 'that the end may be eternal life,' the profit must as far outgo the pleasure, as eternity does time.

With these let us compare those of our own ways. Have we not already tasted how bitter is the forbidden fruit, the fruit of sin? Can we any longer delight in pulling from that tree, and even shaking it to the last apple, which bears nothing else but remorse of conscience, and the wrath of God; but sickness, and misery, and fear, and death? If our souls are as thoroughly surfeited, as they ought to be, with this fruit, so sweet at first, yet so nauseous, so poisonous at the last; it is time we should taste that which grows on the cross of Christ, the true and real tree of life. Behold it is here placed for us on the table of God, who, in the language of a most gracious inviter, saith to us, 'Come, take, eat—Drink ye all of this. O taste and see how gracious the Lord is! O, come hither, and behold the works of the Lord, that he hath done for us, that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth all knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.'

If we come worthily to this repast, we shall renew our spiritual birth-right, whereby we were 'born of the will of God,' and shall renounce our own wills, in order to be governed by his. Here, in the name of reason and faith, let us compare and choose. Our own wills, experience tells us, are blind, and misguide us into every sort of error; but the will of God 'shall guide us into all truth.' Ours are irresolute, his steady. Ours are wicked, and hunt for destruction, both of soul and body, his holy, and always intent on the happiness of his creatures. Ours look downward through sin into a pit without bottom; his, always upward through righteousness into regions of light and endless glory. If we give ourselves up to our own wills, the flesh shall corrupt us, the world deceive us, and our enemy shall finally triumph over us; but if we take the will of God 'for a lamp unto our feet,' we shall never go

astray, for he is wisdom itself; if we take the will of God for our armour, as that is Almighty, so shall we be unconquerable and irresistible.

If you have not hitherto performed, as well as you might have done, the conditions of your new birth-right, whereby alone peace through Christ is promised, let me earnestly press you to a more close consideration of these conditions, as the leading rules of life, whereby you ought to act here, and must be judged hereafter.

Hath the Son of God relinquished the glories of heaven, and descended into a stable and a manger to save you? And will you not go thither in the like spirit of humility to receive him? Is this too low a condescension for you, polluted as you are with worse than beastly filth, which was not too low for God himself. You cannot meet him, but with the same spirit in which he came. He became 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' from that day, when he took on him the burthen of your flesh and sins. And are you, who committed those sins, to be a man of pleasure? He emptied himself of his majesty and glory for you; and are not you to be emptied of that 'pride which goeth before your own destruction,' and those filthy affections, which represent you in the eyes of God as a piteous, if not an odious wretch? Are not you to feel the weight of your own sins, as well as Christ? What stable, what manger, is too vile for you, who have so long lain in filth, and fed with swine, and yet have been foolish enough to take it all for grandeur and pleasure? If you still persist in this mind, you must be told that, though Christ had baptized you with his own hands, yet to you no promise is made, no performance due, no Saviour born.

Unto you only, 'who have put off the old man, and are born again by water and the Spirit;' unto you, who feel in yourself, on the baptismal call of Christ, 'the answer of a good conscience;' unto you, 'who walk not in your own ways, but in newness of life, not after the flesh, but the Spirit;' unto you, 'who stand fast in the faith, confessing that Jesus is the Son of God,' and that through him only you have salvation; unto you, 'who observe all things, whatsoever Christ hath commanded you, who being delivered out of the hands of your enemies, serve God, without

fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of your lives;' unto you only 'is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'

Lay fast hold, therefore, by a lively faith on this Saviour, and by taking good heed to the articles of your peace with God, 'endeavour to make your election and adoption sure,' lest, by departing from them, you be found among those, 'who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they had been sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despight unto the Spirit of grace.'

Here now, my brethren, are light and darkness, glory and infamy, life and death, set before you. God give you understanding in all things, but more especially to make a right choice between these opposites; and grant that your hearts may warmly second your reason, and your works, the warmth of your hearts, through Christ Jesus our Saviour, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LV.

[PREACHED ON GOOD-FRIDAY.]

### THE NECESSITY AND EFFICACY OF THE GREAT SACRIFICE.

ACTS xvii. 3.

*Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.*

THE 'rising again from the dead' shews, that the suffering, here mentioned, was that of death. St. Paul, as we are told in this passage, proved to the Jews, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, that the Messiah, or Christ, 'must of necessity have been put to death, and raised again to life.' That he could not have fulfilled those prophecies, nor proved himself to be the Christ, without thus suffering, may be

clearly seen in the twenty-second Psalm, and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as well as in a great variety of other places, Christ himself, before his crucifixion, assured his disciples, 'that he should suffer many things of the elders, and the chief priests, and scribes, and should be killed.' He foretold the same thing to a mixed multitude, most of them as yet unconverted, in these words, 'Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.' After his resurrection, he reproved his disciples, who had doubted, whether the Messiah should die or not; 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.'

Although there is nothing, at first sight, more mysterious, than that he, who was without sin should, by the express 'appointment' of eternal justice, suffer 'the wages of sin;' that 'the just should be put to death for the unjust;' or that the Son of God himself should die; yet, this most extraordinary, and indeed amazing, piece of history, if duly weighed, and closely considered, will appear to be no less rational, than it is astonishing. But there is no reconciling it to the reason of infidel opposers, without passing through a train of thinking, to the full as surprizing, as either the fact of our Saviour's death, or the end proposed by it.

In pursuit of this, we must take a little compass.

It is evident from the superiority of his nature to that of any other animal, that man was intended by his Maker to be, and still is, the Lord of this world, which he inhabits. By the power derived to him from his reason, he makes the agility and strength of other animals, and the properties of the very elements his own; he sends the dove and the dog on his errands; he subdues the lion; he bestrides the horse; he makes the ocean his highway, and is carried round the world by the winds; the earth and the sun wait on him with his food, and even the thunder is put into his hand. 'He is made only a little lower than the angels.'

Surely then he must be endued with wisdom and good-

ness equal to the high station he is placed in; and the exercise of these two endowments, in so large an empire, must make him happy in proportion to the full extent of his capacity. This is a most natural conclusion from that knowledge which informs us, that man and this world, are the works of infinite wisdom and goodness.

Yet nothing can be more contrary to experience. Instead of governing a world, this lord, so highly stationed, is utterly unable to govern himself. He hath but a small share of that power, his natural abilities entitle him to, and what he hath, he abuses so foolishly, and suffers for it so miserably, that his station and power are become his curse; and yet an unbounded advancement of both is the most violent of all his desires. Nay, instead of a sovereign, he is a slave. His body is enslaved to hunger, thirst, cold, heat, labour, pain, sickness, unhappy accidents; and to death, which he cannot think of without the utmost terror, which he cannot possibly escape. His mind is still worse enslaved. How is he torn with desires, which, if successful, he knows would undo him! How is he blown up with idle hopes! How thrown down by unexpected disappointments! How unmanned by vain fears! How terrified with such as are but too well founded, perhaps foreboding miseries without end! How racked with pride! How distracted with anger! How gnawn with envy! How every thing within him, and about him, tyrannizes over him in its turn, and forces him to betray himself, to abuse his own nature, and to insult his God!

At the same time that he acts so inconsistently with himself and the station he is placed in, and by both is made so very unhappy; all the creatures of lower rank and importance pursue the ends of their being steadily; and those of them that are endued with life, enjoy as much, and suffer as little, as their several natures can admit of.

Whence now this strange conjunction of dominion and slavery, of wisdom and folly, of dignity and meanness? Why are the little things of the world so well fitted to answer the ends of their creation; while the great, for whom all of them are made, betray so much weakness, and suffer so much misery? How does this comport with the infinite

wisdom, goodness, and power of the Creator, who undoubtedly could have made us otherwise, if he had pleased so to do?

And nothing is more certain, than that he did. 'He made us upright, but we sought out many inventions.' We could not possibly have come forth from the hands of an infinitely good and Almighty Maker, such abominable, such wicked, such unhappy creatures as we are. To believe, that we did, is more irrational and impious, than atheism itself.

How we came to fall into this state of corruption and misery by the transgression of a covenant, made between God and our first parent or representative, is plainly set forth in the Mosaic history, where the origin of moral evil or sin, and of the universal disposition in all men to sin, that mystery so unaccountable to unassisted reason, is cleared up, and charged on our freedom, that is, on the highest perfection of our nature. If then we were, and still are, free to do good or evil, though more inclinable to evil, does not sin, if we commit it, 'lie at the door?'

But since it is as plain from the universal prevalence of corruption and sin, that we did originally fall, as it is from daily experience, that we do continually fall; in what light, from the beginning, must we have stood before our Maker? In that, no doubt, of offending children. As offenders, divine justice must have looked on us with an eye of infinite indignation, and resolved to punish us proportionably to our guilt. But on the other hand, as children, the divine goodness must have beheld us with equal tenderness and pity, and resolved to shew us mercy.

How then could God determine. Must his justice, or his mercy, take place? Must he give way to his indignation, and inflict that punishment, which the violated majesty of his being, and his laws demanded? If he does, where is his mercy? Or must he suffer his justice to be swallowed up in his compassion, and give a full and free pardon? If he does, where is his justice? Is there a middle way? Can God set bounds to his attributes, either of justice or pity? Can he be less than infinite in either? Or is there a possibility of infinitely satisfying both? Of exacting the rigour of justice from the whole human race, and yet fully forgiving all men?

Yes, for this difficulty, so infinitely surpassing, in the conception of all created understanding, all possibility of solution, the wisdom and goodness of the holy Trinity have found a perfect reconciliation. A man appears, and voluntarily offers to suffer and answer for all the rest; and such a man he is, that God accepts the sacrifice of his life, for the sins of the world.

As we were led into sin by our first parent, as we became corrupt and guilty in the sight of God, through the disobedience of a representative; it seems reasonable, that a representative, if such there may be, should atone for our guilt, and by suffering, remove, our punishment. Nay, it is as reasonable, that we should become righteous by imputed goodness, as guilty by imputed sin.

And as to our own actual sins, we having been betrayed into them by a corruption of our nature, derived from the original seduction, merely in consequence of God's own appointment, who sent us into being through a natural entail of that corruption; it appears most highly agreeable, not only to the goodness, but the very justice of God, that if a representative may take away the guilt of original, he may remove that of actual sin also, provided it is truly repented of.

But in order, that sin may be truly repented of, and all men become fit objects of the divine mercy, by a thorough reformation, it farther appears to be reasonable, that the new representative should not only suffer the punishment due to our sins, which is death, but should likewise undertake to create us anew, and instead of sinful creatures, as we are by nature, to make us holy and good in the sight of God. If we continue in sin, we cannot be objects of mercy at any rate, nor possibly be forgiven.

Who now is able to do all this for us? Who can offer a sufficient ransom and atonement for the sins of all men? Who is able to create us anew?

No creature, nor number of created beings, though ever so highly dignified, can atone to God for the sins of others. They cannot suffer a punishment proportionable to the majesty of him who hath been offended; nor to the importance of the law that hath been violated; nor to the insolence of those who have repaid infinite goodness with an infinite pro-



vocation; nor to the danger of such, as may make light of sin, in case its atonement or punishment should not appear to be of the greatest weight.

Besides, created beings have nothing of their own. All that they are, and all that they enjoy, is the pure gift of God. Wherewithal then can they make a proper atonement for the smallest of their own faults? How much less can they do it for the most provoking crimes of others, of all mankind?

And, if they can make no atonement, neither can they presume to interpose, in the character of mediators, between God and their fellow creatures. The most exalted creature in heaven would consider, that it must cost more than he could offer, 'to redeem the souls' of his fellow creatures, 'and so would be forced to let that alone for ever.'

Nor can any being less than God, undertake to create mankind over again. He only, 'by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made,' is able to make the 'new creature,' to 'make all things new.' If, therefore, we are to be redeemed from sin, and the punishment of sin, if we are to be made new creatures, it must be by God alone. Our teacher, our representative, our sacrifice, must be truly divine.

But were it possible for a mere creature to redeem us, God would never admit of his interposition, nor suffer him to do it, because by that means our gratitude and love must be carried off from God to the work of his hands, and all men taught to 'worship the creature,' even as, nay more 'than, the Creator.'

To fill up these characters of a Creator and Redeemer, and to effect the high, and otherwise impossible, purposes of both, the son of God, the second person in the blessed Trinity interposes; and, that he may by 'the word of his power,' speak us into a new life, and suffer the punishment due to our sins, 'becomes flesh, makes his tabernacle among men, is delivered up to death for our offences, rises again for our justification,' and, placing himself at the right hand of his father, urges the merits of his all-sufficient sacrifice for every one who believes in him, and effectually hears his call to repentance.

Jesus Christ then, by dying for us hath made peace be-

tween God and us; hath procured us admittance into his family and service; hath, both by precept and example, by his sabbaths, his sacraments, his ministers, taught us how to serve him; hath by his grace enabled us to perform whatsoever in that service is above our natural strength; hath, by an assurance of eternal rewards and punishments, brought over desire and fear, our strongest springs of action, to assist in the struggles of virtue against temptation. In the agony of that death, whereby sin and the old creature are destroyed, he cries out, 'It is finished,' the great work of rooting out evil, and subduing its author, is finished; and, immediately on his rising from the dead, he cries, 'Behold! I make all things new.' No sooner is the moral world made over again, than 'a new heaven and a new earth' are fitted to it. Man is a new creature, and consequently all other things that were made for him, are become new to him. These things that lately tempted him to sin, now no less powerfully prompt him to gratitude, to love, to piety, to goodness, and to a new life.

I hope by this time you are convinced that the mystery of our redemption, when tolerably understood, and fairly considered, not only justifies itself to right reason, as necessary, so that 'Christ the son of God, and sinless, must needs have suffered,' or neither the prophecies could have been fulfilled, nor mankind saved; but claims also the wonder and adoration of all men, who may see in it an abyss of mercy and love, not less profound or extensive than its wisdom. How does the understanding stretch to comprehend this wisdom! How should the heart dilate to make room for a right sense of that love!

Was it thou, the wisdom, the word, the light, the eternal son of God! Who from the beginning lay 'in the bosom of the Father!' Who sat with him on the throne of heaven, in unapproachable light and glory! Who, with him, received the hallelujahs of all the heavenly hosts! Hallelujahs paid for their being, and that of all the worlds, the thrones, the dominions, the principalities, the powers that were created in thee, by thee, and for thee! Was it thou who came to save us from sin, and all the horrors of the pit! to make us partakers of thy holiness, and of thy glory!

And didst thou, from the highest heavens, descend into this nether world, and ‘take on thee the form of a servant’ (a servant, not only to thy Father, but even to us) and ‘wash our feet,’ and our yet more filthy souls! How infinite was thy humility! how tender thy pity for us!

And, who are we Lord! ‘that thou shouldst come under our roof?’ We are not among the great ones of thy creation, not among the principalities and powers; no, but dust and ashes! little! weak! foolish! vain! and O that this were all!

O Lord, we are wicked also! rebels in arms against thy Father and thee! enemies! aliens! ungrateful! contemners of all thy infinite bounty to us! slaves ‘sold under sin,’ who have chosen to serve thy adversary rather than thee! and prisoners for this in chains and darkness, under the just sentence of death, temporal and eternal! And art thou come to save such a race of monsters from ourselves! from that adversary! from that sentence! O mercy infinite! O mystery of mercy inconceivable!

And what hast thou done to save us? What is the price thou hast laid down for our souls? O how can it be told? What were the banishments, the oppression, the poverty, to which thou wast exposed, in comparison to the persecutions and accusations, levelled with infernal bitterness against thy person and character! What were these persecutions and accusations, to thy agony in the garden, when by the extreme torture of thy thoughts the blood was forced through thy pores! Or what again was this to the weight of all our sins, and the wrath of divine justice, poured at once upon thy head! To this, death such as ours, would have been pleasure, and despair, joy. It would have been impossible for thy human nature to have sustained this load, or withstood the violence of such a rack, had not the divine nature upheld the human, and hardened it for the horrible encounter.

And now, blessed Jesus, having accompanied thee, but O at two great a distance, like thy first disciples, we have heard the false accusations laid against thee; we have heard the popular cry set up for thy blood; we have heard thy judge acquit and condemn thee on the same evidence. Now they strip thee! clothe thee again in purple as a mock

king! and bind thy temples with a crown of thorns! Now they buffet that sacred head, where infinite wisdom is seated! Now they load that awful face, adored by angels, with nauseous spittle! Now they tear the flesh from off thy bones with their scourges! All this time we hear no complaints nor answers from thee, thou humble, thou silent Lamb of our salvation! Nay, as often as we can discover thy countenance through the blood, and sweat, and spittle which besmear it, we behold in it a settled composure, mixed with compassion and tenderness. What dignity in thy humility! What heroism in thy patience! what a triumph is mercy making over malice!

But the cross, that altar for the great sacrifice is now prepared; the amazing, the melancholy procession sets out for the place of execution; and lo thou art nailed to the accursed tree, for the greater reproach, between two thieves. Were we as much thy members, blessed Jesus, as we ought to be, we should feel these nails as keenly as thou didst. Behold! thy murderers taunt and deride thy agonies, and endeavour to prove thee not to be the son of God nor the king of Israel, by the reproach of thy cross; and so the noblest instance of goodness that ever was exhibited to mankind, is represented by art and malice, as nothing but impotence and imposture. Let heaven and earth attend to thy return for this, as to a sound more sublime and sweet than that which is sent up to the throne by the whole celestial choir; 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' O surely thou couldst not pray in vain for the pardon of sin, now made thy own, at the instant of atoning for it with thy blood. If this thy prayer was not heard and granted, we all perish for ever, inasmuch as we all have joined in the set of thy murder. Our sins as well as theirs, have spit in thy face, buffeted thee, crowned thee with thorns; we as well as they have nailed thee to the cross, have laboured to dishonour thee in the sight of infidels, have shed thy precious blood.

What other words are those we hear from thee, more expressive of misery than the groans of the damned, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!' Yet in these words, which beyond all others ever uttered, mark the heinousness of sin, what consolation, could he taste it, for him.

who dies in despair! What must sin be which drove thee to this? How shall he be lost who hath thee for a sacrifice, and a fellow-sufferer? How the blood begins to stagnate in thy wounds! What a ghastly paleness overspreads thy countenance! How those eyes that have often swam in tears of tenderness for the miseries of mankind, now roll in the shadows of death, of voluntary death, suffered for our sakes and by our hands!

Hah! What cry is that! What darkness! What shaking of the earth! What yawning of graves! What rending of rocks! The dead, the very rocks, hear thy dying cry, O Saviour of souls! The sun hides his face from thy death, who gave him being. Hell feels the stroke of that death, which destroys him that had the power of death, and rousing her infernal fires, throws the upper earth into convulsions!

What language of angels can do justice to the wonders of this scene? If we have but hearts we want not their tongues. If our infinite benefactor, who searches the heart, reads himself beloved, and sin hated, in that seat of our affections, then it is true that we know Christ, and him crucified.

But if we read or hear of his death, with as little concern as we do that of Cæsar, or with less than we feel for that of a favourite character in a romance, what ought we to think both of our understandings and hearts?

And now, that the extreme heinousness of sin is more fully laid open by the sufferings of Christ, than it can possibly be by any, or all other means; by even the torments of hell; what judgment shall we pass on ourselves, and our condition, if we continue in sin, if we love it, if we even prefer it to Christ himself? Nay, if by our repeated acts of wickedness we ungratefully crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame again? If by ten thousand acts of the kind we repeatedly crucify him, and at the same time mock him by our professions? This is going farther than ever the unbelieving Jews did. They did not pretend to be in earnest, as we do, when they called him their King. They crucified him in the character of declared enemies; we in that of friends and worshippers. They fulfilled the prophecies, and even concurred with Christ's own intention, in the cruelties they exercised on his natural body; we transgress the com-

mandments of God, and disappoint the gracious intention of Christ, by those we inflict on his spiritual body, for which he sacrificed the natural, as less dear to him, and as less sensible of pain.

Is all this now to pass as pure ingratitude? Is there no mixture of folly here? May souls, so extremely vile and unworthy, hug themselves in their baseness, and always take insensibility for safety? No, no, sin must end in misery; and the sin of a Christian, wilfully 'treading under foot the blood' of Christ, in the keenest misery. Ingratitude therefore of this dye is not so much folly, as infatuation, or hell is no longer hell. The sufferings of God incarnate despised, and wickedness continually flung in his face, by men who profess themselves his disciples, his servants, his worshippers, must meet with its full reward, if in that pit of fire and darkness there are torments sufficient to requite such wickedness.

What must sin be, when nothing but the blood of God's only son could wash it away? When God spared not his only-begotten, his well-beloved son, in whom he was well pleased, but poured on him, in the character of our representative, the vengeance due to our offences? If God spared not the imputation of sin in his son, how shall he spare sin itself in us, who cannot sin, without forcing a new nail or spear into the body of Christ? 'If sin could do so much in a green tree, what must it do in a dry.' If by our perseverance in wickedness we turn the sacrifice made for us into our greatest guilt, who shall atone for this guilt? What other sacrifice do we look for? Who will offer higher for our salvation, than Christ? 'Who shall come after God?'

It is impossible to be saved from the punishment of sin, without being first saved from sin itself. As Christ was born for the true Christian, so the true Christian 'is born' a-new to Christ 'by water and the spirit.' But this second birth never takes place, till the old man dies to sin for Christ, as Christ did for him.

'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, let us arm ourselves with the like mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; that he no more should live the rest of his life in the flesh, in the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Our life cannot be hid with

Christ in God,' till we have 'mortified our members which are upon the earth,' till we are dead to this world, and our fleshly nature, till 'our affections' are removed 'from things on earth, and set on things above.' We must 'mortify the deeds of the flesh,' if we would live the life of the righteous. 'They that are Christ's have crucified the affections and lusts.' It is true, that 'by the righteousness of one,' that is Christ, 'the free gift hath come upon all men unto justification of life. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. What shall we say then? Shall we sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know we not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? We are therefore buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life; for if we have been planted together into the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Let us not therefore suffer sin to reign any longer in our mortal body, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof. When we were the servants of sin, we were free from righteousness; but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.'

Instead of encouraging ourselves in wickedness because Christ hath atoned for it by his death; we see here, that the strongest arguments and motives for repentance, for a thorough reformation of manners, for a new and holy life, are taken from that very death, from that very atonement. Baptism is but an empty ceremony, a cheat put on ourselves, and an insult offered to Christ, in his own solemn institution, if it is not considered, as the very death and crucifixion of all that is vile and sinful in us; if there is not truly in it 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.' To what purpose would it be to call men out of this world, to bring them into God's family, to make them his children, and to place them round his table; if no change is to be



made in them, if they are still to 'be conformed to this world,' if they may still be slaves to their fleshly corruptions, if they may continue, as before, the children of God's enemy? the children of God must fear and love, must obey, must resemble their Father, or they can be his only in name and pretence. There is nothing surer than that our baptism is a charter of inestimable privileges; but it is as sure, that those privileges are held only by the suit and service of a truly Christian life, contracted for and vowed at the time when we were washed, and new clothed, for the train of our heavenly King.

This doctrine will startle many; as it will, to assure them, that Christ died not for them, as on this day, unless they will die for him. He kept this solemnity, for the first time, in torture of body, in anguish of soul, in a baptism of blood, in the horrors of death; and can we keep it in lukewarmness, in indifference, in ease and security, in a life like the rest of this world? If we can, we are none of his; we feel not with him, neither the sharpness of his pains, nor the weight of our own sins; we are not, cannot be, members of his body.

No, were we all one body of Christ, as in one body there can be but one mind, we should all be animated, all governed by the mind which is in Christ Jesus, that divine, that holy, that almighty mind, which suggests the thoughts, forms the resolutions, and regulates the actions of every man in whom it presides. There is no wider nor more distinguishable difference, than that between the mind of Christ, and the mind of the unregenerate. The dishonest have not his mind, which is truth and light itself. The incontinent have not his mind, for he is purity in perfection. The proud have not the mind of Christ, who washed the feet of his own disciples. The revengeful have not the mind of Christ, who loved, prayed for, and healed his enemies. The despiser of God's word, the breaker of his sabbath, the neglecter of his table, have not the mind of Christ, are by no means united to his body, inasmuch as it is by these that the mind and spirit of Christ conveys itself through all the true and living members of that body. The idolizer of his own reason hath not the mind of Christ, who had infinite wisdom and humility together; whereas in this man there is nothing but ignorance

and conceit, or he could never have formed an high opinion of his own understanding.

All these are more or less disposed to infidelity, and particularly to take offence at the cross of Christ. The dishonest worldling cannot think of forsaking all, and following Christ with a cross on his shoulders. The incontinent is with difficulty brought to believe, that God requires the denial and mortification of passions, made by himself a part of our nature. The proud, who will not suffer the smallest inconvenience from his inferiors, cannot believe, that God could stoop to such indignities from men. The ill-natured, who will even take pains to hurt and afflict others, cannot conceive, that any being could suffer so much to make others happy. The revengeful, who is so delighted with retorting injuries, hath no notion, that Christ meant to save his murderers. The conceited disputer of this world cannot see the necessity of an atonement for one so righteous, nor of instruction for one so wise, as he is; and what he cannot see, he will not believe.

And are all these to be struck off the list of Christians? Most surely, if they continue the same, or the Holy Spirit knows not what a Christian is. This, you will say, thins the Christian, and crowds the heathen world prodigiously. Do not mistake the matter, as to the addition, you seem to imagine will be hereby made to the number of heathens. If you are one who think to take the benefit of this dismiss, you will be grievously disappointed. You have seen the light, and must account for it. You fly from it, because it makes manifest and reproves your evil deeds; or you brave it with an open perseverance in works of darkness; and do you hope to herd among the heathens, who are to receive the smallest number of stripes?

The wicked heathen shews himself unworthy of the reason bestowed on him, forgetful of the high rank he is placed in by his Maker, and ungrateful for all he enjoys, or rather abuses. In all these respects you are as culpable as he; and besides, 'having been once enlightened, and having tasted the good word of God, you fell away both' in principle and practice, 'crucifying to yourself the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame.' The heathen sinned without the light; you against it. He knew not the truth; you 'held it in unrighteousness.' He abused this

world, and his own nature; you have done the same; and over and above, have 'trodden under foot the Son of God, have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and have done despight unto the Spirit of Grace. Of how much sorer punishment therefore shall you be thought worthy,' against whom both the works and the word of God bear witness, and cry aloud for vengeance? The bountiful intentions of God the Creator only have failed in the heathen; they, together with the infinitely gracious purposes of God the Redeemer, have been disappointed in you; hitherto disappointed, I mean; for if you will even yet open your eyes to the light, and turn your footsteps into the paths of God, you will find that the prayer of Christ for you on the cross was heard, and that 'the mercy of God endureth for ever.'

We are all ready enough to cry out upon the cowardice of all our Saviour's apostles, and the treachery of one; upon the malice of his accusers, the iniquity of his judge, the cruelty of his executioners; but do not consider, that, in all this, we condemn ourselves. What danger dare we face, what man of power, what faction, have we the boldness to oppose, for Christ and his religion? How small must be that sum of money, or that worldly interest, that cannot bribe us to betray the cause of Christ and his church, the cause of truth and virtue, which was dearer to him than his life? And how little of Judas's remorse do we feel for it, when it is done? How artfully is his divinity undermined among us, and all his miracles charged with imposture, by some; while the rest of us stand by as unconcerned, as we could do, had we never called ourselves by his name? How carelessly do we sit in judgment on the merits of his cause; and after a mere cold acquittal, with little or no notice taken of the infinite good he hath done among us, give him up to the outrage of his enemies? How do we mock him with our hypocritical professions? How buffet him with our bitter disputes? How spit in his face, how mangle his flesh, how deluge his blood, how crucify, how murder him, with our crimes! How we act over again the dreadful tragedy of this day! How the light sickens! How darkness spreads itself over the whole earth!

O return, return, thou eternal light, into our understanding. O return, return, thou life, thou warmth of the

soul, into our hearts. Shew us our vileness; revive our piety; with thee let us die to this world, with thee let us arise to a new life; and to thee, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, shall be ascribed all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LVI.

### THE NECESSITY AND EFFICACY OF SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT.

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ST. JOHN, VI. 50.

*This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.*

It is agreed upon by the generality of those who have considered the matter with the greatest attention, that no creature of God can subsist a single moment without the aid of his supporting hand. The sun shines, and the rain descends as he directs. The plants grow, and animals live upon the supply of that nourishment which he affords them. 'The eyes of all, therefore, wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season. He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. He giveth fodder to the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him.' Nothing is independent but himself.

If creatures, void of reason, do in some sense even 'pray for their daily bread,' why shall not we much rather do it, who are, by adoption, the children of the great provider; and who know our absolute dependence on him?

As our nature is made up of a soul and a body, so we stand in daily need of a distinct kind of food for each. Continual supplies of both are necessary to the spiritual and temporal life of every Christian, and their effects and circumstances are alike.

In speaking, therefore, of the spiritual food, which I intend for the subject of this discourse, I shall take frequent

occasion to explain the nature, and press the necessity of it, from the exact resemblance it bears to that of the body, a resemblance authorized by Christ and his holy spirit, and consequently affording, not only the most lively illustrations, but arguments also sufficient for our conviction.

Now we are to observe here at the entrance, that in taking this food of the soul, which we do more especially in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we at once endeavour to nourish in ourselves the principle of eternal life, and to offer up on the altar of our great benefactor, an act or proof of gratitude, required and accepted by him for the highest instance of mercy, which he could give or we receive.

As to the first of these heads, wherein the spiritual interest and life of our souls, rather than our gratitude, is concerned; we are to take notice, that piety and virtue, the health and life of the soul can no more be maintained without the grace of God, which is their proper food, than the health and life of the body, without ordinary meat and drink.

We are farther to take notice, that continual supplies are as necessary in the one case as in the other. God might, it is true, in either case, have made once feeding sufficient for ever; but then we should have forgot our dependence on him. To prevent this, he hath put us on daily supplies, hath so bounded both the heart and stomach of a man, that the hope of supporting the spiritual life within us for ever, by once only receiving the grace of God, would be as vain as the hope of living here for twenty years in health and strength on one meal.

Our outward health and life depend on continual recruits of nourishment, thrown into the stomach, there digested, and thence sent off into the various parts of the body. Not less necessary to our inward health and life are perpetual supplies of pious meditations, devout approaches to God, and vigorous resolutions, duly matured in the heart, and thence dispensed in plenty through all the powers, passions, and affections of the man. The soul lives on thought as the body does on meat and drink; but to live for ever it must be nourished with good thoughts, which nothing but the divine grace can either suggest or bring to perfection. The word of God, and our own experience, leave

us no room to doubt of this truth. We are, therefore, never to forget our feeder, lest we should prove ourselves more brutishly foolish than the dog or ox. It is easy for you to judge what must become of that soul which prefers the body to itself, which, like other animals, is careful to seek for bodily food, but thinks of nothing higher. Can this be the property of him who goes erect, and lifts his face towards the heavens? Of him who is indued with reason, whose soul is intended for immortality?

By the death of Christ we are redeemed, and in his last supper the benefits of that death are conveyed to us under the notion of spiritual food, for he bids us 'eat his body and drink his blood', not corporally, for the food is not intended for our bodies, but spiritually, inasmuch as his flesh 'is meat indeed,' and his blood 'drink indeed,' for the soul.

Our heinous offences, whereby the anger of God is justly kindled against us, have made a propitiation necessary. The dependence and infirmity of our nature have made the aids of God's Holy Spirit as necessary. In the blessed sacrament we plead the great atonement, and at the same time receive continual reinforcements of those aids. Both are admirably represented in this ordinance. The breaking and pouring out of the elements convey to us a lively notion of our Saviour's body mangled, and his blood shed on the cross; nor do they, as common meat and drink, less aptly figure to us that heavenly food of God's grace, whereby our souls are nourished to eternal life.

Nor do they only represent; they also convey the food, and apply the merit of his sacrifice, directly to the soul of every worthy receiver, that is, of every truly penitent and believing receiver. But as a body, whose appetite is palled, and digestion lost, can neither receive pleasure nor nourishment from the best sort of food; so a soul whose faith is dead, and whose religious warmths are extinguished, can receive no satisfaction, no recruit of strength from the sacramental repast. The death of Christ cannot atone for unpented sins, nor can his grace feed a soul that can find no favour in it. On the contrary, as the most wholesome food turns to corruption in a vitiated stomach and a distempered body, so the bread of eternal life becomes poison to a stub-

born and unbroken heart, and is the cause why 'many are weak and sickly, and many sleep.'

Some, therefore, absent themselves from the table of the Lord, as if 'the damnation' threatened by St. Paul to the unworthy receiver, were more to be feared than the sentence of death eternal, pronounced on him who does not receive, by our Lord, in these words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that eateth not the flesh of the Son of Man, and drinketh not his blood, hath no life in him.'

All the ill effects of unworthily receiving this sacrament are suffered, and the sins too committed, by not receiving. He who does not receive, makes himself, for the time, a stranger to all those necessary meditations, self-examinations, devotions, watchings, which call down the grace of God, and give it growth in the heart of a Christian. Besides, not receiving is a more direct transgression of Christ's commandment, than receiving unworthily, and shews, at least, an equal indifference for his body and blood. The neglecter of this most holy ordinance cuts himself off from the catholic church, and all its privileges, particularly from the communion of saints and the means of grace, while he lets himself loose to every temptation, and every criminal liberty, with which the watchful enemy can buffet an unguarded heart. He proclaims peace with his sins, and war with God. This is that death of the soul spoken of by our Saviour, which differs not, but in name, from the damnation, mentioned by the apostle. Why are the words of St. Paul more minded, in this case, than those of Christ? Do they not signify the same thing? Are they not equally terrible? Or is there any other way to avoid the precipice on either hand, but by going constantly to the Lord's table with a truly penitent and believing heart?

No, but then this requires some pains by way of preparation; whereas staying away is only an easy neglect. Going is giving up all our sins, perhaps the greater part of our interests and pleasures; but by absenting ourselves we can wanton in these, pursue those, and avoid the painful mortification of repentance, and of changing both our nature and our habits.

There are many, however, who, though they firmly believe in the absolute necessity of this spiritual food, yet



cannot be persuaded, that frequent feeding on it is as necessary ; and so repair to it but once or twice in the year, and that but coldly, as to a repast, they have no great relish to.

Nevertheless, coldly as they then attend it for want of an habitual spirit of piety, I will go no further, than to their own breasts, for a convincing proof, that frequent receiving is necessary. Tell me, you who make this unhappy plea against the express commandment of your Lord, do you not find yourself a better man, more watchful over your own ways, and more guarded against temptations of all kinds, for some time before and after receiving, than in the other parts of your life. Answer this question honestly to yourself, and then farther say, whether it would not be happy for you, if you were always as good a man, and if, in order to it, you were to receive this blessed sacrament every day of your life. But in case you are not very much a better man for receiving, it is only owing to your receiving so seldom. Try the experiment. Be a constant and careful communicant for one year ; and my soul for yours, you will find your resolutions better supported, your temptations greatly baffled, and your piety more enlivened, invigorated. Pleasure will succeed to dryness in your heart, and ‘ peace in the Holy Ghost ’ will take the place within you of a war with God and goodness.

Pleasure, you know, comes with habit, and habit with repeated acts. We are apt to think often of that which pleases, and not less apt to feel an increase of this pleasure on a long continuance of that thinking, which in proportion as it produces an additional degree of love to the object thought on, produces likewise an equal degree of aversion to its opposite, if such there is.

A mind, so unhappy as to fix its thoughts on an hurtful or seducing object, we see, suffers in point of virtue, just as a body does in point of health, when the depraved appetite is accustomed to, and pleased with, unwholesome food. Such a mind equally hates virtue, and loves vice. The vicious entertainment, wherewith it feeds itself, becomes, at once, its delight and its destruction. It preys on corruption, is satiated with carrion, and bloated with the principles of death.

On the other hand, the mind which hath wisely chosen

to feed itself with virtuous thoughts, enjoys a state of spiritual health and strength, resembling the soundness of that body, whereof the appetite is used to, and pleased with wholesome food. This mind equally hates vice, and loves virtue. In this mind, good thoughts are perpetually producing good resolutions, and those again, good actions. Unfading pleasures attend each step of this happy progress; pleasures, that not only comfort the heart, but take in the whole man, carry the understanding with them, and ravish the very conscience. This is breathing the air, as well as eating the food of heaven.

However in those minds, who are habituated to the most refined and religious way of thinking, so many evil thoughts, and sometimes even sinful habits of thinking have crept in during their unguarded hours; and the enemy hath sown so much tares among their wheat, while they slept, that great watchfulness and care to weed out these, and encourage the good seed, are become necessary, lest when the harvest arrives, the heavenly reapers should find a crop more fit for the fire, than for the garner of God.

And that the bread of life may not be wanting to minds thus prepared for it, we must, at every opportunity, repair to the Lord's table, 'Who satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.' It is impossible, he should live for ever, who goes not thither; and most highly improbable, that he who goes but seldom should feed the principle of eternal life in himself during a long famine, and that often recurring, of its necessary nourishment. As the stomach, so the soul, by too long a fast loses its appetite and power of digestion. In long interruptions of self-examination, of serious reflection, and of close communication with the fountain of strength, evil habits gain, and good ones lose ground; conscience is laid asleep, and the soul starved out of all its vigour.

He who makes a long journey, especially if his road lies upward, ought to be strong and active; and, in order to sufficient strength, should have frequent and plentiful refreshments on the way. The traveller to heaven particularly ought to consider how far that place is from him, how high it is above him, and what necessity there is, that he should, as often as possible, have recourse to that gracious

provider, who saith, 'Come unto me all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' Without this refreshment, the soul will soon faint and give up: and as there is no standing still, will be tempted by the smoothness and down-hill tendency of the contrary road, into that common jaunt of pleasure which ends in hell.

A real Christian cannot be long absent from the sacrament, because he knows, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that holiness without grace is impossible, and that grace is not to be expected from God, its only dispenser, but in the way of his own appointment. He is perfectly sensible of all this, and therefore never absents himself from the table of God.

But there are other Christians who believe it as well as he, who yet, by one temptation or another, are often, nay, for the greater part of their lives, hindered to receive; that is, there are a sort of Christians, who have good principles only to condemn their bad practices. That Christ will not acknowledge such as his, we have his own word for it, for of all those who constantly, or generally absent themselves from his table, there is not a single one, who in other respects leads the life of a Christian. Though therefore they may say to him at the last day, 'Lord, have we not believed in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils,' he will answer, 'I know ye not; depart from me, ye that work iniquity,' ye that have broken my commandment, and cut yourselves off from my body.

Dreadful words from our redeemer and judge! from him who is our shepherd, our sponsor, our physician, our spiritual commander, our Lord and master! from him who hath purchased us with his precious blood! Where can the Christian sheep hope for pasture and protection from the wolf, but in the enclosures of Christ? Where should the children of God look for their daily bread, but at his table, through whom they are adopted, who is their security with the Father, and who must either feed them, or give them up? Where should the sickly soul apply for medicine, but at his hands, who alone can heal it? To what magazine, but that stored up for him by the captain of his salvation, should the spiritual soldier have recourse for military provisions? Whose invitations should he attend, or whose

commands obey, who hath been bought off from the slavery of sin, and brought into the free, the honourable, and happy service of God, but those of his gracious purchaser? And as this purchase is made by the blood of his Redeemer, where, but in the cup of blessing, can he find the price, which he is to pay and plead for his soul.

There is not, that I know of, any one relation we stand in to God, as Christians, that does not make a constant and careful attendance on the Lord's supper, a necessary and indispensable duty, for he hath commanded it, as the chief means to make us 'strong in the Lord,' for it is the food of the soul; and as a testimony of gratitude, for this is the grand commemoration of that death, which alone can give us life.

If, particularly, we consider ourselves as by nature slaves to sin, and doomed to eternal misery, but redeemed and set at liberty by the blood of Christ, we must be utterly incapable of gratitude, if we do not, on all occasions, call to mind this instance of infinite goodness with all possible love and thankfulness. And as our great benefactor hath himself appointed an holy institution, by our attendance whereon he expressly and peculiarly requires our acknowledgments for this astonishing act of compassion towards us, we cannot refuse that attendance, without, in effect, either denying the favour, or refusing our thanks; nay, without returning again into that state of slavery to sin, and that just dread of infamy and misery, from which he died to deliver us. All the benefits of his death, forgiveness of sins, grace, mercy, and peace with offended omnipotence, are conveyed to us in this holy ordinance. To decline it therefore is in form to disclaim those benefits, in as much as it is presumption in the ungrateful to hope for them, especially through any channel, but that of Christ's own appointment.

Besides, as this blessed sacrament is not only the formal act and seal, whereby Christ, in his last will and testament, bequeaths to us all our title to an inheritance in heaven, but also the chief means of imparting to us those aids of his Holy Spirit, without which it will be impossible to make good that title, he who stays away from this sacrament, puts himself again, as I just now observed, where his old sinful nature left him, and renounces at once, all the assistance,

titles, and benefits of that religion, on which alone he professes his entire dependence for eternal salvation: What name shall we give to such a professor? Will foolish, or mad, or wicked, give him a just character? No, all together they are too feeble to exhibit the picture of such a monster, in whom there is so great a mixture of folly promoting vice, and vice maturing folly, such a professing and denying of the same religion! such an acknowledgment of his own weakness, and presumption in his own strength! Such a contempt for his own reason, and yet such a preference of it to the wisdom of Christ! Such an attempt, not only to look two ways at once, but to go two contrary ways at once! in short, such an amazing jumble of all falsehoods, all inconsistencies, all sins, as never did meet, never possibly can meet, this single case only excepted, in any one mind.

Are we the servants of God? And do we, in good earnest, mean to do his work? What! work without strength! Or hope for strength without meat and drink! 'He,' saith the apostle, 'who will not work, let him not eat.' Though this is spoken of meat for the body, it is as justly applicable to food for the soul. He that will not do the work of God, how dare he presume to sponge on the spiritual food at his table? But on the other hand, he that does not eat, cannot work, for want of strength. 'What shall we do,' say the Jews to Christ, 'that we may work the works of God?' In answer to this question, he first tells them, what is the work of God, namely, 'to believe on him whom God had sent;' and then proceeds to describe and recommend to them the bread of God, which alone could enable them to believe in him, or to lead a life conformable to that belief. And so strongly does he insist on the resemblance of this spiritual, to bodily food, calling it twenty times in the same passage by the same name, that we cannot help thinking the frequent use of it as necessary to the eternal, as that of outward food is to the temporal life, especially as he there, in the strongest terms assures us, we 'have no life in us, if we do not eat and drink it.'

If we call ourselves the servants and dependants of Christ, and if he vouchsafes, as indeed he does, to call us his friends, how can we possibly turn a deaf ear to those

gracious invitations he perpetually gives us to his house and table? He will neither know nor own those for his, who will not come in even on an affectionate compulsion. Were our love in any proportion to the goodness, or our reverence to the greatness of our divine inviter, not death itself would be able to frighten us from his table. Since he is pleased to accept of our eating and drinking there, as a mark of our reverence and affection for him, and since there is no difficulty in doing this, but such as we are infinitely concerned to overcome for the eternal safety and welfare of our own souls, if we absent ourselves, we are neither his friends, nor our own.

Did some rich and powerful prince make frequent feasts for his neighbours of lower rank and condition; did he in repeated and pressing invitations assure them, that he would consider all who came as his friends, and all who did not as his enemies; we may be sure not one would stay away, who either feared his power or wanted his favour. They would, all of them, constantly attend his table, dressed out in their best apparel, and eager to pay the expected compliment. Garments fit for such company, must be had for love, money, or credit, cost what they will. The new-bought ground must be left unviewed, the oxen, just purchased, must remain unproved in the field, and even the bride, on the day of her marriage, must wait, till his highness is attended.

But in case some of the princes dependents should absent themselves from three or four of his entertainments, for one they appeared at, and he should see them from his windows visiting his enemy at next door, I leave you, who so often stay away from the Lord's table, only that you may confederate with his enemy, to judge in what light these trimmers, these time-servers, must stand before their great patron and benefactor.

Shall we not be as ready to answer the invitation of Christ, that patron, to whom 'all power in heaven and earth is given,' that benefactor, who hath laid down his life to deliver us from the most wretched kind of slavery, and to exalt us into 'the glorious liberty,' the happy inheritance, 'of the son's of God?' Is 'the mighty God, the Prince of peace,' less powerful to befriend or hurt us than an earthly patron? Is his person less respectable, or his presence less



desirable? Is his food less delicious, or his guests less entitled to our love? Is the protection of a man worth so much courting, and that of God fit only to be slighted? Is bodily meat and drink, which cannot long please, cannot long preserve life, and may destroy it, worth so much bustle and attendance, and those of the soul, which if a man partake of, 'he shall live for ever,' worth nothing? Though these are questions fitter to be asked in a mad-house, than in this, yet nothing but stupidity here, equal to distraction there, can blunt the sting, or deaden the sense, of the reproach they carry with them to the general practice of those who hear me. Is it possible that any one of you, who here at least in this house, if not at your own, hath asked his 'daily bread' from our common 'father which is in heaven,' from the great dispenser of spiritual sustenance, should absolutely refuse it, when offered, immediately after praying and entreating God to give it, as you have all done more than once this day, since you entered the house of God, and came in sight of his table, should not accept it, though he sees it is there ready to be delivered to him! You have asked, why will you not receive? You seek, and here may find, why draw you back your hand, and go away empty? You have knocked, and behold 'God hath opened to you,' why turn you about, and suffer his door to be shut at your heels? 'Give us this day or daily bread,' say you, 'Take, eat,' saith Christ. We will neither take nor eat, you reply. What earthly father would bear so perverse a child? What entertainer in this world endure such insolent mockery in his guests? How, then, think you, shall the majesty of heaven digest this worse than blasphemous trifling? You did not know, it may be, what you was saying when you was repeating the Lord's prayer. What! not attend to your own words, when you was speaking to God! Or, perhaps, you changed your mind. Did you so? And what if God should change his too, and resolve never to make you the same offer again, nor afford you another opportunity?

A certain wealthy clergyman, deeply affected with this observation, that the tables of great men are much better attended than that of God, fell into a method of asking his parishioners, great and small, by ten at a time, to dine with him on Sundays. They all came in their turns, neatly



dressed, and with good appetites and cheerful countenances sat out his entertainments. Some, on a general invitation, gave him their company at every dinner.

As soon as all had done him that favour, he then invited them to the sacrament on the Sunday following, at which time, observing almost the whole congregation, as usual, quitting the church immediately after sermon, he called them back, and said ;

I am heartily concerned to find you prefer my company, who am but a vile mortal, like yourselves, to the company and communion of Christ ; and my meat, which is only dust and ashes, to the bread of eternal life. After this, can you call yourselves Christians, candidates for heaven, ‘ and lovers of God more than of earthly things ?’ There is the table of God ; and there Christ is going in a few moments, to feed those who will come to him with his own precious flesh and blood. You, in the mean time, are turning your backs on him, facing about to the world, which you renounced by a solemn vow, when you were baptized, and going home to feed on the flesh of beasts. Go, then, as you have no appetite for this kind of food ; go, and mess with the swine on dung, and with the serpent on dust. Go, earth to earth, and ashes to ashes, for this is your own chosen portion, and this the lot you like best ; while Christ and the true Christian unite, and spirit feeds on spirit.

How severe ! but how just ! Do you feel it ? Oh, how then would you feel, if Christ himself were to take the pulpit, and to speak to you, as, surely well he might, in words to this effect ?

“ I often laid before you the necessity of grace in order to a good life, and of that, in order to your everlasting happiness. I provided for you the means of grace at my table, and by my ministers continually and importunately invited you to come and receive those means, prepared for you at the expense of my life. But you shut your ears to their voice ; you despised my entertainments ; you turned your backs on me ; you counted my blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and did despite unto the spirit of grace. Wedded to your own ways, and fond of a wicked life, you shunned the means of reformation. Presume not therefore to call yourselves by my name. ‘ I know you not.’ Had

you loved me, no worldly considerations, no amusements, no pleasures, could have prevented your paying your acknowledgments for my death, in the way appointed and expected by me. Had you meant to honour me, you could not have so closely adhered to your sins, and kept at so great a distance from the opportunity of uniting with me. You give the reproachful name of infidels to the Jews who bought, and of traitor, to Judas, who sold me, without considering the shameful traffic you drive on in my name in the midst of your pretended faith and professions. Pilate the pagan, having found no fault in me, gave me over to a cross on mount Calvary. You, a Christian, daily crucify me afresh before the world by an obstinate perseverance in those sins, which I died to atone, and which nevertheless you love so much better than me, that, rather than forsake them, you forsake me, and basely refuse to commemorate that atonement. How I bore to be buffeted, spit on, and crucified by my enemies, you know; but how I shall bear to be buffeted, spit on, and crucified a-new by you, my professed friends and disciples, after all I have suffered for you, ought indeed to be a little better considered by you, than it is. The miserable and total destruction of the Jews, so soon after my crucifixion, shews, I can, not only 'walk humbly, and love mercy,' but 'do justly too,' and 'execute vengeance on sins like yours. For other men, who every where, particularly at my table, discover a due sense of my love, I gave my life; for you I lost it. You may go on to hug yourself in a notion, that you are only ungrateful; but the time approaches a-pace, when you shall feel, you have been equally stupid; and miserably lament your having sinned as grievously against your own soul by neglecting the food of eternal life, and the necessary means of your salvation, as against my honour, in suffering my table to be spread in vain. Where is your faith, that it does not set the horrors of hell before you, from which I died to deliver you? Where is your faith, that it does not set the joys of heaven before you, to which I died to entitle you? 'Ye dead, hear the voice of the son of God, and ye shall live.' Oh unhappy people, lost to me, and to all goodness! 'Hearing ye hear, and will not understand; seeing ye see, and will not perceive; your

hearts are waxed gross, your ears are dull of hearing, your eyes are closed; lest at any time ye should see with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and understand with your heart, and should be converted, and I should heal you.'"

Dreadful expostulation! how does it thunder on the dulness of our ears! how does it pierce and appal our hardened hearts!

Ere you, the contemner of God's table, turn your back again on him, give me, his unworthy minister, leave to ask you; did the son of God submit to be persecuted, spit on, buffeted, scourged, crucified, and, in all, derided, to save you, a poor despicable offender from eternal flames, and lead you to everlasting glory? Did he command you, his servant, thus purchased with his blood, to cast away your sins, no less destructive to you than reproachful to him, and to honour the remembrance of his death with a grateful attendance on his table? Did he appoint this as the grand testimony of your love and thankfulness for an act of mercy, amazing even to the host of heaven, who knew him to be the infinitely compassionate God? And will you (I speak to your heart and conscience, 'if they have ears to hear, let them now hear;' if they have sense to feel, let them now or never feel) will you basely turn your back on his feast of love? Will you not rather fly to 'kiss the son, lest he be angry?' Will you cling to your sins, those only causes of all your fears and miseries, and cut yourself off from Christ, your tender friend, your compassionate redeemer, your only, your all powerful intercessor? Can you repay such unexampled goodness with so infamous coldness? What a soul have you, if you can but so much as think of rewarding all his sufferings, and your great deliverance, with ingratitude, in this instance, above all others, 'exceeding the sin of witchcraft?' Do you not love that father, who, when you could not help yourself, provided for you the necessities and comforts of life? Do you not love that mother, who washed you, when an infant, from the foulness incident to that age, often bathing you in her tears, laying you in her bosom, and feeding you with nourishment from her own breast? If you do, why infinitely rather love you not that Saviour, who, finding you drenched in a sink of pollution, washed you in his own blood? Who, finding you destitute

of the most necessary sort of sustenance, and starving to death, to eternal death, for want of that sustenance, took you in his arms, embraced you till he pulled you into his own body, and there suckled you at his veins and arteries with the life-blood issuing from his heart? If, while you are thus addressed, you are preparing to quit the house, and forsake the table, of your Redeemer, go, since you are able; go, return to those sinful pursuits, whatsoever they are, which are dearer to you, it seems, than the son of God, after all you have suffered by them, and he hath suffered for you. But know this, that you leave the love of Almighty God, ungrateful as you are, and the necessary means of your own salvation, foolish as you are, behind you. Go, and leave us, who, I trust in God, are not cursed with hearts so very stony, to meet the lamb of our salvation with love resembling his own; to feast on the miracles of his mercy, and to put forth all the ardour of our hearts in a grateful act of devotion, inspired by our comforter, recommended by our Redeemer, and returned into our souls by our heavenly Father in grace, mercy, and peace, without end.

And now, O Lord, the gracious feeder of souls, tear from us, we beseech thee, the foul rags of our sins, clothe us in the white garments of a new life, cause us to hunger and thirst for the food of that life, and therewith satiate the souls of us thy children and servants at thy blessed table.

The grace of, &c.

## DISCOURSE LVII.

NONE BUT THE CHILD OF GOD HEARS GOD.

JOHN VIII. 47.

*He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not,  
because ye are not of God.*

CLEARLY to conceive, and thoroughly to understand, what it is, 'to be of God,' and what, 'to hear his words,' in the sense of our blessed Saviour, who said this to a crowd of

hardened unbelievers, must be a matter of the highest consequence to every man who reads the holy Scriptures, or hears the gospel preached by God's ministers. The important truth thus surprisingly expressed, is not less a truth, nor of less concernment, to mankind now, than it was, when uttered by the mouth of Christ. Men are still divided into those 'who are,' and those 'who are not, of God;' and consequently, into such as 'hear,' and such as 'do not hear,' God's words, although spoken with equal plainness to both.

That the truth contained in these words, is, as I have intimated, surprisingly expressed, will appear to any one who considers the words themselves, for therein we are given to understand, that while some men are endued with a spirit of grace and piety at, or previous to, their hearing the gospel, there are others, who being destitute of this spirit, do not hear it, although it is sounded in their ears. And that this truth is of the last consequence to all men will quickly appear, if we reflect but for a moment on the faith and salvation which follow on hearing the words of God in our Saviour's sense, or on the infidelity and reprobation, that not hearing in this instance, is attended with.

Our Saviour spoke on this occasion to men who did actually hear every word he uttered, nay, and well enough understood his meaning, or it had been wholly impertinent in him to speak to them, at least in such a manner. His meaning therefore is, that although with their outward ears they heard distinctly the sound of his words, and with their mere apprehensions took the import of what he said, yet something lay between this superficial apprehension and their understandings, which prevented his words from striking on their internal sense of hearing, and raising that conviction in their minds, and that conversion of their wills and affections, which it was the end of his discourses to produce. That which hinders the gospel from penetrating the ears of the soul, and accomplishing this happy end, is, no doubt, a stupidity of mind, as to spiritual things, brought on by a sensual or worldly attachment of the affections, and what St Paul calls, 'an evil heart of unbelief.' Our Saviour finding this attachment and this evil heart in the generality of his hearers, observes of them, 'that seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.' It is

for this reason, that he so often cries out, to men who were, we may be sure, by no means naturally deaf, 'he that hath ears to hear, let him hear,' and in my text so plainly distinguishes between a carnal and a spiritual sense of hearing in persons who sufficiently felt the keenness of his reflection, as appears by their resentments.

Whether the distinction between those who do, and those who do not, hear the words of God, although preached equally to both, arises from mere natural disposition, or from supernatural grace, by the former cherished, and by the latter stifled, in themselves, which appears to be the case, it is however a notorious and incontestable fact, that such a distinction there really is, for,

There is no one congregation, to which the same minister hath for a course of years, read the Scriptures, and preached according to his ability (no matter in this case whether greater or less) whereof, while one part hath convinced, converted, and in various respects edified, the other, hath not remained all the time as unaffected and uninstructed, as they could have been, had he never once opened his mouth. Let any one take them, just as they sit, and examine them, and he shall find what I have said to be as glaringly evident as the light that shines in at the windows of the church.

And that this remarkable difference proceeds not materially from any difference in their natural capacities, will be every whit as evident, first, because the one sort shall know, and the other shall not know, the simplest and easiest articles of religion, which are equally level and intelligible to all capacities; and secondly, because they who are found on trial, to be the most shamefully ignorant of Christianity, shall in all other branches of knowledge discover a much greater quickness of apprehension, a much stronger memory, and clearer judgment, than many among the best answerers; and why then are they so ignorant? But because, although they had ears to hear, and understandings to learn, other things, they had none for God and religion.

But to be more particular as to these two classes of men, observe those who can give a competent account of the Christian faith, and you shall perceive them exceedingly attentive, while in church, to the lessons and the sermon, and equally earnest in the time of prayer. According to the na-

ture of what they hear, you shall see them sometimes roused and alarmed, sometimes softened and melted, sometimes transported with joy, at other times dejected, frightened, afflicted, but at all time considerably affected, provided that which is delivered, is in itself affecting. It will, in short, be sufficiently manifest, that these men have a quick sense of hearing, that lies nearer to the soul, than their outward ears. And you shall still be more clearly convinced of it, if you follow them home to their houses, for there you shall find them either on their knees at their devotions, or intent on careful recollections of what they had heard, or closely studying the Scriptures, or engaged with other Christians of the like spirit in religious conversations, or training their families to the knowledge of God and his will, during the remainder of the sabbath. These are the men who are of God, and therefore hear his words, not barely with their outward ears, but with every nerve of their hearts, and every faculty of their souls.

On the other hand, observe those in whose mouths no answers were to be found, but such as betrayed the most stupid ignorance, and you shall see them behave themselves in the house of God either as if they had absolutely nothing to do there, or as if what they were about were the most trifling, impertinent, and disagreeable employment of their whole lives. They whom you might have observed remarkably skilful and active in their worldly affairs, or eager in the pursuit of their sensual pleasures, here, while the one thing necessary is transacting, are transformed into ideots who know not what to do, or into unfeeling blocks and stones, on which no impressions can be made. One yawns at the mention of God's most tender mercies, while another is lulled to sleep by the sound of his most alarming judgments. Here you see an empty head bowing to some insignificant acquaintance, that ought to roll in the dust before the majesty of Heaven for unnumbered offences besides this. And there you see an impertinent mouth, with a silly whisper, unseasonably interrupting the slight attention of some neighbour, whose rambling thoughts had by chance been fixed for a moment on the business of the place. Few of them kneel, raise their eyes or hands to heaven, or utter one syllable of the prayers! Here and there one, moved as it



were mechanically, may be heard muttering a response, who, at the same instant that he says, Lord have mercy upon us, is settling something in his dress that did not need it, or reaching at a distance for a little snuff. His lips indeed are seemingly addressed to God; but all his little paltry soul is with infinite insolence given to some whiffling thought, or some despicable affection. Whether God is awfully adored, or the most interesting points of religion enforced, if the door is opened to let in the most unstriking person in the parish, the eyes of the whole tribe are instantly turned on him with as much seeming curiosity, as if he had two heads upon his shoulders. Are not these people now in an excellent disposition to edification? Their behaviour at home, during the remainder of God's day, is perfectly of a piece with that which they display in his house. One half of them pass it, just as their cattle do, in a stupid indulgence to the same appetites, to the same fondness for indolence and sleep. The other, not knowing what to do with a portion of time, wherein a religious custom not yet sufficiently conquered, forbids attention to worldly affairs, give themselves up to such amusements, as would not be wholly innocent on any other day. To think of God, his word, or his works; to give themselves up to meditation or prayer; to take that opportunity of examining their own consciences, or of instructing their children and servants; are things they have no more notion of, no more know how to do them, or once conceive they ought to do them, than they would, if the fourth commandment, or all the commandments, were repealed, or even both testaments destroyed, over the face of the whole earth. If from a charitable presumption, that there is no mortal of common sense, who may not be roused by the animating or alarming motives of religion, urged home on his understanding in all the beauties and terrors of the gospel, you play the celestial music of God's promises, or the dreadful thunder of his threatnings, at their ears, they hear you just as they do the whistling of the wind, and feel you, just as a mountain of marble does the beating of the waves. See how untouched they sit at the mention of heaven, and the recital of all its boundless joys, and all its endless glories! See with what a slight indifference, with what a perfect composure, they hear you, in the stongest terms

you can choose, or even in God's own awful words, representing the horrors of that eternal damnation, of 'that worm which dieth not,' of those 'fires that are not quenched,' of that 'blackness of darkness,' which are reserved for all the lovers of religious darkness!

Whence now proceeds this impenetrable deafness, this unfeeling, this immoveable stupidity? Our Saviour answers the question in my text. 'They therefore hear not God's words, because they are not of God.' The passage between their ears and their hearts, and between those again and their understandings, are so totally filled up with the pleasures, the profits, and the cares of this world, that there is no room for the word of God to enter. 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias' the prophet, quoted by our Saviour, by St. John, and by St. Paul, and applied to the very same kind of men; 'Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.'

Hence it is, that among the lower kind of people such numbers are found, who in the midst of all that unclouded light which shines about them, still 'sit in darkness,' in an almost total ignorance of Christ and his holy religion. And hence also, among the higher ranks of men, the generality have given only their ears, and many of them not even those to Christianity; have given little or no attention to the proofs of its divinity; and yet with a freedom, equally stupid and impudent, commence infidels, disbelieving through mere distaste or contempt, and ridiculing what they will not be at the trouble to understand. It is as much in vain to hope for the warmth of religion in the one sort of people, as it is to expect the knowledge of it in the other. Christianity, nevertheless, is neither above the capacity of the labouring man, nor below that of the witling. Such is its simplicity, that it may be easily understood by the former; and such its beauty and dignity, that the latter, if he does not highly taste and ardently love it, can by no other instance of insensibility so clearly prove himself a brute or a blockhead. 'It

is wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets. She crieth in the chief place of concourse, how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" But they answer, 'depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' and she gives them over with this prophetic dismiss, 'therefore shall ye eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices?'

Having thus opened the doctrine of my text, and proved its truth by two known experiments, one wrought on the ear of him who is of God, and therefore does hear the words of God; and the other, on that of him who is not of God, and therefore does not hear his words; it may now be of some use briefly to examine, and as it were dissect, that internal sense of hearing, wherewith only the words of God can be heard; and then more at large to shew, what those obstructions are that clog this sense in some men, and make them deaf to the voice of God.

The outward ear, we know, is but an organ or instrument, whereby sounds are rendered perceptible to the mind, which, not being seated in the ear itself, but communicating with it by another organ, through that ordinarily perceives all the sounds that strike with considerable force on the ear; but nevertheless, on some occasions, although all the organs of hearing are in perfect good order, and the sounds are strongly impressed, is as insensible of that impression, as if it had never been made. This, which daily experience makes known to every man, never happens, but when the attention of the mind is closely and earnestly pre-engaged to some other object, or in some other very interesting chain of thoughts, or is asleep.

It is farther to be observed, that even when the words of those who speak to us are distinctly heard, and are in themselves most intelligible to us, we however only so far perceive their meaning, as other objects, or other tracks of thinking, leave us at leisure to attend. Hence it is, that we often but half conceive what we hear perfectly well, and might as perfectly understand, did we give our minds wholly to what is heard.

The passage to the mind is often shut against the word of God, outwardly, as in the first instance, so as that the

very sound of it is not heard ; and more inwardly, as in the second, so as to be but half perceived and understood.

But more inward still, and nearer to the soul, it meets with another and greater obstruction in those that are not of God ; for even, after the meaning of it hath been so far attended to as to be sufficiently understood, the farther attention requisite to its being believed and cordially embraced, is instantly carried off to other things, more pleasing to their corrupt affections ; or, what is worse, their inveterate prejudices, or beloved vices, so harden the heart, and arm the will against it, that the understanding, which in such men is always enslaved to the heart and will, is not only not at liberty to examine the force of what it proposes, but is compelled to look out immediately for pretences to evade it, and arguments to refute it. The alarm given by the word of God to a corrupt nature, is intolerable. ‘ He that believeth not, shall be damned. Repent, or ye shall all perish.’ Against a declaration of war in terms so terrible, every vice, every corruption, every habit, every affection and passion, of a dissolute heart, rise at once in arms. As such an heart hath no refuge, but either in insensibility, or opposite opinion, it first tries whether absence of mind may not render it sufficiently insensible, and in order to this, calls in all its wonted pleasures, amusements, schemes, to carry off its attention from so dreadful an invader. But if this expedient proves unsuccessful, and the alarm hath already seized the spirits, then the understanding, blinded and chained, like Samson, is called in to drudge or make sport for its tyrants, whom, together with itself, it overwhelms at last in one common ruin. But in the mean time all goes smoothly : reason, ever infallible, when she seconds our wishes, soon finds out, that faith is not in our power, that the want of it therefore cannot be punishable ; that God hath given us our passions and desires, and will not destroy us, at least, will not make us miserable to all eternity, for gratifying those desires with the objects he himself hath provided for them in the works of creation ; and that therefore that religion cannot be founded on truth and the nature of things, which bids us abstain, when nature prompts us to enjoy.

These are the reasonings, spun out of appetite and pas-

sion, which shut the internal ear against the words of God in all those men who are not of God. And in such men these reasonings will hold good and sound, till poverty, infamy, sickness, pain, death, or damnation, the natural or vindictive consequences of their vices, teach them to feel conviction, who would not hear it.

But till then, say the parson what he will, reason, that is, their own reason, will always be on the side of the libertines, and teach them this comfortable opinion, that if there is a God, it is his will they should be wicked.

Now, it is not only the thorough-paced infidel that is furnished with this armour of proof against religion. No, that whole tribe of men, who dodge between faith and infidelity, between virtue and vice, and hope to compound, under the sanctified name of Christians, with Almighty God, for a decent life of sin; though they are not so completely accoutered, have however as much of this armour as is necessary to their plan of living. If they want the head-piece, they have the breast-plate, and that suffices, for their heads are naturally not very penetrable.

In this they transact all their business, pursue all their pleasures, and go to church on Sundays; and here they most want it, for who knows what may be heard from the lessons or the sermon, that might otherwise carry compunction or terror to their hearts? But they are safe. The lessons are old, trite, and often heard before. And as to the sermon, every thing alarming or damnatory in that, is either overstrained by the too much heated imagination of the preacher, or, at least, it is not in all points applicable to them, and therefore in no point or measure to be regarded. If the sermon is short, what signifies it, say they; the advocate is retained, and must harangue a little for his fee. If it is long, why then it is tedious and impertinent, and may be parried by a nap, or a little chat to him who sits next. If it consists of human reasonings and moral sentences, it is pretty enough, but they could have said as much themselves. If it is much larded with Scripture, especially if it any where attempts 'persuasion by the terrors of the Lord,' these hearers contemn it for the antiquity both of its matter and dress, and take it extremely ill that

the preacher should endeavour to frighten people who know better things, than to stand in awe, at this time of day, of hell and damnation. In short, the preacher, manage as he will, is but a weak creature at the best, and therefore what he says ought to pass for little.

Pride is the greatest infidel of all our passions. 'What! to pin one's faith on authorities! To be guided by the reports of others, rather than one's own judgment! To submit to mortifications! To deny one's self! To renounce the pomps of the world! To be humble, meek, and patient! To follow a crucified master! But, above all, to be tutored, and even, in some measure, governed, by a despicable parson, our inferior in birth, breeding, and fortune, whom we must not only maintain, but reverence, truly! and (mortifying thought) to the miserable produce of whose wrong head and barren understanding we must gravely listen at least for half an hour every week! This is not to be endured. Yet were the detested usurpation on our liberty to stop here, we might perhaps compound. But all these encroachments are no sooner submitted to, and we begin to hope for those comfortable indulgences to our schemes and pleasures, which are wisely granted by some undertakers of the conscience, than behold! our mistresses are to be banished, our gaming tables overturned, the very glasses struck out of our hands, as we were raising them to our mouths, and almost all our schemes of profit, pleasure, or ambition, forbidden, under pain of damnation! Our whole nature gives the lie to a religion that teaches this; and therefore it is, must be, and shall be, a false religion. The gownmen may propose to reason with us on the evidences of their religion, on their records, their prophecies, their miracles, too extraordinary to be believed, even though they were seen; but is there not somewhat within us, sufficient to baffle all this cant? Can that be wisdom which would persuade us to act against our own nature? Or can that be truth which tells us, we are blind, and want a guide? which bids us think meanly of ourselves?'

The infidels, I know, avow other principles more specious, and would be thought to proceed on reasonings, not so immediately drawn from their own depraved hearts; but

those they set outward only to save appearances. I have here laid open the true springs of infidelity, uninfluenced by which, no man ever turned apostate to Christianity.

This religion, and this alone, approves itself to right reason, by the purity of its morals, the simplicity and depth of its instructions, and the power of its institutions and sanctions, as the most excellent rule of life. It approves itself also as the work of God, and as a true history of facts, by such evidence as was never given, never possibly could have been given, to any other account of past transactions. That it does both, appears incontestably from the trials it hath undergone and surmounted. All that artifice, persecution, sophistry, and ridicule could do, to expose or suppress it, hath been done, and it hath triumphed over all. No other religion was so maliciously or critically examined, so artfully undermined, or so bitterly attacked, either in its principles or professors! and, behold! it not only stands its ground, but shines out, as it were, with an additional lustre. Had its opposers proceeded on reason only, or could reason have been at all employed against it, there had been no need of artifice or cruelty to help out the opposition.

What then hath given rise to this opposition, and so long kept it up? It was, no doubt, 'an evil heart of unbelief, which in men, who 'are not of God,' always proves too hard for their understandings, and for all the evidences of religion, as well natural, as revealed. The corrupt, the refractory, the suspicious heart, resists the light of reason no less, than that of revelation, and judging of all other things, and all other men by itself, is a stranger to faith and trust. They, 'who of old,' as St. Paul observes, 'were hardened through the deceitfulness of sins,' were 'the unbelievers. And to whom sware God, that they should not enter into his rest, but to them who believed not?' The controversy about Christianity is, in effect, nothing else but a controversy between a sound understanding and a corrupt heart, between virtue and vice, which in those 'who are not of God,' ends always in favour of the latter. There is in reality but one objection against the religion of Christ, and it is the heart only that makes it; but it is exactly of the same nature with that which an abandoned and ungovernable son makes to the advice of his wise and worthy father. The



scape-grace however will by no means confess that he disobeys through love of vice. No, he endeavours to assign plausible motives, and to justify his conduct with reasons, and, if he reasons right, he justifies rebellion and wickedness, and proves his parent a tyrant or a dotard. Just so 'the natural man receiveth not the things which be of God, for they are foolishness to him,' but labours to shew either that they are needless, for he knew them before, or that they are absurd in themselves, and unreasonable in regard to him, and therefore could not have had God, for their author. If God speaks to him, he answers with 'Coniah, I will not hear; and this hath been his manner from his youth,' to disobey the voice of God, long before he did it on principle, or found out his strong reasons for infidelity and wickedness. Such men, saith God by Jeremiah, 'walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken to me.'

Now, this alienation of the heart from God is not his work. He never rejects, till he is rejected. No, he cries in the most affectionate and moving voice to a man of this sort, 'I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.' But when those he cries to in this tender manner, will not hearken to his voice, will treat with scorn, expostulations issuing from the bowels of infinite compassion, then 'he gives them up unto their own hearts lusts, and suffers them to walk in their own counsels.' Then he sets them at a still greater distance from him. Then he is said to have 'blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts,' and so made it impossible for them to hear his voice or to return. Because they have 'given themselves over to all deceiveableness of unrighteousness, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God hath sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' The fate of these despisers of faith, who, through the pleasure they take in unrighteousness, reject the truths of God, is remarkably suitable, and mortifying. Being abandoned by the fountain of light and truth, they are forced to take up with, what of all things they

pretend to the greatest contempt of, either the imposture of false miracles, or the delusion of false reasonings.

It is but one and the same mind that shuts itself against truth, and opens itself to error. As no truths are so striking, as those of religion and virtue; no errors so palpable, as those of infidelity and wickedness; so, of all sorts of minds, that proves itself the most grossly stupid, which greedily sucks in the one, while it carefully arms itself against the other. Is there any thing, to which a sensible mind should lie so open, as to God who made it, and hath done so much to make it happy? Or is there any thing against which it should be so closely locked up, as those worldly schemes and sinful pleasures, from whence have evidently proceeded all its errors, all its guilt, all its disappointments, fears, distractions, miseries? If the prophet asks, 'he that made the ear, shall he not hear?' may he not as reasonably ask, he that made the ear, shall he not be heard? shall that be heard, which is qualified only to amuse, to deceive, and to destroy? And shall he not be heard, who alone can neither deceive, nor be deceived? who loves us more than we do ourselves? who moved by his unutterable and inconceivable love, breaks through the otherwise unalterable course of nature, and tramples on the works of his own creation, that we may see it is he himself, while he flies to save us from sin and misery? He bids the winds be still, he smooths the billows with a word, he speaks the sick into health, and the dead into life; and thus he proves, that it is he who bids us believe and repent. But all this is not sufficient to still the winds of wild opinion, to smooth the waves of outrageous passion, or to cure the distempers and revive the piety, of that mind which 'is not of God.' The fountain of truth and goodness saith, be pure, be humble, be meek, be honest; but the fountain of all corruption, saith, enjoy thy pleasures, esteem thyself, retort injuries, and use thy art to execute thy schemes. The man who is not of God, hears both with his ears, but the latter only, with his heart. 'Believe in me,' saith God, 'and lean not to thy own understanding.' Trust to me, saith avarice, saith ambition, saith pleasure; and judge for thyself, say they all; and all are obeyed by the man who is of this world, and not of God; who thinks, judges, and believes only through

his outward senses, and fleshly desires, which are his only self.

Thus in a corrupt heart ends the great controversy between God and his adversaries; and if time does not do it, eternity at least will shew, which had the right side of the question.

May there no longer be a dispute on the subject in any of us; may God give us grace wisely to hear, and dutifully to obey him in all things, through Christ Jesus our Saviour, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LVIII.

WHO IS FOR GOD, AND WHO AGAINST HIM.

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ST. MAT. XII. 30.

*He that is not with me, is against me.*

IN some contests, they who are not immediately concerned, are at liberty, or rather it is their duty, to take neither part, because the thing contended for, is indifferent in itself, or because both sides are in the wrong. There are others, wherein every man is obliged to favour at least, if not to join himself to, one of the parties engaged, because one of them is evidently in the right, and no man ought to be wholly disinterested, when the cause of truth, justice, or virtue, is debated. In the cause of religious truth every man is a party, if it is a fact, as no doubt it is, that the happiness of every man is inseparably connected, not only with his thinking rightly in religious matters, but, in some measure also, with his endeavouring to make others do the same. Happiness is the effect of virtue; and virtue, of true religion.

The chief among these, or rather that wherein all the rest are comprised, is the great contest between Christ, the fountain of true religion, of pure virtue, and of our real

happiness, on the one side; and the author of spiritual darkness, wickedness, and misery, on the other. Here all men, whether sensible of it or not, are infinitely interested; and it is owing either to their ignorance or stupidity, if they are not proportionably concerned.

It is of the highest moment to us, that the rules whereby our Saviour will distinguish his friends from his enemies be known, and well considered. Now, that he makes, and ever will make, this important distinction, not by the professions, but by the principles and deeds, of men, will be evident from the application of a Jewish proverb in the 9th of St. Luke, and here in my text. In the former of these places, John saith to him, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said unto him, forbid him not, for he that is not against us, is for us.' Here Christ takes that man to be on his part, who, acting in his name, and, questionless by his spirit, made war on the enemies of God, that is, did the work of God, though without the formal profession, or personal attendance, of a disciple.

The judgment he passes on him, who stands as it were neuter, in the war between God and the author of evil, is very different, though made by the same proverb, but converted, as was the manner of the Jews in some of their common sayings, to a seemingly opposite purpose. To such he will not allow the benefit of a neutrality. He knows of no man, who is neither to be rewarded as a friend, nor punished as an enemy; but saith, 'he that is not with me is against me.'

It is true, he thus applies the proverb, in answer to the Pharisees, who had charged him with casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and proves from thence, and from the tendency of the fact itself, that he is the enemy of devils.

But while, with great force, he urges the argument against his pharasaical adversaries, he pushes it forwards through them, into the cooler hearts of such as stand behind, and prudentially shew themselves, neither for him, nor against him. He affirms, that every one, who does not labour to gather sheep into his fold, as he does, scatters, as the wolf does, many from that fold, who would enter, were

it not for their examples, who stay out. In all cases like this, he who helps not, hinders. A great part of mankind never move but with a crowd before them, and weigh the strength of a reason only by the numbers it hath already convinced. The fears of many, and the negligence of a yet greater body, I mean, more especially, as to considerable changes, either in religious opinions or professions, are seldom surmounted, but by the previous conversion of others more attentive, more sharp-sighted, and more resolute.

If a professed indifference to Christ and his religion is capable of doing so great disservice to both, and if therefore Christ will regard those, who do not declare for him, as his enemies, no less than those who declare against him, in what light must he look on such as bear his name, and make profession of his religion, while they either labour to pervert its principles, or, in the main of their lives, too plainly prefer the service of his enemy? These, undoubtedly, he must regard, not as neutrals, nor even as mere enemies, but as detestable traitors. Considered in this light, they do infinitely more damage to the credit and progress of his religion, than can possibly be done by those who never gave in their names to him, nay, or by those who openly vilify and oppose him.

It is true, Christ, properly speaking, cannot be betrayed, for he hath no secrets to be concealed; and therefore, in this respect, may safely set every Judas at defiance. But if any man, outwardly bearing the badge of Christianity, shall corrupt or enfeeble its fundamental articles in the minds of others, or shall deny its author in his actions, as often as he is tempted by worldly interests, or fleshly pleasure, or even shall shew himself indifferent, as often as the offers of the enemy seem, in his scales, to balance the promises of Christ; this man is a traitor, and wounds the Saviour of souls more sensibly by his professions, than Judas ever did in the midst of his kisses; I say, by his professions, for did he deny himself to be a Christian, the open enemies of Christ could not, as they always do, throw the odium of his practices on the religion he declares for; neither could other weak professors of Christianity so miserably stumble at his example, saying, as is too frequently their unhappy custom, ‘see how such a one acts, how he

lies, cheats, gets drunk, converses with scandalous women, and does a thousand other things forbidden by Christianity. Do you observe, how he undermines the doctrine, into which he was baptized, and that whereby the sins of mankind are believed to be atoned? Yet the man is much liked, passes for a very tolerable Christian, and hopes for heaven at the last. Why may not we act, and hope as he does? There are but few men in the world, who fall not, more or less, into this snare, that is, are not, more or less, infidels or reprobates, purely because others, professing the same religion, and even that but nominally, have shewn them how to reconcile a practice and a profession, as opposite as light and darkness. So far common sense extends its conclusions from the doctrine of my text.

Let us however examine the point a little by other places of Scripture, that we may the more perfectly understand what it is 'to be for Christ,' and what, 'to be against him.'

If a man may be truly said to be with Christ, who only follows him, carries his name, and declares for him, then Judas was really a good Christian, and Christ himself knew not what a Christian is, for he says, 'Woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed.' Should such a one say unto him, 'Lord, Lord, have I not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works?' all this will not prove him to be for Christ, who will nevertheless 'profess unto him, I never knew you, depart from me, you that work iniquity.' Judas could say as much for himself, as you, and yet I have pronounced him 'the son of perdition.' Here is profession for profession, than which nothing better can be reasonably hoped for. Not only they are 'against Christ, who deny him before men in words,' but they also 'who profess that they know, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate;' of whom St. Paul tells us, 'even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; whose glory is their shame; and who mind earthly things.' These are 'against Christ.'

Who then are 'for him?' They, no doubt, of whom he saith to the Father, 'I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have

known hereby, that I came out from thee; and they have believed, that thou didst send me. Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept my word. They that are Christ's,' says St. Paul, 'have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.'

But are there not a third, or middle sort of men, who, in the strictness of these expressions, are neither with our Saviour, nor against him? No, Christ, who best knows his own, absolutely denies the fact, in my text. It is true, of good men, some are better; and of bad men, some worse, than others. The good are not all equally the friends; nor the wicked, all equally the enemies, of Christ; and for these inequalities different degrees of reward and punishment are reserved in the determinations of our judge. It is also true, that the best of men sometimes fall into sin, and the worst, sometimes rise to acts of piety and goodness. But then he who is to pass sentence on us, knows perfectly well, where frailty ends, and presumption and perverseness begin; knows, who, in the main of his life, is a good, and who, a bad man, that is, who is on his part, and who, against him.

A rational and free being, who knows there is a God, cannot stand suspended between virtue, which he is sensible is the will of God; and vice, which, he is sure, is his abhorrence. But farther, if he knows, that God hath not only given him being, but heaped on him all the blessings he enjoys here, or hopes for hereafter, and purchased him with his own blood from the dreadful punishment due to his sins, under such obligations to such a governor, and such a benefactor, he must surely be very wicked, if he is not in some degree virtuous. To do no good, under these circumstances, must be high ingratitude; to do evil, must be unnatural rebellion. Whosoever renounces this double obligation to obedience and gratitude, laid on him by the Saviour of mankind, is an infidel and an enemy; and whosoever pretends to receive it, but denies its power by acting, in the main, as if he regarded neither the duties nor motives it suggests to him, is a traitor to that Saviour.

Thus it appears, that from the throne of God, down to the nethermost hell, there is not, there cannot possibly be, one moral being, who is not either the friend, or enemy, of Christ. In the one or other of these lights, he must regard



every man, and every man must regard himself, at the final judgment. On that great occasion, the judge will pronounce but two sentences, to the good, 'come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' and to the wicked, 'depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' At that day, there will be no man found, who will not tremble under the one, or triumph in the other, of these sentences; none who will not be a fit object of either. Here is no middle judgment between, come, and depart, nor a middle region, between heaven and hell, for the reception of him, who is neither called as a friend, nor rejected as an enemy to, Christ.

Well, but granting the truth, what is the use, some will ask, of this doctrine? Hath it any tendency to increase the number of Christ's friends, or to diminish that of his enemies? After hearing all this, will not every one be just where he was? Not every one, it is hoped. Our infinitely wise instructor undoubtedly had the edification of his hearers in view, when he spoke my text, and did not utter it merely as idle words. It will, I trust, be a great comfort and confirmation to every good man, to perceive by an infallible rule, that Christ regards him as his friend. What can so effectually encourage him to a steady perseverance, as thus beforehand to enjoy the happy judgment of the last day? It will be also as great a terror to every bad man, to know by the same infallible rule, that he himself is the enemy of Christ. What is so likely to work him to repentance, as the bitter foretaste of his future condemnation? All this, however, you will say, we knew before; and I can as easily answer, perhaps it was not duly laid to heart. What I have been saying was music to the conscious friend of Christ, music to be heard with pleasure on ten thousand repetitions. It cannot therefore be he, who peevishly says, 'all this we knew before.'

No, it must be you, who did not know, or knew it only in the spirit of slumber, that you are the ungrateful, and hereafter, if you do not awake in time, must be the miserable, enemy of that Saviour, who laid down his life for your soul. You have, all along professed Christianity, but contented

yourself with such a kind or degree of it, as the vain and senseless practice of the world vouches for sufficient; that is, you come sometimes to church, give a small matter to the poor, and now and then, communicate. You take care to keep within the verge of the laws, to preserve a tolerable character; and so to pass in your own, and the judgment of others like yourself, for a moderate Christian. But, in the mean time, you scruple not to take God's name in vain, to talk or act obscenely, to get drunk sometimes, and to dash your dealings in the world with too large a mixture of cunning, extortion, or oppression. If you have observed this, or somewhat like it, to be the general practice, the unhappy example serves you for a law, to which all the laws of God must give way in you, who set not up truly for a saint, but sneer at those who are more scrupulous, as hypocritical pretenders to that character. All this while, it is with you a matter of but little moment, whether you are 'with Christ,' or 'against him,' as is evident by your never, in any material instance, preferring his service or honour to the ordinary calls of worldly interest or pleasure.

If you are on Christ's part, what passion have you subdued, what appetite denied, what view of temporal profit or honour, though ever so inconsiderable, have you set aside, purely to please him? Or rather, what sense of his goodness, or your past ingratitude, do you even now feel, to prove to you, that you are not wholly indifferent about him, his religion, or your place among his followers? On his own maxim, the cold, and almost contemptuous services you render him for the loss of his life and blood (loss, surely I may call it, in respect to you) could not entitle you to the name of his friend, were you as cold to this world, and the things of it. How far then must they be from giving you any claim to that honourable appellation, when all your warmth is bestowed on that which he abhors, which he commanded you to abhor, and you, in your covenant with God through him, renounced by a solemn vow? 'You honour him,' it is true, and but a little, 'with your lips; but your heart is far from him.' Full well he knows it, for he is a searcher of hearts, and clearly sees where all the ardour of yours is placed, while he hath only the worthless compli-

ment of your professions. This you may be experimentally convinced of by an impartial consideration of your prayers, your faith, and the general cast of your whole life.

Your prayers are but seldom offered up to the absolute disposer of all things, and offered with such an unaccountable coldness of heart, as testifies no affection, scarcely, indeed, a bare dependence.

Your faith, for want of a thorough conviction, or of that close and keen attention, which the great things it sets before you demand, amounts to little more than a mere opinion as to either the past or future facts suggested in your creed. Such an opinion is too weak to have any material effect on your practice, too feeble, by far to bring futurity even into competition with the present objects of sense and appetite. You see these in more than their own size and colouring; you taste them with more relish than they are naturally qualified to yield; you feel them with all the sensibility of your soul, as fraught with pleasure only, and with more of it than it is possible such things can afford to any but a very sensual mind. But in so great a degree of dimness and confusion does the eye of your faith present you with a view of things to come, that heaven hardly looks like happiness, or hell like misery, or either, like a reality. Nay, faith in you is enslaved to your senses; believes what they promise, though almost always against reason; hopes for happiness against all experience, in the pursuit of temporary, uncertain, unsatisfactory, and, therefore, insignificant things; and follows the views of fleshly appetite in a world, which whosoever trusts to, will find to be 'vanity and vexation of spirit,' at the last.

How unlike is your faith to that of a real Christian! His faith draws his very senses into its service. He believes, and therefore hears God speaking in his word; feels God moving in his heart; sees the judgment seat of Christ, with the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell, almost as clearly as if they were displayed just before his eyes. Nay, he suffers the anguish of his Saviour's wounds with not much less pain than if the nails and spear had pierced his own flesh; and triumphs over sin and death in the resurrection of Christ, with an high degree of that joy, he knows he is to feel, when he shall arise from the grave himself.

As to the general cast and tenor of your life, this will make the melancholy truth, wherewith I am endeavouring to rouse you, still more indisputable. An insensible stupidity damps and flattens all you think or do in relation to religion. Here you know nothing. Here you feel nothing. But in regard to this world, you are all alive. How deeply read is your understanding here ! How warmly engaged is your heart ! I appeal to your own breast for the truth of these observations, and of this, as the summary of them all, that you are, at best, but a middling Christian, and yet, at the same time, probably a good farmer, mechanic, merchant, or manager of your temporal affairs.

Now, I know, you are ready to declare, with an affected humility, ‘ that it is the height of your ambition in religious matters, to be an ordinary or middling Christian. Let others, you say, set up for singularity and saintship ; for your part, you wish to be found even among the lowest class of Christians, and aspire only to a bare acquittal.’ And yet you want not your share of ambition and pride too. Misguided man ! How miserably you mistake that for humility, which is but lukewarmness and indifference. But where, pray, is the humility of vilifying those religious warmths in others which you never had either the sense or goodness to feel in yourself ? Know, unhappy self-deceiver, that there is, there can be, no such mortal as a middling Christian. Neither the nature of our religion, as set forth in my text, and throughout the Scriptures, nor the inconceivable tenderness of Christ in suffering for us ; neither the exalted joys promised, nor the shocking torments threatened, will suffer a thinking mind to be indifferent. If you do not feel the force of what I am saying in the depths of your soul, what an insensible soul must that be ! That you may perceive, I say not these things of myself, but by authority ; hear them from him who ‘ loveth you, and hath laid down his life for you,’ and nevertheless thus accosts you on the subject of your indifference to him, and attachment to the world ; ‘ You cannot serve two masters, you cannot serve God and mammon. He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not

worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.' Consider now, have you ever given up any of these things, or even much smaller things, such as houses or lands, for the sake of Christ or his gospel? or do you think yourself capable of doing it? You who daily sacrifice all the little regard you have for Christ to every moment of pleasure, or mite of gain?

If your eyes are now open, look about you, and tell us where you are; surely not with Christ, but against him, not even with a company of indifferents and neutrals, but of reprobates and devils, the sink and scum of the creation, who in their lusts, and even pride of their hearts, have wisely preferred rebellion to gratitude, infamy to glory, and hell to heaven. Do you not observe, how one of your company betrays the son of God, how another condemns him, how another spits in his face, how another buffets, how another scourges, how another crucifies him? Dare not to call Judas a traitor, till you consider whether you have not more than once sold the Saviour of mankind for some pieces of silver. Dare not to censure Pilate as an unjust judge, before you have recollected, whether you never by your words acquitted, but in your deed condemned, the Redeemer, as he did, to please the world, and to promote or secure your interest with its great ones. Beware of charging the unbelieving soldiers who executed the sentence on Christ, with cruelty, till you seriously reflect, whether you, his professed disciple, have not often spit in his face, buffeted him, scourged him, crucified him, by your sins, as well as they.

But here you will say, 'what can Christ expect from so poor a creature as me, dependent, while in this world, on the necessities of life, and charged by Providence with a family, which it is my duty to take care of? Besides, hath not God given me my appetites and passions, and fitted the good things here below to these internal springs of desire and action which he himself hath impressed on my nature? Must I not act as an inhabitant of this world, while I am here? And will it not be time enough to act as an inhabitant of the next world, when I find myself there?'

Are not you yourself a little startled at a plea, the same in substance with that of the declared infidel, and as agree-

able to his other principles, as it is wholly repugnant to yours? Your principles tell you, that, 'having food and raiment, you are therewith to be content.' Pray, is this all you seek for? It is true, the same principles teach, that, 'if you provide not for your own, and especially for them of your own house, you have denied the faith, and are worse than an infidel.' But what are you obliged hereby to provide? Not surely unnecessary sums of money, 'the love of which is the root of all evil;' not great estates, not sounding titles, not sumptuous palaces, not luxurious tables; no, but 'food and raiment only.' Every thing of this sort, you are, if occasion requires, to sacrifice to Christ, and not Christ to them, as is your general practice. If God hath given you your natural appetites and desires, he did not give you either the excess of those appetites, or your present habit of indulging them to the uttermost. If he stored the world with materials for your gratification, it was not, be sure, that you should 'lade yourself with thick clay,' ill-gotten by fraud and oppression, and worse spent in pride and riot; but to try whether you could be 'temperate in all things,' and 'use this world as not abusing it;' and whether you could, in the midst of these things below, look up, 'and fix your affection on things above.' If you are a Christian, your principles tell you that 'while you are in this world, you are not to live like a man of this world;' but if you are 'born of God, to overcome the world,' and to 'keep yourself unspotted from it, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts.'

Thus, to the uttermost of your power, are you to act, while here, or you will never 'keep the commandments of God, nor enter into life,' nor have any opportunity of shewing, how readily you could conform to, or what a fine figure you could make in a better world, were you translated thither.

This, you see, Christ actually expects of you, because he knows it is, or puts it within your power. Your pleading poverty, therefore, or inability, is only done to cover your disinclination, ingratitude, and treachery. Besides, this part of your plea, I must tell you, sounds most scandalously from your mouth, who are apt to talk so high of your honour, of your understanding, and of your resolution, on

some occasions, as if you had surmounted the infirmities of human nature, and needed neither man to teach you, nor even God to help you.

If you now perceive that you are not with Christ, but against him; if you see it with that shame, alarm, and terror, which ought naturally to accompany such a sight; the work of this day is done, and you are infinitely happier now in your grief, than you were a few hours ago in the midst of darkness and security. But, if you are still insensible, the charge of treachery and ingratitude, so clearly brought home to your door, must be resumed, and those crimes, as committed against the Saviour of the world, held to your eyes in their own enormous foulness, for how otherwise is it possible to rouse you?

Consider then seriously, if you can, as to the charge of treachery, that when you were baptized, you gave in your name to Christ; you covenanted with God through him your intercessor; you vowed abhorrence to his enemies; you vowed fidelity, love, and obedience to him, during the course of your life. On this, he entrusted you with his name and honour, together with a title to all the infinite blessings, arising from peace with God, a peace purchased with his last agonies and blood. Consider now, on the other side, that your whole life is little else than one continued breach of the covenant and vow you made; one continued insult on his name and honour; one continued exposure of both to the blasphemy of his enemies. You renounced those original adversaries of Christ, the devil, the world, and the flesh; what else have you, all along, loved, consorted with, or followed? By this you spread a snare for the feet of the weak, and make your name of a Christian the bait. By this you give Christ a defeat, and the devil a triumph. If this is not treachery, then Judas himself was faithful. If this is not ‘crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame,’ then he was never crucified at Jerusalem, nor exposed to contempt between two thieves. And if this is not a degree of treachery, sufficient to match the hottest place of punishment, for what other crime is that place reserved?

But you intend, you say, no such treachery to Christ, no such new crucifixion of your Saviour. How? Do not



you know Christianity is vilified, Christ himself blasphemed, and his spiritual body corrupted, wounded, mangled, through your unchristian course of life? Or are your sins all unintended, undesigned, and purely accidental? Do you mean absolutely nothing by following the flesh, and hunting after the world, with all the force of your understanding, and all the anxiety of your heart? Nothing, I verily believe, but your own gratification. But then most certainly nothing more was meant by the first betrayers and murderers of Christ. Will you admit this plea of yours, when made by your servant? He, poor man, tells you, it is not to offend or injure you, but to please himself, that he performs none of your commands, does every thing you dislike, and associates often with your enemies; and you are as well assured of his sincerity, on this occasion, as of your own towards God, in the use of this apology. How dare you now expect better services from him, than you render to God, the great master of you both?

In the next place, whether your ingratitude is not of as deep a black as your treachery, you will never know, till you feelingly reflect on what Christ hath done for you, and as impartially on what you have done to him.

He, the Son of God, hath died to save you, a poor, unworthy criminal, from endless infamy and misery (O think how great that infamy and misery!) and to bring you to endless glory and happiness; O consider, how high that glory! How infinite that happiness! How coolly you hear it! As coolly you return it by your formal professions, your dry thanksgivings, your unwilling and insignificant services, through which scarcely any footsteps, of either your understanding or affection, are to be traced. Yet this negative is the least ugly side of your ingratitude. On the other, are found all your positive sins; your vile thoughts, your false, profane, or seducing discourse; your abominable actions; all imagined, uttered, committed, directly against him who died for you. Of this you are well aware, if you know any thing of the religion you profess, and therefore cannot claim the benefit of Christ's dying prayer, even for his murderers, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' You perfectly well know, what you are doing by all your coldness of devotion, and

by all your warmth in sin. You know, that coldness is a renunciation of him, and that warmth, rebellion against him. You know, that, by both, you his professed member, unnaturally nail him to a new cross. Will you proceed to repeat this inhuman, this ungrateful, this atheistical murder, almost every moment of your life, and still continue to call Christ your Saviour? What cruelty, what mockery, is equal to this?

Know, most fatally-mistaken man, that this is desperate, infinite folly too (for 'to him all power, all judgment, in heaven and earth, are committed),' and that you are in a state of real rebellion against the Sovereign of the world, and of war with the Almighty. If your forces are sufficient to maintain this war, and your armour proof against his two-edged sword, go on; but, for shame, no longer say, you are a Christian. There is as much sense, and more consistency, in directly contending with God, than in pretending to be his servant, and yet fighting against him.

But in case you know your own weakness, and are afraid of contending with an adversary, 'to whom vengeance belongeth,' and who can, 'and will repay,' let me, with the grief, the fear, the compassion, of a fellow-creature, and a fellow-Christian, earnestly press you to repent, and make your submission, this very instant. Your case will not admit a moment's delay; neither is there any medium between being 'for Christ, and against him.' Salvation is found only in being for him; damnation only, in being against him. Awake, consider this, ere it is too late, and choose your party; but consider it with your whole understanding, and choose with your whole heart, for remember you choose for all eternity.

And may the all-wise God assist you, and us all, in this one thing needful, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, to whom with the Father of mercies, and the Comforter of souls, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LIX.

## FOLLY WISER THAN WISDOM.

## ST. LUKE XVI. 8.

*The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.*

ST. JAMES tells us, there are two kinds of 'wisdom, that which is from above, pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy;' and that 'which is from beneath, earthly, sensual, devilish.' They, who are enlightened by the former, which is nothing else, but the knowledge and spirit of the gospel, are in my text called 'the children of light;' and they who follow the latter, are there called 'the children of this world.'

Perfect wisdom consists in a right choice both of ends and means, and in a steady pursuit of those ends by these means. The real child of light, or the true Christian, shews himself wise in all the three respects, but more especially in the choice of his grand end or aim, which is to please God, and to be happy for ever.

In regard to his chief end or view, the child of this world shews himself to be a fool, for 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,' who can best distinguish between the true and false wisdom; but then the worldling, in the choice of his means, and still more in the steadiness of his pursuit, leaves the good Christian so far behind, that, in these branches of wisdom, he is pronounced by our Saviour, at the close of the parable from whence my text is taken, to be 'wiser than the child of light.'

It was however by no means the intention of our blessed Saviour to recommend the worldly wisdom to us, nor to propose the policy of the steward in the parable as a fit object of our imitation, any farther than as he shewed himself wise in turning his present opportunities to his future advantage. This is plain from his being called an unjust or

iniquitous steward in the parable itself, and even by him who applauds the craft of his contrivance. We know, that, in the judgment of our blessed Saviour, all iniquity, howsoever deedly schemed, and artfully managed, is folly; and such it will surely appear to be at that time, when he will say, 'depart from me all ye that work iniquity.' He only laments and reproves it in mankind, that the very wisest and best among us rarely, perhaps never, shew as high a degree of thought and forecast for the eternal interest of their souls, a matter of infinite consequence, as men of only equal talents shew in regard to their worldly interest, which, in comparison, is a thing of no moment. And to make this reflection, so very astonishing, and so very severe, and yet so glaringly true, the more striking, he couches it in a proverbial paradox, and says, 'the children of this world,' or of ignorance and darkness, 'are in their generation,' their tribe or sort, 'wiser than the children of light,' or of true, real, and heavenly knowledge; those, he affirms, see better at midnight than these at noon-day; they, who are so stupid as to prefer a short life of vanity and vexation to an endless life of happiness and glory, do nevertheless, being more closely interested in so absurd a choice, put their natural abilities more on the stretch, and consequently exercise more thought and judgment, in order to the accomplishment of their low and insignificant design, than the wisest saint does for his soul, for heaven, and for God. This, in short, is what he upbraids us with, that the worldly man hath more of the worldly wisdom, than the spiritual man hath of the spiritual. The man who schemes only for this life is so far bedarkened, as to know neither the world nor himself, or he would not lay out himself upon it; and yet he conducts himself, in order to it, with great address and judgment. Whereas he who schemes for heaven, is so far in the light as to know both, to know what heaven is, who God is, and how the one is to be served, and the other obtained; and yet acts, on most occasions, as if he thought his soul not worth saving, nor God worth serving, nor heaven worth acquiring.

Experience would have made this shameful truth but too evident, had our Saviour never pronounced it. Compare the statesman and saint, each in his own way, on

the articles of attention, application, depth of thought, force of judgment, and quickness or skill in the choice of expedients and measures ; and you will soon subscribe to our Saviour's decision, though you do not receive him as yours.

Compare the merchant, or lower still, the tradesman and farmer, with the plain good Christian, of equal, or, if you please, of superior abilities ; and while you see this merchant, or mechanic, applying closely to his worldly business, looking sharply, reasoning clearly, judging skilfully, and, if need be, consulting the most knowing of his neighbours, in all his dealings, whether he buys, sells, or contests a property of any kind ; you see the good Christian frequently off his guard, sometimes asleep on the brink of destruction, and discovering such a want of knowledge and judgment, as to religious matters of the greatest moment, that you cannot help wondering, what is become of that natural understanding he shews in other things, that do by no means so nearly concern him. See how the worldly man labours by day and night ! how he weighs his words ! how he sets his very looks to the drift of his designs ! how, like a serpent, he winds this way and that, when he is at a pinch ! how he now mines and dives from the eye of your penetration ! and how now again he shews his teeth, if he hopes to intimidate ! and all this perhaps for an advantage of five or six shillings in buying your web of cloth, or selling his horse ! what do you see like this in the Christian, considered as such ? It is true he, now and then, examines himself ; sometimes meditates ; often prays ; goes frequently to the house and table of God ; is honest in his dealings ; is compassionate to the poor ; is sober as to wine, and modest as to women. But then how often do senseless prejudices, idle customs, or unruly passions, throw him off his guard into a conduct, as remote from common sense, as from the strictness of his religious principles ! How many idle words are suffered to pass over his tongue, and unworthy thoughts through his mind ! Is there a day wherein he does not, more than once, put his hand to such actions as religion forbids, or neglect those it requires ? How cool is he to the honour of God, and to the propagation of his gospel among his children and servants ? Does he appear to

hunger or thirst for righteousness? Does he care, cark, and labour, with all the vehemence of his affections, and at the full stretch of his faculties, for heaven; as the child of this world does for vanity and vexation? Far from it. God is his master; but were you to judge by his behaviour only on many occasions, you would take him to be the servant of some lord, equally void of sense and goodness. Heaven too is his aim, but were you to judge of it merely by the manner of his pursuit (so feeble at best, so often interrupted by trifles, and so ill-advised throughout), you would take heaven to be, of all things, the most insignificant.

How far are the votaries of heaven outdone by those of ambition and avarice! A Cæsar, or Cromwell, aims at ends that seem to be placed beyond the bounds of possibility, and above the reach of human power. Yet, by a thorough exertion of their abilities, by an obstinate perseverance in well-chosen measures (well chosen, I mean, in regard to the ends in view), and by a resolution which no hardships, no dangers can shake, they, in a few years, accomplish their designs, and find they had laboured for nothing but 'vanity and vexation of spirit!'

As much a fool is the miser in regard to his end, and no less wise in the choice of means. How mortified is the man to all folly and vanity, but the folly and vanity of possessing more than he can possibly ever use, or even means in the least to enjoy. From his view of growing richer he never wavers a single moment, nor to the value of a single farthing. He wastes such wisdom on the acquisition of a shilling, as Cæsar could not outdo in that of an empire.

What candidate now for an heavenly crown can you compare with Cæsar or Cromwell? Who labours for eternal riches, as the miser does for money? What is the wisdom of the saint, or martyr, to theirs? Which of these heroes in Christianity does not often fall into stupid errors and sins, it may be of the grosser kinds, as David and St. Peter? Take Solomon, if you please, for the wisest child of light. Did ever the silliest child of this world deviate so far from his worldly scheme of life, as that monarch did, from his religious one, when he was on his knees before a deified stone or log?

The force of human understanding is in nothing so clearly

seen, as in the wars waged by mankind on one another, for things of no value, often for things of a pernicious nature, to the possessors. The art of war, and the display of it in a long and active campaign, is undoubtedly the highest exemplification of human wisdom, that hath ever been, or possibly can be given. Is the Christian warfare, wherein the soul and heaven are contended for, managed with any thing like it? No, there is nothing so silly as the Christian soldier in his endeavours to defeat the stratagems of his spiritual enemies; nothing so awkward as he in the use of his armour. His helmet of salvation is thrown on the ground, and his shield of faith lies at a distance, when the adversary of his soul is laying at him. With the sword of the spirit he knows not how to make a single stroke, when infidelity and vice ought to be invaded. How he yawns, when his enemies are upon him! How he nods over the danger of endless misery.

Though the Christian martyrs died for truth, for heaven, and for God, we admire their fortitude and contempt of death, and revere it as a great and singular sort of heroism, as if they had not trampled on pain and death for somewhat infinitely more valuable, than present ease and life. But a single field of battle may suffice to shew, how this world's martyrs exceed them in numbers, and equal them in bravery, by the hundred thousand, who encounter death there in all its pomp and terror, and by the twenty thousand that fall for the hope of a little higher post, or for the payment of sixpence by the day. Christianity is not less outdone by this world in confessors, than in martyrs. Who suffers so much hunger, cold, self-denial, or even persecution for religion, as the miser just now mentioned, for his wealth? Who is so saving of his conscience, or of his treasure in heaven, as this wretch is, of a mouldy crust, or an inch of candle?

Now, were the spiritual wisdom of much greater extent and difficulty in the acquisition, than the worldly; or, did the benefits arising from the possession of the worldly wisdom, vastly exceed those which spring from the spiritual; the too general indifference for, and ignorance of this, and the intense desire of that, together with the prodigious progress made in it, observable in the bulk of mankind, would, on the comparison, be less astonishing and shameful than



they are. But the truth is, a few days are sufficient, for the attainment of so much spiritual wisdom, as is requisite for the salvation of a soul, and the benefits arising from it, infinite; whereas, the close application of an antideluvian life is not enough to make any man a thorough master of the worldly wisdom; and then, its fruits and benefits, as their utmost termination is at the grave, must be but of very little value to an immortal being. Besides, the worldly wisdom almost always fails of its end, the spiritual, never. Again, he who thirsts for the spiritual wisdom, for 'pure water from the fountain of life,' is as well qualified to receive it in the vessel of its natural capacity, as the mere temporal man is to receive that, in his, which flows from the fens and quagmires of this world.

The art, nevertheless, of reclaiming and saving the soul, and of acquiring eternal happiness, short and easy as it is to the learner, and infallible as it is, if known and reduced to practice, in the attainment of its infinitely desirable end, is but imperfectly known, and still more imperfectly applied, by the real children of light. But the art of acquiring riches, of catering for our pleasures, and of rising to worldly power and honour, which cannot be arrived at, without infinite study and pains, which is so difficult in the practice, and hazardous in the success, as all men know; and as all dying men know, so vain, so insignificant in its end and aim; is well understood, and as well followed, by the generality of mankind; and why? But because the children of this world, who are by far the greater number, give their whole hearts, and consequently their whole heads to it; while the children of light give but a share, perhaps no great share, of either, to that light, and the remainder is at the service of a world, which they have solemnly renounced.

There is no child of this world, who, supposing him ever so unthinking, will not choose a greater, rather than a smaller piece of gold, though they must be put into the scales to find a difference. But supposing the difference to be very considerable, as of one, and a thousand, in that case, if he hath his choice, he never deliberates, but instantly, eagerly prefers the greater. So instantly would he choose a life, rather than an hour, of pleasure, equal in degree, and differing only in continuance. So instantly would he choose a

large estate, rather than a single acre; and a kingdom, than an estate. So far reason helps the most stupid to wisdom in sensible and worldly things; but goes a great way farther in deeper thinkers. These it will put on ploughing and sowing in order to somewhat yet unseen, the future increase of harvest; it will put them on laying out large sums in trade, with a view to future profit; it will put them on practising the strictest abstinence, on swallowing the most nauseous medicines, or even on cutting off their limbs, for sake of future health. Yet the difference between the thing chosen, and the thing avoided, in all these and the like cases, is but small; for every man knows, that a few days may, or, at least, a few years must, reduce it to nothing.

But set the same man to compare temporal things with eternal, and you shall see him, as it were, suddenly deprived of his reason, choosing that which is uncertain, rather than that which is sure! that which is momentary, rather than that which is eternal! that which is small and worthless, rather than that which is infinitely valuable! Nay, that which he knows to be evil on the whole, rather than that which he knows to be wholly good. In all this now he follows but one rule, a rule, directly against which he acts in tillage, trade, physic, namely, to choose the present rather than the future, though the future is, in his own judgment, infinitely better.

If we inquire, how it comes to pass that his boasted reason here so strangely deserts him, we shall find, it is because he seldom weighs spiritual and temporal things together in the same balance, but apart, and therefore knows not how to make a just and fair comparison. Temporal and present things press on him, not only with all their own, but with a large addition of imaginary weight. This is owing to the quickness of his senses, and the vehemence of his affections and passions. On the other side, spiritual things lie but lightly on his apprehension through the deadness of his faith, and the dullness or infrequency of his meditations. Having therefore lively impressions of the temporal, he easily discerns their differences, and weighs them, one against the other, with sufficient exactness; but can make little or no comparison of 'the spiritual with spiritual,' a thing never done, 'but by the wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth,'

because he will not give his mind to this wisdom, nor admit a clear and lively sense of such things.

But, if at any time, sense on one side, and faith on the other, should attempt to bring the comparative weight of temporal and spiritual things to the test of his reason; his reason, knowing only the weight of the former, nay, perhaps taking it to be greater than it is, through the imposition of his senses, appetites, affections, passions, and imagination; and little, or not at all, affected by his faith towards the latter; swerves to the side of temporal things, or is too easily prevailed with, at least to tolerate a preference she cannot approve. Here reason loses her prerogative, not her being, or her strength; for henceforth she is employed in planning and executing the worldly or sensual schemes of her seducers, and, according to her higher or lower degree of ability, makes the man a more or less ingenious fool, ingenious as to means, and a fool as to ends. He knows the difference between a true and counterfeit farthing, and always chooses the true; yet he obeys the command of a pope against the express command of God; he strains at the gnat of mint-tithe, and swallows the camel of iniquity and cruelty; he boggles at an innocent, perhaps useful, ceremony, but stretches away at full speed on the road of schism.

Here you may learn how it is, that 'the evidence of things not seen' dwindles down to almost nothing; 'and the substance of things hoped for' evaporates into a shadow. Death and judgment, because yet future, and not foreseen in any precise point of time, are set aside, as events that may never occur. Heaven and hell too are removed still farther from the attention; and even he, who is not only 'about them but within them, is not in all the thoughts of such men.' No, they have other things to think of, 'what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed;' nay, how they shall gather that which they never mean to use, or squander that which they know not how to give; how they shall prolong their lives, and shorten their days; how they shall reconcile honour to treachery in themselves, and contempt to integrity in other men; how they who find no satisfaction in a natural world made by God, may be happy in an artificial one of their own making, with pernicious cookeries for wholesome food, with

coaches instead of their own legs, and with candlelight in the place of sunshine. Here is their treasure; and here are their hearts; and here therefore are their heads too, full-fraught with that kind of wisdom, which is necessary to a scheme of life, infinitely perplexed in its views, and not less opposed in the management.

Now, the good Christian (I mean as the world goes) partakes too much in this character, and looks like the joint issue of light, and of this world. His false heart often forgets that it belongs to a Christian, and is divided. So is his understanding too of course. He goes to two different schools, and attends to two opposite arts, and therefore cannot possibly be so good a proficient in either, as the worldling is in the management of his temporal designs, which engrosses the whole man.

Thus stands the comparison between the real children of light, and those of this world. You may easily judge how it is likely to terminate between the latter, and the pretended children of light, who make Christianity the compliment of their professions only, but know almost nothing of its principles or spirit, and live in direct contradiction to what they do know. Here we have not wisdom to compare with wisdom, but downright folly and stupidity of the grossest kind. We need not, therefore, take up much time in examining a difference so glaringly evident on the slightest inspection.

The professors I am speaking of, insist they are Christians; and we, for the present, will grant it, purely because they have been baptized; but we must take leave at the same time to call them children of this world, for this obvious reason, that we can see nothing in them or about them, which savours of any thing else. As each of them, therefore, is a sort of double man, we want not another for a comparison, and have nothing more to do, than just to see whether his wisdom as a child of light, or as a child of this world, is most considerable. This will cost us but little pains. Two or three points of trial will lead us to a clear decision.

View him on his worldly side, in his contracts and covenants with mankind about all sorts of property, and you will find him keen enough to be a match for any man, even

for a man of the law. He knows to a tittle what he is entitled to, and what he must do to make good his pretensions. This he performs with the greatest exactness, and that he claims with equal precision.

Yet this very man, turned round and viewed on the Christian side, is found wholly ignorant of the covenant between God and his soul. What God hath therein promised to him, or he vowed to God, he little knows, and as little cares. Heaven is promised, and he is sworn to believe and obey. But what is heaven good for? Or what is his vow to him? Yes, heaven, he says, he wishes for of all things, but owns he cannot act up to the terms on which it is offered, yet hopes he shall at last be admitted there. He does not expect an harvest without ploughing and sowing, yet hopes for an eternal kingdom, without doing, or even knowing what is to be done, to obtain it. He says to God, 'depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' but is in no pain about the menace of Christ, who hath threatened to answer him at the last day, with his own word, 'depart from me, for I know you not.'

In all the contests he maintains with others about property or honour, his title to either will bear no argument, whereof he does not know the utmost force, and does not make the utmost use. His adversary, though as subtle as he, can pass none on him, that admits of a solid or even of a plausible answer. No prejudices of education, no whims, can so blind the eye of his judgment here, as to warp it from his pretensions.

How different a man is he in religious disputations! Here he hath nothing but sophistry and passion for reason; and with these endeavours to support the most stupid ignorance, the most groundless prejudices, the wildest imaginations. He cannot be sent to buy bread, in order to eat it for flesh, nor to buy wine in order to drink it for blood, to any other but a religious market. He will not quarrel with his neighbours, nor cut their throats for wearing a white or black coat, any where else but in a church. He may be brought, such is his modesty, sometimes to give up his judgment to that of another man in secular affairs; but, in religious matters, he 'leans to his own understanding, and decides against the plain and express declarations of God.'

He does not believe, he will be less expert in any profession or science, but that of religion, for being early instructed in its principles.

Take him now in practice, and you will soon perceive how ill the religious part of him can bear a comparison with the worldly. See how he studies, dresses, dangles, to humour his worldly patron! How he labours to serve the man who can promote him! How he mortifies all his own passions to gratify those of the great man he depends on! A word or a nod from his lordship sufficiently intimates his will to the spaniel, who is sure to make one on every public day, and to run at every invitation.

Far otherwise does this pretended servant of God testify his dependence on Almighty goodness. What appetite will he deny, what passion will he subdue, what worldly view will he lose sight of, to honour or please Almighty God? God calls him to his house; but he hath somewhere else to go; or if not, thither, in that case, perhaps he does go, but with infinite indifference, sometimes even with an air of condescension; and when he is there, good God! how little does he look as if he were praying to thee, or listening to thy word.

When God invites him to the food of eternal life, this goodly Christian either turns a deaf ear to the gracious call, and always stays away, or goes once only for five times he ought to go, or goes in the rags and filth of his sins. And this, he wisely judges, is enough to ensure his salvation with an all-knowing searcher of hearts; attendance enough for that Saviour who purchased him with his blood. Had this pretended servant of God any spiritual wisdom, he would want no long or pressing exhortations to the duties of religion, for they say, a word is enough for the wise. But how many lessons, psalms, epistles, gospels, must be read, and how many sermons preached, to him, before he can be made, in any low degree, acquainted with his religion, or warmed to any feelings of piety, devotion, or repentance! A look from the great man is well enough understood by this pretended child of light, who goes away unaffected from the repeated instructions and vehement exhortations of the great God. The great man does but intimate, and is obeyed; the great God cries aloud, again and again, and is

not heard. The wretched man, nevertheless, of whom I am speaking, after acting this part, will stomach it not a little to be told, that as sure as God is a wise being, so surely must this his nominal servant be a fool, for expecting anything else from such a conduct, but infinite indignation.

Nothing now can appear more wonderful than this man's stupidity, to one who considers the plentiful lights in order to religious knowledge, and the irresistible motives to the service of God, afforded by the gospel, whereof God by Isaiah, saith, 'I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. Hear ye, therefore, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see.' And, behold, immediately after he asketh, 'who is blind but my servant? Seeing many things, but he observeth not; and opening the ears but he heareth not.'

Pursue the mere professor of Christianity into the general tenor of his life and conversation, or his dealings among mankind, and you will find him there too, wise enough as to the affairs of this world, and worse than an idiot in matters of religion.

Every thing that naturally tends to promote the profits, pleasures, or honours, he aims at, that he studies, that he steadily pursues, that he carries into execution with admirable address. When lawful measures prove insufficient, he lies, perjures, circumvents, or perhaps murders, if he hath room to hope for secrecy and safety, from infamy and death; and no fox knows better how to kennel in a rock, than he does, in all the arts of fair appearance, and of eluding a legal prosecution. But as a Christian, he either proposes no scheme at all, or one directly contrary to the end he pretends to have in view. Heaven, he says, is his aim; and wickedness we know is his course, a course which he himself knows leads quite the contrary way. 'He travels with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood; he leaves the paths of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness;' yet he says, I am the child of light and hope, I am in the way to heaven. He knows he is to be justly judged for the life he leads here, and either rewarded, if a good man with heaven, which is infinitely preferable to all



the pleasures ; or punished, if wicked, with hell, which is infinitely worse than all the miseries of this world ; yet heaven he forfeits for a trifle, an oath, a bottle ; and hell he rushes into, to avoid somewhat as insignificant, the taunts of a coxcomb, or the frowns of a paltry man in power. What sort of wisdom now is his, who can so distinguish between small enjoyments, not exactly equal, as to prefer, and between small inquietudes, not exactly equal, as to avoid the greater ; and yet knows not how to distinguish in either case when the difference is infinite ?

How keenly does our Saviour upbraid this gross, I had almost said, infinite folly, in the words of my text ! One would think, no fool could be like him, who prefers sin to virtue ; this world, or rather hell, to heaven ; and the enemy of mankind to God, as the avowed child of this world does. Christ, nevertheless, here maintains that this is a wise man, to him who professing Christianity, and acknowledging all the attributes, particularly the infinite wisdom and holiness of God, hopes to be saved by that religion, against its most peremptory declarations ; to impose on God himself ; and to make a sort of composition between virtue and vice, between God and the author of sin.

The professed Christian declares, he hath given himself up to the guidance of that ‘ wisdom, which is from the Father of lights,’ that wisdom which prefers the great to the little, the good to the evil, the infinite good to the infinite evil. But when in the midst of those lights, ‘ he walks not honestly as in the light,’ but in ignorance and works of darkness, does he not betray a much greater degree of folly, than the children of this world, who, if they prefer it to heaven, are at least consistent with their own choice in the management of their pursuit ? ‘ Had it not been better for him never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after he hath known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto him, like the dog to his vomit,’ and the sow after she was washed, to her ‘ wallowing in the mire ?’ He who hath chosen this world, and acts uniformly up to his choice, gives himself some chance of accomplishing his purpose, and is therefore by far a wiser man than he who having two inconsistent ends in view, and attempting to arrive at them by two widely different ways, is sure to miss of both. In this

life, where we see little more than the outside of mankind, we are frequently shocked with the appearance of a child of light, and of a child of this world, in the same man, the most hideous of all monsters. This however is but an appearance. In the eye of Christ who saith, 'it is impossible to serve God and mammon,' and who never accepts half a heart, the mask becomes transparent, and nothing is seen within, but a man of this world.

The keen and chameful charge, laid against us in the text, by the best of all friends, who loved us, who died for us, having the conscience and experience of every man, and the truth of God himself to prove it; how ought our faces to redden, and our hearts to break at the stupidity, the ingratitude, the infamy, thrown on us by so reproachful a censure! How can we dare to be angry, when men revile us in terms the most scandalous and opprobrious, since the very worst they can possibly say to us, or of us, is mere panygyric, to that which God and our consciences say of us, and to us, as often as we peruse his word, or examine ourselves? Why should our numbers, and our community in shame give us countenance, since God, we know, passes judgment on each of us singly by himself?

Is it true then, that while we call Christ our Saviour, and consider the devil as the enemy of his glory and our own salvation, that enemy is served with more wisdom and zeal, than he? that every earthly trifle is pursued with more ardour than heaven? that all the affairs of this perishable world are transacted with more skill and judgment than those of religion? What new scourges, new thorns, new nails, and spears are these to the feeling of our gracious and compassionate Saviour! What new, what continual matter of triumph to the malicious and insolent devil! Had we any sense of true honour, or any spirit of indignation, they would surely take fire at this reflection; and once on fire, would animate us with a more than human resolution to turn the weapons of our adversary against himself, to turn the incentives of pride, lust, and avarice, into so many instruments of beneficence towards men and glory to God, that so we might, pursuant to the command of Christ, 'make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, who when we fail may receive us unto everlasting habitations.'

If we are really the children of light, let us, with an ingenuous concern to be outdone in wisdom by the most despicable of fools, firmly resolve to 'walk as children of the light, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' As we are 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, let us shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, by walking honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying,' but in that newness of life, to which the gospel of Christ hath called us.

If we are really the children of light, of that light which maketh every thing else manifest, and itself, most of all; we must see, that 'Christ is that light,' that 'the Lord is our everlasting light, and God our glory.' Seeing this, how can we walk, on some occasions, as in the day, and, on others, as in the night, like the mongrel children both of light and of this world. How can the Lord be our light, if we do not our utmost 'to walk worthy of the Lord?' How can God be our glory, if we are a reproach to him and his holy religion? Can we behold him displayed, by his own glorious light, in all his infinite goodness to us, and not infinitely love him? And if we love him, in any proportion to that goodness, which gave us being, and the means of salvation at the expence of his own precious blood, shall we suffer the children of this world so far to outstrip us in the zeal and wisdom of a service, rendered, against all sense and reason, to the most horrible of all beings, and for wages, paid here in no better coin than vanity and vexation, and hereafter in death eternal? Shall we even make it impossible for mankind to judge, whether we are the servants of God, or of his enemy?

If we really dwell in the light, can we not see ourselves, and the way we are going? Or can we go two ways, up and down at once? If we have any glimpse of true wisdom, shall we not take the advice of Solomon, and endeavour 'to be wise for ourselves?' Yet how can we be wise for ourselves, if we attempt to serve two opposite masters? Nay, if we suffer the plant, that bears eternal life, to pine in the lean soil of weak reason only, and a still weaker faith, while that which bears death and misery, grows rank

in all the fatness of our hearts ? We ought never to forget, that he who is now a child of light, as the devil was, before his fall, may, like him, become a child of darkness and of this world, and with him, inherit 'outer darkness.' This most terrifying reflection should set us on the watch, should rouse every power of the soul and heart to the service of God, that we may 'stand fast in the faith ; that we may quit ourselves like men, and be strong ;' that we may no longer blindly walk towards any other point but heaven, nor idly loiter in the way to that ; that we may 'lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us ;' that we may 'gird up our loins, and with patience run the race that is set before us, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

O infinitely gracious and almighty God, grant us, we beseech thee, strength to do this, to thy eternal glory, and our salvation, through Christ Jesus, to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LX.

### THE SCORNER SCORNE.

PREFACHED ON A FAST-DAY IN TIME OF FAMINE AND UNSUCCESSFUL WAR.

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PROV. I. 24—26.

*Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ;*

*But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock, when your fear cometh.*

THESE words are found in the midst of a remarkable speech made by wisdom to that part of mankind, who most want, but are least inclined to receive, her admonitions. The wisdom that speaks is that divine Wisdom, or 'Word, whereby the Lord hath founded the earth, and established

the heavens ; whom the Lord possessed from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was ;' who is ' the wisdom of God ; and who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' The men she speaks to, are the thoughtless, the insensible, the proud, the wicked.

And, as if she did not expect to find a race like these, assembled in a temple, synagogue, church, or any place peculiarly consecrated to religious instructions ; she attacks them in their own place of rendezvous, ' she crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets ; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates ; in the city she uttereth her words.' In the thoroughfare of ' the simple ones, who love simplicity,' and hide themselves therein ; on the very parade of ' the scorers,' who with pleasure, glory ' in their scorning ;' just in the path of ' fools, who hate knowledge,' because it exposes their folly, and ' reproves their evil deeds ;' amidst ' the deaf adders,' by nature incapable of hearing, yet ' stopping their ears,' lest they should by some miracle be forced to hear, and at the same time opening their mouths, that they may fasten their envenomed teeth on their teachers ; in this crowded mart of business ; this broad way of pleasure, pomp, and ambition ; this kennel of vice and pollution ; even here, the wisdom of God raiseth its voice, and uttereth its sacred words.

But is it possible that the voice of God should deign to mix itself with a clamour set up by folly and wickedness, where, as in their own element, they ride rampant and triumphant ? Why not ? On whom should ' this light shine ?' but on those ' who sit in darkness ?' To whom should wisdom preach, but to fools ? Or threaten the terrors of the Lord, but to proud and obstinate fools ? When this Wisdom or ' Word of God was made flesh, and dwelt among us,' as he ' came into the world to save sinners,' so he conversed with sinners, but without sin. He brought the medicine of the soul to those who needed a physician, but without catching any infection. It is true, he was ' a friend to publicans and sinners,' but without being himself ' a gluttonous person, or a wine-bibber,' without ' consenting to the thief,' or ' being partaker with the adulterer.'

As ' all things were made by him,' and the holy Scriptures

revealed by his spirit, so he teacheth both by his word and works. By his word he calls us to faith and repentance; and by his works of nature and providence he gives perpetual encouragement to the virtues, and scourges the vices of mankind. In times, like these particularly, he preaches to us even by our own follies and crimes, together with their unhappy effects, preaches righteousness to the yet uncorrupted observer, and repentance to the yet feeling sinner, in a strain of oratory, that is truly pathetic.

In this sort of eloquence chiefly consists the force of that speech, wherewith the wisdom of God, in the mystic character of a woman, here addresses her auditors of the street. Let us hear her at large in this and other parts of Scripture, where it will be evident, she applies herself, not only to the Israelites, but to all men, peculiarly indeed to us of these countries, and in these times. Suffer me only to lend her a tongue, and to be when your dulness may possibly require it, her interpreter. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;' or if he cannot hear, let him feel, now that the rod is laid on to urge the lesson, the rod, I mean, of famine, and a calamitous war, the effect, the punishment of our departure from God, and contempt for his holy religion.

'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regardeth; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock, when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a worldwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth

unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.'

Were wisdom to speak personally and directly to us of these countries, and at this very time, just so would she speak; and no doubt, this her most upbraiding and alarming speech was written for our admonition. It is true, she speaks of the too late return of the wicked, and of her determined deafness to their cries, as future events; 'then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer.' Herein only does her address appear to be somewhat inapplicable to us; for although the calamities she threatens, are, in some measure, already inflicted on us, we are as far from calling on her, as in the midst of our stupifying prosperity; although 'the day of our calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon us make haste, yet we obey not, neither incline our ears, but make our necks stiff,' that we may not hear nor receive instruction. In all other points these words of wisdom come home to our particular case, pierce to the bottom of our sins, and paint exactly the dreadful condition, into which we are entering, as fast as the rapid tide of our infidelity and crimes can carry us.

The introduction to the speech just repeated, hath two things very remarkable in it. First, the divine speaker calls those to whom she addresses herself, by the names of 'simple ones, scorers, and fools;' and yet in the second place, she exhorts them 'to turn at her reproof,' and promises 'to pour out her spirit,' and 'make known her words unto them.' By the former, she attempts to gain an humble and obedient ear, if possible, even from the fool and the scorner; and in order to it, lets them know, who she is, and who they are; how wise and glorious she; how stupid, how despicable, how every way impotent, helpless, and miserable, they. By the latter, she affords encouragement, even in case of the grossest folly, to hope for knowledge, and on supposition of the most scornful obstinacy past, to expect her grace and spirit, if the one 'will but hear and fear,' and the other 'cease to rage, and be confident.'

From this sharp, and yet compassionate manner of accostment, she goes on, first, to remind them of her having 'called and stretched out her hand to them.'



Secondly, of their having 'refused to hear her call,' of their having universally 'disregarded the stretching out of her hand,' and of their having 'set at nought all her counsel, and despised her reproof.'

And then thirdly, to assure them, 'she will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.'

First, the divine wisdom reminds her senseless and haughty hearers of her having 'called and stretched out her hand to them.' But how hath she called? Why, first, by the voice of common sense and reason, that power of reasoning and reflecting, which she hath bestowed, in a greater or less degree, on every human creature. By this she hath called on them, to consider, that God governs the world both by the nature of things, and his providence; that, if folly could possibly succeed against nature, wickedness at least cannot hope to prosper in spite of providence; and that it is not only atheism, but distraction, to believe, they may, be appearances, for a time, ever so tempting.

But lest reason should fail in the performance of this most easy office, she hath called to them by the history of former times to reflect, that every irreligious nation was a wicked nation; and that no wicked nation could, for a moment, preserve itself from slavery, or long, from total ruin; and she hath called on them by their own experience to mark the truth of those Scriptural, but common observations, that 'the prosperity of the wicked is short,' and that 'he suddenly cometh to a fearful end.'

And that these reflections may be made with the greater frequency and strength, the Divine wisdom hath continually called to them by her holy Scriptures, and given that which was only human reason before, the vigour of a voice from heaven, loudly threatening the folly of the simple ones with adversity, the pride of the scorner, with a fall, and wickedness with vengeance.

But as men, so very foolish and vain, are too apt, in obedience to appetite and passion, to stifle their own reason, to overlook the events of things, and to turn away both their eyes and ears from the word of God, she hath never ceased to call them by her ministers to the right use of their rational faculties, to the experiments daily made before their eyes of the power whereby God and nature perpetually scourge the

wicked, and to the awful menaces in Scripture of wrath, judgment, and fiery indignation, on the impenitent.

Thus, by reason, conscience, and every thing within them; by nature, experience, and every thing around them; by the word of God, and the voice of his ministers, now soothing in the promises, now alarming in the threatenings, of truth infallible, and justice irresistible, she hath called them to instruction; and if she had been heard, would have roused them to conversion. But what does she promise? Not only the things that now are, but those which are to come; things infinitely great, and eternally to be desired; things which the carnal eye hath not, cannot see; and which it cannot enter into the carnal heart to conceive or imagine. And what does she threaten? Judgments here, and damnation hereafter; judgments, however which the worldly-minded is too much an infidel to fear, and eternal damnation, which the sensual compound with for the pleasures of a moment.

As a skilful orator labours to enforce what he says to the ear, by the gestures wherewith he speaks to the eye, and hopes to render his eloquence visible; so the divine wisdom also 'stretches out her hand,' and pleads the cause of goodness and happiness with a sort of action, suitable to the infinite dignity of her person, and the infinite importance of that cause; for in her hand she holds forth not only 'length of days, riches, honour,' and every temporal blessing, but happiness and glory eternal. When these fail of the intended effect, she knows how to fill her hand with distresses and calamities, with judgments temporal and spiritual; and when either alone proves unsuccessful, she confers the former, or inflicts the latter by turns; she cheers with plenty, or scourges with famine; she comforts with health, or dejects with sickness; she encourages with peace, or terrifies with war, as the obstinacy of her hearers may require the one, or their docility entitle them to the other. She uses the 'low still voice' to whisper knowledge and duty to the sensible ear of a lively conscience; and thunders 'the terrors of the Lord' to a haughty or hardened heart. 'He that hath ears to hear,' must hear such a preacher; he that hath eyes to see, must see such engines of persuasion; and he that hath any sense of feeling, must

feel the force of those engines, at least when they are immediately applied to his soul and conscience, too stupidly heavy to be moved by a power less than infinite, and even by that at a distance.

Here indeed is eloquence in perfection, working on the judgment with arguments irresistibly convincing, and on all the senses, desires, affections, passions, with all nature, with the whole world, with heaven and hell, with God, and all his attributes of wisdom, justice, mercy, and power, as instruments of persuasion. There is no one here, to whom this powerful speaker hath not preached in that 'voice, which hath gone out into all lands,' and those words which have been sounded 'to the end of the world.' Who is he that hath not heard 'the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder' of soul and spirit, and 'of the joints and marrow?' Or who is he who, after hearing her speak through the works and word of God, hath not also heard her speak more particularly to himself in the blessings and judgments of his providence, urging every word with comforts too tender, one would think, not to melt the most insensible, or blows too terrible, not to quell the most stubborn heart? Yet where is the effect?

Why, in the second place, almost all, to whom she hath called, 'have refused to answer her;' have 'disregarded the stretching out of her hand; have set at nought all her counsel, and despised her reproof.' The blessings she hath promised have not soothed, nor the judgments she threatened, alarmed them; so that she may truly say, 'I have piped unto you, but ye have not danced; I have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented.' In the end, however, I shall be 'justified of my children' and servants, who, knowing how much greater trust ought to be reposed in me, than in the wisdom of the world, do repose it. I also, in return, will justify them at that time, when I shall distinguish between their obedience and your rebellion. They have heard my call; I will theirs. But as for you, '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 spoke, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore

thus saith the Lord God, behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry ; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty ; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed ; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.'

Our great unworthiness (to say no worse) considered, it is surely more by far than we could reasonably expect at God's hands, 'to have, when we earnestly ask ; to find, when we diligently seek ; and to be opened unto, when we vehemently knock.' But if infinite wisdom condescends to be our suitor, and to entreat our acceptance of her gifts, shall we refuse ? to seek for us, shall we not be found ? To knock at our understandings and hearts with all the strength of reason, revelation, conscience, experience, preaching ; shall she be denied admittance ? Yet, such is our folly, that we prefer ignorance to her instruction, and darkness to light, 'because our deeds are evil ;' and such our pride, that we scorn her call, because it is a call to humility, to self-condemnation, and self-denial, and that only, when self is become the enemy of our happiness, temporal and eternal.

But howsoever the not attending to her bare instructions may be excused in wretches, too dull to hear, too stupid to understand ; yet how can we be so blind as not to see her hand stretched out, and filled with blessings and curses ? Or so insensible as neither to feel the one in our miseries and fears, nor the other in our gratitude, when they are actually poured upon us ? During the last sixty-five years, what peace, liberty, improvement, plenty, hath she not showered on us with an unstinted hand ! And how have we received these blessings ? Why, only as so many provocatives to irreligion and wickedness. What hath our long peace produced, but a stupid security ? What, our singular liberty, but unbounded licentiousness ? What, the continual improvement of our country, but corruption of manners, and the arts of refinement in folly and wickedness ? What, our uncommon plenty of money and the comforts of life, but desires inflamed beyond all possibility of control, by a wanton indulgence, and pampered up to madness by excessive luxury in eating, drinking, dressing, and attendance ?

On the other hand (to say nothing of the severities wherewith the sins of our forefathers were chastised in former ages), she hath, by her providence in the government of the world, frequently, in our days, scourged the growing infidelity of these countries in famines, pestilential fevers, rebellions, &c. with as much sharpness as was consistent with the great indulgence just now mentioned. On particular occasions, we have suffered much, and with reason, dreaded more; but neither suffered, as if sensible our afflictions were the natural effects of our sins, nor dreaded, as if at all apprehensive of God's displeasure. Our want of provisions was charged to the account of unnatural seasons; our contagious disorders to unwholesome dispositions of the air; and our rebellions, to the policy of the French king, and the designs of a pretender. Few among us traced these calamities to the overruling wisdom and justice of God, or considered, that second causes are moved and directed by the first. Public fasts and days of humiliation have been indeed, from time to time, appointed, and kept with some little shew of religious sorrow by a small number of us; but all our former luxury, wantonness, wickedness, have never failed to return with the next meal. For one day of gloom dedicated to God, a whole year of riot hath been constantly offered up to his enemy. In short, we have not loved God the more for what we enjoyed, nor feared him the more for what we suffered; but have forgotten him, not only after, but in the very instant of both, because we neither would 'hear the voice of his wisdom, nor see the stretching out of her hand.'

No, on the contrary, we 'have set at nought all her counsel.' Two ways she hath offered it to us, by the nature of things, and by the holy Scriptures. By a tolerable experience in the nature of things, particularly of our own nature, and of ordinary causes and effects, so far as they concern our safety and welfare in this life, we may easily gather a sufficient stock of prudence for the management of ourselves and our affairs. Wisdom, for instance, by her natural counsel, soon teaches him who is capable of learning any thing at all, that it is best to wake by day, and sleep by night; that food naturally wholesome, pleasant, and easily obtained, is preferable to the contrary; that

the natural figure and proportion of the human body is more convenient and beautiful, than any other which art may bestow upon it; that industry and action are more conducive to health, and the supply of all our wants, than sloth and idleness; that temperance is the parent and nurse of health and every virtue; and luxury, of sickness and every vice; and that whatsoever is governed by wisdom and design, is better governed than that which is left to chance or hazard.

Wisdom, by her counsels, as conveyed to us in holy Writ, pursues the business of our instruction to yet higher and nobler lessons. Here she teaches us to know our Maker, the ends for which we were made, and the proper methods of promoting those ends. Here she directs our eyes through faith to immortality and glory, and lays out the road that leads to both. Here she proposes every motive and encouragement to virtue; and when we nevertheless fall into sin, and begin to lose our hopes of the great things promised, she calls us back to our duty, and shews us how to obtain mercy and forgiveness.

How miserably are her counsels in each conveyance rejected! The present times declare aloud for nature, and write and talk so much about the sufficiency of nature, together with the indispensable expediency and duty of following nature in every thing, that, taking the world only by its words, one would imagine we were hastening back apace into a sort of golden age, or primitive state of pure, natural simplicity.

But in truth all this talk is made use of only to run down revelation, and discredit the necessity of supernatural assistances; for in what age of the world did mankind ever shew a more thorough contempt for nature? Or when were they more absolutely enslaved, against common sense and reason, to artificial modes of living, and an endless round of refinement, too piteously silly to be the object of a sensible ridicule, and too destructive of every virtue, every real comfort of life, to stand the test of experience in the greatest dunce among all her scholars?

Is sleeping in the day with the owl and bat, and waking in the night with the robber and the wolf, a practice authorized by nature? Or is the light of a candle more natural

than that of the sun? Can the recreations (not to say the business) of a rational being find a fitter season in the gloomy, the damp, and dangerous air of the night, than in that of the day, when all nature in its beauty, calls us up to health, joy, and an unforced flow of spirits?

Hath nature fitted our constitutions for a riotous indulgence in artificial meats and drinks? The wisdom of God denies it. She never gave us a natural desire of that which is not in nature, and is only the effect of art.

Will he who is so vain of his person, as to study nothing else but his dress, so dress himself, as to disfigure that person, and turn himself every year into a new kind of monster? Is this following nature?

Were idleness as agreeable to nature as the love of it is common, how could even the necessities of life be procured? Or can it be supposed, that wealth hath given one sort of body to the rich, and necessity quite another sort to the poor? If they have, surely wealth and necessity are not both the work of nature. If idleness were natural to us, how comes it to pass that the idle are always not only the most useless, but the most profligate and most miserable of mankind?

If we really mean to follow nature, as it is, why do we not banish our luxury of every kind, strip ourselves of all our refinements, and reduce ourselves to the principles and manners, in all respects, of those true naturalists the native Americans, Negroes, and Hottentots? These, of all men we know, are the closest followers of nature; and that which distinguishes the inhabitants of these countries from them, is only either preternatural, or artificial. If they are as God made them, neither he nor nature could have had any hand in making us, who are nothing more than the creatures of art, refinement, and fashion. It would be a blasphemy against nature, or nature would be a blasphemy against the Creator, should we ascribe to nature a monster, a pageant, tricked out only for shew, consisting, it is true, of a soul, but a soul steeped in the corruption of every vice; and of a body, but a body tottering, or rotting under every distemper.

Do they follow nature, who are for taking that which, of all things, they have most at heart, out of the hands, not



only of reason and lawful industry, but, of God's providence, and giving it up to the decision of chance at a gaming table?

The miseries suffered by the slaves of the devil would be somewhat more tolerable to pride than they are, were they not so infinitely ridiculous. To be fished for, and to be caught with a bare hook, or with known experienced misery, is such an insult to the infidelity and vices of that age, which boasts itself the most refined and sagacious of all ages, as can be no otherwise accounted for, but by the supposition of a general infatuation. Where is that vaunted reason in the pursuit of nature, whereof we hear so much talk? Does it consist in preferring the things of this world to God and heaven; and then in wildly wasting those things, so preferred, on objects and pursuits, too silly for the wishes of a child, too gross for the taste of a brute, and both publicly and privately too ruinous to end in any thing else, than in universal slavery, distress, or desolation? Are these the dictates of reason? Is this the appointment of nature? Tell me, are you, the present pretended advocates for nature, the only beings in the creation, who are privileged to trample on nature, on your own nature? And must the God of nature be denied a right to speak above nature, to suspend or invert nature, that is, to work a miracle for your conviction and retrieval, when nothing else, nothing in nature, can effect it?

If you thus set at nought the counsel of wisdom, even as conveyed by nature, which you profess to admire and follow, it is no wonder you should still more flatly reject it in the Scriptures, where it is accompanied with certain necessary austerities which you do not relish; no wonder, you should say to wisdom, when she thus addresses you, 'depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him. And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?'

It is still less to be wondered at, that you should despise her reproofs, whether as uttered by her ministers, or backed by her providential corrections. Her ministers, if they attempt to 'persuade you by the terrors of the Lord,' and threaten your horrible enormities with vengeance from the hand of a chastising God, are to be shunned and persecuted.

And when what they have threatened comes to pass in public or private calamities, which tend to the disappointment of your abominable pursuits and unreasonable expectations ; you then murmur and kick at Providence, as if your lives gave you a right to a paradise of your own making. Is it following nature or reason to expect to be whispered to, at a time when you are almost deaf ! or to be flattered when you only insult ! Is it reasonable to give drams in fevers, because the mad patient is pleased with them ! Do rational parents cherish their children for spitting in their faces, purely because those children would rather be cherished than chastised ? Is it reasonable to expect that kings should reward and promote robbers, cut-throats, and rebels, merely because such sort of men would be glad to live at large and without law, and to be rewarded and promoted at the same time ? Can you reasonably expect the comforts of life, who have never taken the necessary pains to acquire them ? Or you who are perpetually exchanging them for superfluities and throwing them away on your follies and vices ? Can a nation reasonably expect fidelity and patriotism from those to whom it hath sold its power ?

Is it reasonable to hope, that wretches, softened on the down of luxury, and lulled in the lap of ease and wantonness, should stand the hardships of war, and shine as heroes in the day of battle ? Is it possible that effeminacy and cowardice, worse than those of women, should conquer ? Or that God should providentially, nay, miraculously, interpose, to crown with victory a people, as dissolute, abandoned and infidel in his sight, as it is effeminate and abject in the sight of its enemies ?

We can conceive nothing more reasonable, than that God should govern with wisdom and justice that world, nay every nation, and even every particular person, of that world, on the creation whereof he hath expended so much wisdom, goodness, and power. To ascribe, therefore, as now almost every one does, the prosperity of a nation solely and ultimately to the wisdom, and all its calamities solely and ultimately to the weakness of those at its helm ; and to suppose that God does not interfere, is true national and political atheism. Yet admitting the supposition, can the dishonest be safely trusted ? or can an unbeliever be honest ?

When we see, every day, a country selling itself, and sold again by the purchasers, what madness is it to trace this only to political mistakes, and to hope for redress in new hands or measures, instead of turning our eyes on irreligion, on a rejection of the counsels offered by divine wisdom, and on the contempt of her repeated reproofs, as the true sources of our disgraces abroad, and distresses at home?

Having thus 'refused to answer, when wisdom called, disregarded the stretching out of her hand, set at nought her counsel, and despised her reproof;' we have now but too much reason to expect, in the third and last place, her final sentence, her dreadful dismiss; 'I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.'

Fearful sentence! a people distressed by a decay of trade! reduced almost to their last morsel of bread! unsuccessful in war! relying on weak and divided counsels! not knowing whom to trust with its administration, lest he should prove a traitor! nor with its sword, lest he should prove a coward! mortgaged! sold! to false friends at home, and bitter enemies abroad! yet rioting in expense and luxury! rioting and starving! licentious, yet enslaved! torn by various factions, whereof not one hath the least real attachment to its true interests! torn by heresies and schisms, although wholly regardless of religion! and therefore deserted by that only wisdom which is able to retrieve its affairs, that wisdom which it hath, long since, rejected, which it still ridicules! even now, when it is her turn to laugh at its calamity, as equally unavoidable and intolerable, and to mock when its too-well grounded fear of greater evils, than it hath ever yet endured, is come. A new and horrible thing may be seen among us, the vengeance of God, and our unnatural wickedness, treading circularly on each other's heels! following, and followed, so closely, that the crime is committed, the judgment executed, and the crime again repeated, almost in the same instant. Where, or in what is this war with the Almighty likely to end!

Behold 'the whirlwind of God's wrath,' which threatens to scatter us from our country, and to 'lay waste our dwell-

ing-place !' or to sweep us, with a swift destruction, from the face of the earth, to distress and anguish infinitely more fearful ! ' Behold the whirlwind of the Lord, which is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind, which shall fall grievously on the head of the wicked, whom the Lord shall scatter as with an east wind before the enemy, and shall shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.' In that day shall ' he that sitteth in heaven, laugh ; the Lord shall have them in derision, for in their prosperity they said, they should never be cast down ;' and, therefore, setting up for scoffers in religion, they ' took pleasure in walking after their own ungodly lusts.' There is, surely, nothing so deservedly the object of scorn, as weakness setting up for independence, and stupidity scoffing at wisdom. It is not, however, till the security of the simple in their sins hath slain them, and the prosperity of fools, notwithstanding the long-suffering patience of God, hath at length brought destruction on them, that the vanity and vileness of such wretches can be set in their own proper lights, and thoroughly exposed.

Go, now, saith wisdom, and look for succour against the sword from your long-vaunted power and courage. Go now to your riches and ask them to bribe the pestilence, and turn away the vial of its poison on some better nation. Go now to your revels, and try if you can shut out the light, on this day of visitation, from the exposure and punishment of your evil deeds, your deeds of darkness. Go now to your infidel arguments, your irreligious taunts, your atheistical blasphemies, and see if they can comfort you under the scourge of an avenging God. Go to your associates in profaneness, and ' now, that thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee ;' but ' the wind shall carry them all away ; vanity shall take them.' You knew not the extent of your power, nor the number of your possessions, nor the bounds of your pleasures, nor the depth of your own wisdom ; can none of these deliver you ? Surely it is not possible, that one lately so very confident, can now be reduced to a condition, so wholly helpless and abject.

Wisdom, having thus scorned her scorers, and mocked at her scoffers, vouchsafes no longer to speak to them, but turning herself to others, who may profit by the example of

their miseries, she says, then shall these unhappy contemners of wisdom 'call upon me, but I will not answer.' The day of grace is past, and it is now my turn to lend a deaf ear to their cries, as they always did to mine. It is now come to pass, that 'as I cried, and they would not hear, so when they cry I will not hear.' As, when 'I stretched out my hand, no man regarded, so now, when they spread forth their hands, I will hide mine eyes from them; yea, when they make many prayers, I will not hear. They seek me early,' but they shall perceive it is too late, for they shall not find me, because, when 'I sent to them all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them; yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck, and did worse than their fathers;' and also, 'because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.' No, they fled from the light because 'it reproved their evil deeds,' and affected to treat the fear of God as mean and slavish. They were too wise to learn, and too great to fear. As they 'would none of my counsel, and despised my reproof,' it is impossible, they should taste the blessed effect of either contentment, for the present, and happiness for ever. On the contrary, for this their rejection of my counsels and reproofs, and for giving themselves up to the guidance of their own counsels, 'they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.' It is true, they have adorned the broad way downward with every plant of pleasure, and enriched it on either hand, with fruit-trees in abundance. This they have chosen for their way, and made it an avenue of delights; but they shall soon perceive, that these fruits are too bitter to be tasted, and too poisonous to be safely touched; they shall perceive, when it shall be too late to return, that their way is only an avenue to infamy and destruction. As they have 'plowed iniquity and sowed wickedness, they shall reap the same. They have sowed iniquity, and they shall reap vanity. These backsliders in heart shall be filled with their own ways. Hear, O earth, behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law,' but rejected it. They shall have enough of their own counsels, and surfeit on the produce of their own devices; but 'while the flesh of their

delicate quails, after which they lusted, is yet between their teeth ere it is chewed, the wrath of the Lord shall be kindled against them, and he shall smite them with a very great plague,' the plague at least, of a palate loathing, and a stomach turning, at every pleasure, and of all the distempers, tortures, terrors, attending on a life of folly and sensuality. 'But whoso hearkeneth unto me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease. Surely he shall not be moved for ever. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' The portion of those who reject my counsels, shall be vanity and vexation now, and the dread of worse hereafter. But the portion of all who lend an attentive ear to my call, and an obedient heart to my instructions, shall be peace of mind for the present, and a well-grounded hope of happiness infinite, and glory eternal, yet to come.

Here you may perceive, is vengeance threatened, and mercy offered; and both founded on the unalterable decrees of God, nay on the very nature of things, insomuch, that he must cease to be just, and the whole scheme of nature be inverted, infinite wisdom must degenerate into folly, and eternal truth into fallacy; or every one of us must have reason to rejoice in what is promised, or to tremble at that which is threatened.

But why do I say, threatened, to a people conscious of their own guilt, conscious of their having departed from the counsel of wisdom, and sensible (if they have any sense) that the avenging hand of God is already laid upon them? As nevertheless the present are probably 'but the beginning of sorrow,' and as a deep repentance, if it becomes general, may avert or mitigate the greater evils yet to be apprehended; let us neither presume in our wickedness, nor despair of God's compassion; but now that he himself, finding his ministers have been either unfaithful, or unheard, hath began to preach to us by famine and the sword, let us 'hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.' The sincere repentance of those who hear me, will, in proportion, contribute to the relief of the whole community by appeasing in part, the displeasure of Almighty God. If there had been but ten righ-

teous found in Sodom, though a large and populous city, their righteousness had saved the whole from fire and brimstone. But although we are too few to procure by our return to God so great indulgence to numbers of hardened and desperate offenders, and their is now not an Abraham among us to obtain, by his faith and piety, so great an indulgence; yet shall not each of us, if we wholly forsake our sins, procure salvation to himself, 'and save his own soul alive? If when a land sinneth against God by trespassing grievously, and he stretcheth out his hand to break the staff of the bread thereof; or saith to the sword, go through that land, and cut off both man and beast; or send a pestilence into that land to pour out his fury in blood;' if he would not spare it, 'though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it; yet should these good men deliver their own souls,' at least, 'by their righteousness;' and surely that would be sufficient to repay all the vigilance and perseverance of good life in them, and to overpay the keenest anxieties of repentance in us.

Let no man presume to say, I have, in this discourse, delivered myself in terms too severe and damnatory. Let him rather consult with his own conscience, and he will find perhaps that no small share of our present public calamities and fears are chargeable to the account of his particular guilt. Let him in the humility of spirit, which ought to result from such a consultation, reflect on the severity wherewith infinite wisdom condemns his departure from her, and denounces vengeance on his head; and then let him, if he dare, censure me for too much harshness in repeating her words. Or if this criminal under sentence, is still bold enough to arraign the Scriptural reproof of his own crimes, let him consider, that God is now speaking to him by his judgments in a louder and sharper tone. If he considers this as he ought to do, he will think it no time to criticise the words of others, when the bolt of God is lanced at his own actions; but will rather 'learn to hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.'

May God, of his infinite pity, look with patience on the hardened, and compassion on the penitent sinners of this his once favourite, but now unhappy country. May he greatly sanctify all his dispensations, whether of indulgence or severity, to the entire amendment both of our principles and



ways; that henceforward his wisdom may be our only guide, and his glory, the only aim of all our pursuits, through Christ Jesus, our blessed Saviour, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Grace, &c.

## DISCOURSE LXI.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN IS BOTH DEAD AND ALIVE.

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COL. III. 3.

*Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

THE Scriptures mention three kinds of death; the first, a separation of soul and body, which is a natural death; the second, a separation of both soul and body from God, which is spiritual or eternal death; and the third, a separation of the soul and heart with its affections from the world, considered as an allurements to sin, which is a figurative death, and the immediate forerunner of the true, spiritual, and eternal life.

Opposite to these kinds of death, the same Scriptures frequently speak of as many sorts of life; and set forth these kinds of death, as so different among themselves, and these sorts of life, as so distinct from one another, that it is plain the same man may be dead in the third sense, who is alive in both the former. This will appear from my text, and various other passages, hereafter to be instanced.

It is this last kind of death, which St. Paul speaks to us of in my text, when he says to all true Christians, 'Ye are dead,' dead in the opinion of a wicked world, because ye no longer, as they do, 'make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; but do through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body,' desiring, like this blessed apostle, 'as much as in you lies, to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.'

The whole world, properly so called, 'lieth in wickedness,' and through the universal corruption and guilt of mankind is subject not only to the first or natural death, but also to 'the second' death, or the eternal separation of soul and body from God. From this worst kind of death nothing can deliver us, but the 'death unto sin,' spoken of in the text and elsewhere; and 'a new birth unto righteousness' through Christ Jesus our Lord. By the first we 'put off the old man, we mortify our members which are on the earth,' and 'crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.' By the second we are 'born again of water and the spirit,' and enter on a new life, a holy and spiritual life, that 'life which is hid from' the eyes of an ignorant, undiscerning, and sinful world; but is hid and safely laid up with Christ, the author, and giver of this life, 'who is the very life itself,' and in whom every true believer lives, and lives in God, for he is, in soul, in heart, in faith, in practice, truly 'alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

In order to make the beauty, force, and use of the text more intelligible, let us enter a little into its several parts.

First, it tells the real believer, or Christian, that he is dead, a word of infinite comfort to him; and of no less terror to every one who is not yet a real Christian.

The first finds infinite delight in reflecting, that 'the bitterness of this death is past' with him; the other, equal fear and anxiety of soul in considering, that he must either suffer the agonies of this death unto sin, or fearfully expect the agonies of that death, which is never to find an end. The first knows, and the latter ought at least to know, that every man must die either to sin, or to God. There is no possibility of a middle way to be taken, although the generality of those who call themselves Christians do nothing else, during their whole lives, but attempt a middle way, if that may be called a middle way, which goes so much nearer to this world, than to the gospel, as to discover very little kindred to the one, and so great a likeness to the other, that, bating a little prudence and outward decency, no difference can be perceived between the lives of Christians in general, and the lives of such as openly disavow Christianity. But, to the infinite mortification and disappointment of these compounders between God and sin, they shall, one day, find there

are but these two ways mentioned by Christ, 'the narrow way,' and 'the broad,' and that every one is, and must be, either a good man, or a reprobate. 'He who is not for us,' saith Christ, 'is against us.'

What then is it to be dead in the sense of my text? It is to cease from sin, for 'he that is dead' in this sense, 'hath,' as St. Paul assures us, 'ceased from sin,' that is, hath 'denied himself,' his worldly and fleshly self, hath subdued his stubborn and unruly passions, pride, anger, revenge; and mortified his corrupt affections, lust, avarice, gluttony, and drunkenness. He walks no more in obedience to these passions and affections, so far as they are inordinate, than another man who is in his grave.

Our Saviour speaks of this man, as well as of his first disciples, when he says, they 'are not of this world as I am not of this world;' and the men of this world, for once agreeing to the words of Christ, say of him;

'He is no more like one of this world's people, than if he had just dropped from the moon. It is a poor dead creature. He hath neither life nor spirit in him. One seldom meets him at the public diversions. He makes no figure in the world. After all, he must have a good stock of vanity to countenance his contempt of the world in the midst of that universal contempt, wherewith he is repaid. As his life is a haughty censure on all mankind, a very few only, as singular and precise as himself, excepted, so the practice of a world is surely a sufficient censure on his. Were it possible for such a wretch to have friends, his whimsical indifference about wealth, and his equally ridiculous squeamishness of conscience in regard to justice, oaths, and the like, would make him wholly incapable of serving them. On a jury, or before a court as witnesses, the men of this stamp are always too nice and punctilious to give their souls for one another, as we do; and therefore the very best of them can neither be nor have a friend, but is cut out only for insignificance and obscurity; and lies like a mass of lead at the foot of that ladder, on which others mount to titles and honours. And as to business, he is overrun with such scruples, is so mere a slave to superstition, which he calls religion, stands so much on ceremony with heaven, and is, in short, so great a fool in regard to the

world, that one might as well expect to see a child of three years old bustling at the bar, or wrangling on the exchange, or scheming and managing an election. For these reasons he is rarely heard of in the way of business; and never, as a thorough-going man. In the way of pleasure he is more rarely to be traced. Were he not absolutely dead, surely his bottle would sometimes be seen, or his mistress heard of. He hath nothing to do in this world, and is fit only to be laid aside, as a creature of no significance to it.'

Just so he thinks of himself, and takes this for the highest encomium the world is capable of bestowing on him, as the only allurements to vanity, wherewith it is able to tempt him. But that he may not hear it, like one really dead to the world, he buries, he hides himself; and where? Why, 'with Christ in God,' according to the words in my text.

He retires, as much as in him lies, into the obscurity of a life, wholly different from the rest of the world. He gives himself up to secret prayer, and to acts of charity as secret. In the depths of solitary meditation he labours to wean his heart from a vain and vexatious world, and to turn it with all its affections to God. If he throws an eye on the world, it is only to study the uncertainty and deceitfulness of all its ways. If he looks into himself, it is to examine, with more severity than malice employs on the faults of others, the corruption and vileness of his own nature. From objects of contemplation so very uncomfortable and unpleasing, it is the great relief and refreshment of his soul, to lift his thoughts to the one infinitely good; but not till he hath, in some tolerable degree, subdued his fleshly desires, banished the world from his esteem, and by both raised his soul to a taste for higher and better things, and to some hope of favour in the sight of God through Christ Jesus his intercessor.

This, you see, is not the employment or pursuit of the world, nor is this the way to come at riches, honours, power, or pleasure. No, these must be hunted after, if hunted after at all, by quite other arts, than prayer, almsgiving, and religious meditation, which are the proper methods only of laying up 'those treasures, which neither moth nor worm can corrupt, nor thief break through and steal;' of arriving at

‘those honours and that power,’ which are sought for ‘by a patient continuance in well doing;’ and of enjoying ‘those rivers of pleasure which are at the right hand of God for evermore.’ The good Christian aims his life at a future world; and therefore it is no wonder he should seem to live and act as if he were out of this world. He aims his life at ends and purposes invisible to the unregenerate; and therefore that life itself is hid from their eyes.

As the life of this man is hid from that world, to which he is dead, so his life, his new life, is fed and maintained by food, equally unknown to the irreligious world, for ‘the Lord giveth him to eat of the hidden manna,’ and guides the course of his life by ‘the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.’ This wisdom which is foolishness to the Greeks and all other men of this world, because they pursue such ends as it points not at, and think all other ends insignificant, directs the true Christian to the one only end worth pursuing; and therefore hidden as it is from the eyes of a self-blinded world, is the only wisdom.

You may now see how, and in what sense it is, that he who is dead to the world and to sin, is buried, or hid, in a great measure, from that world, and almost entirely from its praise and esteem. The artful, the covetous, the ambitious, the lawless, triumph on the stage of this world, and carry all before them, while the good are shuffled out of the way, and pushed aside, as strangers and foreigners, who have nothing to do here; so true is the saying of Solomon, ‘when the wicked rise a man is hidden.’

The world calls him a living man, whom it sees exercising the common functions of life, that is, using his eyes, ears, palate, stomach, with all his affections and passions, just as other men are wont to do. It pronounces him alive, whom it sees moving, as pleasure and interest draw; or moved, as custom and fear of worldly power push him backward, or forward. The world hath no other notion of life, but this; and therefore looks on the good Christian as dead, who does not appear to see the pomps, nor to hear the enchantments, nor to taste the pleasures, nor to regulate his motions by the fashions, or in the ways, of this world.

If such a one is sometimes seen in the world, he serves for nothing else, but a wonder and a gazing-stock to the rest

of mankind. Nay, as his life is wholly spiritual, he walks about like the ghost of what he was, before he departed the life of sin, the reproach, the aversion, the terror, of all who meet him. But, like other apparitions, he is so seldom seen in the world, is so hidden from the eyes of other men, that it at length becomes doubtful with some, whether there is really any such being or not.

But, how, where, or with whom, is he hid? Can such goodness be lost to God or itself? Is a character so modest, and so exceedingly beautiful, to be seen no more? No, if he is hid, he is only hid as the 'gospel itself is, to them that are lost;' in whom 'the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' These are too blind to see him, or to look into his hiding place.

All other true believers, because they themselves are there also, know, that his 'life is hid with Christ, who knows his own sheep, and is known of his.' But the 'world who hath not known his father,' knows neither him nor his sheep; and therefore both are said in the text to be hid, as dead in the opinion of the world, because removed out of their sight.

Long before Christ was born, it was prophesied of him, that he should 'have no form nor comeliness,' and that men, when they saw him, 'should see no beauty in him, that they should desire him;' that he should 'be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' and that the men of this world should 'hide as it were their faces from him.' We may now turn the words of this prophecy into a history, and write it as matter of fact, not only concerning his person, but his gospel also; and the historian, as well as the prophet, may ask, 'who hath believed his report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'

As there was nothing in his person or countenance, and as little in his dress and attendance, to strike the minds of the worldly with any extraordinary degree of love or veneration; so neither is there in his doctrine or gospel. A wonderful plainness and simplicity, resembling those of his personal appearance, run through the whole, and hide the majesty and power of his religion from every eye that is affected only with pomp and show. It is by the eye of

faith alone, and of the Holy Ghost, who inspires that faith, that the otherwise inconceivable grandeur of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness, is discovered under a dress so plain and humble, and infinitely recommended by that dress to the admiration of a truly judicious and well disposed mind.

But farther, as there is nothing here to be relished by a false taste, so there is every thing to offend a proud and corrupt heart. Here is a suffering king to be served ; and a crucified God to be adored. How does this shock his faith, who hath made an idol of his own understanding, or who considers nothing as great, but worldly pomp and power ? Here denying ourselves, mortifying the deeds of the flesh, subduing our inordinate inclinations, bridling even such as are innocent, and dying to sin and the world ; are made absolutely necessary to the new life of a Christian. How does it disgust and offend the world to have almost all methods, both of making and enjoying fortunes, condemned and forbidden, as wicked, in pain of eternal damnation !

Now, is it any wonder, the world should hide as it were its face, should turn away its attention, and lock up its heart, from such a teacher, and such doctrine ? Here are the reasons, the true and real reasons, why Christ, and all that are firmly united to him, are said to be hid together from the eyes of a vain and sinful world ; and why it is affirmed, that ‘the God of this world,’ or the devil, ‘hath blinded the eyes of them who believe not, lest the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.’ The true Christian sees, and is seen, by that light alone ; and they therefore who are blind to that sort of light, cannot possibly see him. They are as deaf too to that sound and voice of the gospel, wherein the real Christian speaks, and is spoken to. ‘He that is of God heareth God’s words :’ they therefore hear them not, ‘because they are not of God.’ So neither this way can these men perceive or apprehend the true Christian.

In this blessed sanctuary, in the bosom of Christ himself, and in a life wholly governed by the gospel or religion of Jesus, is every real Christian hid from the observation of the world, to whom his life is a mystery, never to be accounted for, or fathomed ; and not only hid, but guarded



and defended on all sides against all the allurements, against all the vanity and vexation that is under the sun. From hence he looks not down into the world, but to laugh at its follies, or to pity its miseries. 'The armour of God' surrounds him. 'The helmet of salvation' guards his understanding. 'The breast-plate of righteousness' arms his heart. 'The shield of faith' defends him against all attacks. And with 'the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God,' he cuts in sunder, and strikes down all opposers. If the old serpent assaults him, he rouses up his courage with these words of God, 'resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' If his carnal desires do but begin to undermine his temperance or chastity, he recollects with a trembling heart, the admonitions of God, 'the minding of the flesh is death; ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' If the world with its customs and fashions bears in upon him, he hears God calling to him from within his own breast, and saying, 'be not conformed to this world.' And if all this is not enough, he hath still an infinitely comfortable assurance in reserve, that the presence of Christ, who hath promised 'to dwell in him, and to be with him to the end of the world, and the grace of his Holy Spirit, shall be sufficient for him.'

As there is little difference between dying to the world, and living in Christ; between 'the death unto sin,' and 'the new birth unto righteousness,' inasmuch as both are covenanted for in the same baptism, and take place in every true Christian at the same time, so I have treated of them as nearly the same thing. All the difference consists in this, that when we die, in the sense of my text, we 'cease to do evil,' and hate it; and when we begin to live in that sense, 'we learn to do good,' and to love it. He who does the former on Christian principles, can hardly stop there, but is under a sort of moral necessity of proceeding farther, and performing the latter. Whosoever on the footing of Christian faith, hath from his soul renounced the world, and emptied his heart of all its vanities and temptations, hath done it only that he may open his heart to God, and to the love of that which is pleasing in the sight of God. At the same time that he 'removed his affections from things on the earth, he set them,' according to the precept immediately preceding my text, 'on things above.' He died to sin and

the world, only, that his life might be hid with Christ; that his heart might be there purified by the gospel, and fortified by the grace of God; and that he might take sanctuary in the bosom of his Redeemer, from all the otherwise irresistible temptations, and all the otherwise unavoidable miseries to which he lay exposed before, when he was a man of this world.

In this high and comfortable sense it is, that he who is dead to the world, is hid with Christ. Thus it is that the Christian diamond lies concealed and enclosed in 'the rock of his salvation,' from whence he shall, in God's appointed time, shine forth in all the lustre of him, who is 'the way, the truth, and the life,' who is 'the light of the world.' By this light of all who truly live in Christ, the hypocritical pretender to Christianity is exposed in his true colours, and beheld as the carcase of a dead man, reanimated only by a fiend; as 'a dark and black spot in the feasts of charity; as a cloud without water carried about by winds; as a tree whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked by up the roots; as a raging wave of the sea, foaming out its own shame; and as a wandering star, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.'

But if the wicked are so exposed by this light, you will ask, how can he that is with Christ be hid in it? Can that which is in the light be hid? Yes, 'God is light,' and he who is hid with Christ, 'is hid in God;' hid from a blind and sensual world, which although this glorious 'light hath shined in darkness,' where all other lights are most easily perceived, 'yet comprehendeth it not.' By this day-light of the gospel the moles and bats of infidelity can see nothing; and in this light, which is too strong for the eyes of the world, and which, therefore, no man, who is yet in the world, 'can approach unto, wherein he dwelleth who hath immortality (to whom be honour and power everlasting),' dwelleth also the good Christian; for, 'thus saith the High and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Hither, into this unapproachable light, no carnal eye can follow him who

lives in God, and who is 'made one with Christ, as he is one with the Father.'

But hid as he is, now in this present time of suffering, while he stoops under the cross of Christ, and the reproaches that fall on his master fall also on him; he knows a day is coming, when, according to the verse immediately following my text, 'Christ, who is his life, shall appear,' and then shall this good Christian, and all that belong to Christ, appear with him also in glory.

Behold the wonderful change of things! This man, so despicable in the esteem of the world, that few or none thought him worth their notice; this Lazarus, who was 'clothed in rags,' who had only dogs for physicians, who lay like a contemptible log at the gates of the wealthy, and 'longed for the crumbs that fell from their tables;' is now comforted in the 'bosom of Abraham;' while the great ones of this world, in whose eyes he was no better than the dirt they trod on, 'are tormented in the fire which cannot be quenched.' They had their world, and he hath his.

When the men of this world see this (and see it they must) 'they shall be troubled,' as we are told in the book of wisdom, 'with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, too late repenting, and grieving for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves; this is he whom we had some time in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints. Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction; yea, we have gone through deserts, where there lay no way; but, as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it. What hath pride profited us? Or what good hath riches with our vaunting brought us? The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away by the wind; but the righteous live for evermore: their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the most High.

While health, prosperity, and riches last, they harden the heart and stiffen the neck of every worldly-minded man; and so long 'the things of the spirit,' or of God, 'are foolishness unto him. But as soon as these fail, we see, even he is forced to own, that 'the wisdom of this world,' which was always 'foolishness with God,' is really foolishness in itself, and downright destruction to him that trusted in it.

Let us, my brethren in Christ, who are or ought to 'be, dead to the world, and hid from it with Christ in God,' now with all our hearts, as well as understandings, resolve to improve on 'the hidden man of the heart, and to seek only the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy;' and let us also with heart and understanding, utterly renounce the wisdom of this world, that wisdom which is not from above, but is 'earthly, sensual, devilish.' That it is equally necessary to our happiness, that we should do both, may be as safely left to the vote of sober reason and universal experience, as to the word of God. Reason and experience make it a clear point, that nothing but vanity and vexation here, with infamy and disgrace hereafter, if there is to be an hereafter, can be hoped for from the wisdom of this world.

On the other hand, God's word makes the doctrine affirmed in my text, absolutely necessary to salvation. 'We must die to the flesh and the world, that we may not be condemned with the world.' Now this death consists in loving the world no longer, but rather hating it as the enemy of God. 'Love not the world,' saith St. John, 'neither the things that are in the world;' for as St. James assures us, 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever, therefore, will be a friend to the world, is the enemy of God.' This hating the world is that death, St. Paul tells us, we pass through in baptism, when we 'put off the old man. How shall we,' saith he, 'that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin.'

You now see plainly the necessity of this death to the

flesh, to the world, and to sin ; and that you cannot possibly live] to Christ, without first dying to them all. You will quickly see, that it is as necessary to be born again, in order to be saved ?

Hear the words of Christ to Nicodemus, ‘ verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ Such is the necessity of entering upon a new life in order to be saved ; and a new life is nothing else but this, an abstinence from sin, and a continual practice of the duties required by the gospel. ‘ Whosoever,’ saith St. John, ‘ is born of God, doth not commit sin. Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world.’ ‘ If any man be in Christ,’ saith St. Paul, ‘ he is a new creature. They, therefore, which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.’ If they breathe the spirit of the new life, how can they do otherwise than live unto him, with whom their lives are incorporated and hid ? Are they not one living body with Christ, their head ? Or can they have any other life, but the very life, of that head ? If, as Christ himself saith, ‘ he hath made all things new,’ surely every one who is really united to him, and become a true member of his body, must have ‘ put off the old man, and must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, or the inward man, day by day.’ Other things are yet as they were ; or are become new in regard to their new regenerated, or new-created possessor ; or have perished ; the members of Christ only, that is, they who are regenerated and converted from this world, and their sins, they only are made new by a change of nature.

You by this time may have seen what it is ‘ to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ You may have seen also the necessity of the former in order to the latter. It only remains, that you consider, with all possible attention both of understanding and heart, the necessity of this latter, or the life in God, in order to your eternal peace and happiness.

Fear not. The change, recommended to you by the word of God, consists not so much in the pangs of dying, as in the pleasure of a revival into your only real and natural life. Sin is the only death ; and goodness, the only life.

Hate this death, love this life; and then your change will afford infinitely more joy to your spiritual, than pain to your fleshly nature.

But whatsoever degree of pain it shall be, that may attend your dying to a world, on which you have foolishly, but habitually fixed your heart, let it be the wisdom of your now sounder thoughts, cheerfully to submit to the revealed appointment of your Maker, and the common law of his creation.

All the creatures are subject to change. God only is immutable. How can you pretend to this distinguishing attribute of your Creator? Behold! the heavens are subject to perpetual revolutions, and the earth to annual changes of seasons, light, and darkness, heat, and cold, pursuing each other in regular, but swift successions. The vegetable world, conforming to the same law, revives or withers, puts on, or puts off its attire, at the call of nature. In like manner, the animal creation undergoes a variety of changes peculiar to itself. One casts its old hair, another its skin or shell, another molts its feathers; and all of them, as if created anew, come forth in fresh liveries.

Now, none of these alterations are brought about in them without a considerable degree of uneasiness and pain. The old nature in them sickening, and in some sense dying, is repaired and revived, as it were into anew.

It is, on good grounds, believed, that the very angels make a progress, and arrive not at the perfection of their natures, or of their glory, but by certain changes and degrees; who can tell what struggles their virtue was tried with, before they were entrusted with the thrones and principalities, ascribed to them in the holy Scriptures?

And who art thou, O man, so frail, so imperfect, and even so loaded with corruption and sin, that thou shouldest hope to be good without a change; or happy, without being good? Know, that your own nature hath made this impossible, and God hath decreed the contrary, for, 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord; nor without keeping his commandments, shall any man enter into life.' If therefore, for a time, the very pains of hell should be the price of so great and necessary a change; you could in nothing shew yourself so wise, as in courting and inviting them with in-

finitely more earnestness, than you ever did, the keenest pleasures of sense.

But, as I have already intimated, the pain of dying to a world, so vain, so deceitful, so vexatious, cannot be very great to a sensible and thinking soul, that knows it, as having already smarted in it, and begins to be disgusted with it.

Besides, whatsoever of bitterness may be tasted in the administration, or of pain felt in the operation, of the spiritual physic; the whole is greatly abated in this, as in bodily disorders, by the sure and certain hope of recovery, nay, by the immediate sense of a recovery, actually begun from the first moment of the application.

Where is the great matter in forsaking a world, of which we are perpetually, and with infinite reason, complaining, and that soon will forsake us? In the continual disappointment of our hopes, or crossing of our schemes, or impairing of our fortunes, or thwarting our pleasures, or loss of our friends, do we not 'die daily?' die to the world, and the things of it, against our wills? And shall it seem too much, to die once voluntarily and totally for our souls, for heaven, and for God?

How shocking to nature would it be, to see the dead and the living intermixed, forming one society, and conversing together! But how much more shocking to the eye of faith, to behold those who by their deeds are known to be dead to God, blended with his true and living people, merely on the strength of an outward profession; and calling themselves the members of Christ, the children of God, and heirs of eternal life, when all the time, it is as evident, as the light of God's word, compared with their crimes, can make it, that they are only the servants of sin, the children of the devil, and heirs of no other portion, but that which is reserved for the hypocrites? evident, that in the face of day, they walk in darkness; and in the house, at the table, and even in the name of God, promote the interest, and give vogue to the service, of his enemy; and the more for professing Christianity.

Not less shocking would it be, were it not so common, to see the same man, religious, and atheistical; virtuous, and vicious, by turns; to-day, travelling in the narrow way, and to-morrow, in the broad; but there slowly dragged, and



here driving at full speed; now dying to sin, and then, to God; and consequently walking in the sight of sound reason, the frightful spectre of both worlds, rather than the real inhabitant of either. Nature, reason, Scripture, all teach us to abhor such spectacles. How then comes it, that we are so little startled at feeling, what we are so powerfully instructed to tremble at the sight of? Can the same thing that is so hideous in principle, be ever admitted, be even courted in practice? Can a rational creature, a creature, that fears death more than every thing else, voluntarily give himself up to innumerable deaths, to a succession of agonies, which cannot possibly, after all, end in any thing but eternal death; rather than to that one death, which he knows, is the only gate to everlasting life?

True are thy words, O blessed Redeemer, 'he that would save his life,' his sinful life, 'shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for thy sake, shall find it,' shall surely find it, hidden with thee in God.

Teach us, O infinite truth and wisdom, a right sense of this thy declaration, so mysterious to a blinded world; and ever powerfully intercede for us with the Father, to whom, in the unity of the ever blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Grace of our Lord, &c.

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## DISCOURSE LXII.

THE THINKER SHALL BE SAVED.

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### PSALM XIX. 14.

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

THIS Psalm, which ends with my text, hath been justly esteemed one of the noblest strains both of poetry and devotion, that have ever been employed to raise the thoughts of the religious, and to carry them up to God. Every reader,

who but barely understands the words, confesses its force by the warmth it kindles in his heart, if he is a man of piety, or at least by the wings it gives to his imagination, if he hath any taste for the high and great in what he peruses.

But the psalm, if closely examined by the judicious, and thoroughly understood, discovers somewhat, beyond this, inconceivably glorious and divine. He who reads it with any portion of the spirit that penned it, hears the voice of God, speaking from heaven, and calling up his soul to the adoration of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, displayed in the visible heavens. He hears the works of God preaching these attributes of their Creator in a language loud enough to be heard by the whole world. He sees the sun in particular, not only making his glorious circuit in the skies, and proclaiming as he goes, in an hymn clothed with light instead of words, the praises of his great original; but sees him also poetically introduced in the psalm as a similitude for the yet brighter sun of 'God's law' or word, 'which enlighteneth the eyes' of the mind, 'giving wisdom to the simple, converting the soul, rejoicing the heart,' and in all these pouring on the mind that religious wisdom and warmth, which are here poetically connected with, and represented by, the light and heat which fall from the sun on our bodies.

After this, the sacred poet represents himself to the understanding reader, as doubly struck with the awful voice of God, both natural and revealed, as trembling under the reproof of nature and Scripture at once, as overwhelmed with a sense of his own infirmities and sins, and crying out, 'who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright and innocent from the great transgression.'

Surely, if any form or act of devotion might hope for acceptance, purely on account of its excellence, it was this. Yet behold! the blessed psalmist, no less lowly in himself, than exalted as to the matter and spirit of his hymn, and fully sensible, that no address to God, howsoever excellent in itself, nor even howsoever ardently offered up, can entitle the sinful to a favourable hearing, throws himself on the mercy of his Maker, and on the merits of his Saviour, crying out in the humble language of my text, 'let the words

of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer; that is, O Almighty Ruler of the world, the rock of my salvation, who redeemest me from sin and all its dreadful effects, hear with pity even the prayers of thy unworthy creature; and, while I consider myself as nothing in the midst of thy other works, or as convicted of sin by the purity of thy law, have mercy upon me, and hear the words of my mouth; have mercy upon me, and accept the meditation of my heart.

In this spirit of admiration ought we to meditate on the works and word of God, and in this spirit of humility and contrition on the error of our own ways. And thus in dust and ashes ought we to implore pity for our highest raptures of devotion, and forgiveness for the most sanctified thoughts of our hearts. For who are we? Or what are our devotions, that we should presume on a more gracious hearing, than he who offered up the incense of a heart, kindled into love and piety by the Spirit of God himself? But as he trusted in the Lord his strength and his Redeemer, so should we, who have the same Redeemer, the same 'advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; through whom,' after 'ordering our words aright' before God, 'we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need.'

But so far as our meditations, and our prayers proceeding from those meditations, may be rendered acceptable in the sight of God, by our own endeavours, we ought to know, that we are lost to God and ourselves for ever, if we do not meditate with all the strength of our minds, and all the ardour of our hearts, on the subjects that engaged the meditations of the royal psalmist, namely, on the works and word of God, and on the state of our own souls. Without thinking deeply, keenly, and indeed almost continually on the works and word of God, we shall never know how to fear and love, nor consequently how to obey God, as we ought to do. Nor without thinking in like manner on the state of our souls, shall we ever be able rightly to judge of what we are doing, which way we are going, or wherein the course of life we are leading, is likely to end.

But before we come to be particular on these important

subjects of meditation, it will be necessary to say something on that of meditation itself, that we may set ourselves, with understandings duly awakened, and hearts strongly engaged, to a work wherein we are infinitely interested.

In the nature of things, as sorted by their Maker into kinds or classes, a man is distinguished from a beast merely by the faculty of reason; but in the eye of true wisdom and religion, he is distinguished only by the use of his reason. In philosophy, that animal is called a beast, which cannot reason; but in religion, that is rightly called a beast, which does not reason, that is, which does not meditate in order to judge, and judge in order to choose, and choose in order to be happy. We have bodies, appetites, affections, and passions, in common with the brute creation. But it is only by our power of meditating and reasoning, that we are enabled to know God and his will, to know wherein consists the main of our happiness, and how it is to be pursued. By this power we can govern ourselves, and conduct our affairs. By this power, duly exercised, we can weigh the objects or views, which present themselves to the judgment, one against the other, and find out which of them is best entitled to our choice, especially if the difference is very great, and more especially still, if it is infinitely great. In this consists the present advantage of a man above a beast, which can do none of these things, but is forced to follow the call of appetite, even into the snare that is laid for his life.

If this is a true and just distinction, we shall be forced to call him a beast, although ever so exactly human in his outward figure, who either shews no power of choosing his ends and purposes; or suffers sense, appetite, and passion, instead of reason, to choose for him a low and momentary, before a high and lasting enjoyment; to choose the known occasion of his own misery, rather than the known occasion of his own happiness. Nay, and if an infinite good and evil have been ever set before him, and he chooses the evil, we must pronounce him more foolish than a beast, which can have no notion of either, and consequently can by no act of its own incur the latter, or obtain the former. Is he not worse than a brute, who for a dish, a bottle, a strumpet, or some pieces of ill-gotten metal, forfeits heaven?

The winged brute runs into the snare, and the finned

brute into the net, because he knows not that it is for his life. But the human brute swallows the bait, though he knows it is for his soul.

Man is by nature a thinking being, but is often pronounced thoughtless, not because he ceases to think, or loses the power of thinking, but because he is judged to exercise this power improperly, that is, on useless or hurtful subjects, or because he thinks too much on subjects of little concernment, and too slightly on such as are of far greater moment to him. Strictly speaking, it is not want of thought that fills the world with so much wickedness and misery, no, nor with so much folly. There is no keener thinker than he who is enslaved to the momentary pleasures of the flesh, or the trifling profits of the world. Even the fool, who stupidly says in his heart, there is no God, says it only after having found out by a great deal of reflection, that the being of a God necessarily infers the misery of a wretch, so lost to goodness. And is he not a fool, who so thinks, plods, and schemes his life, as to give the lie to all nature, and to have nothing at the last to comfort him in the midst of dark prospects and fearful expectations, but a weak wish to perish for ever?

What a reproach is it to the human understanding and heart, that while the author of all good, his works of creation and providence, and the interests of the soul, draw but a few, and those but rarely, to cold and almost useless meditations; the author of evil, and the means of making us now and for ever unhappy, employ all the rest of mankind in such meditations, as rack their understandings to the utmost stretch of thought, and steep every thought in gall. With what force does one meditate on the object of his lust; another, on that of his avarice; and a third, on that of his ambition! How keenly is this man set a thinking by envy, and that by malice and revenge! How artful are their schemes! How vehement their pursuits! And why all this waste of thought, but for purposes as foolish, as they are wicked? Found by universal experience, in continual disappointments and vexations, to be as foolish, as they are pronounced by the severe remorses of conscience to be wicked?

What I have here said of those who give up their understandings entirely to folly and misery, is, in too great a

measure, true of the very religious themselves, who give but half their thoughts to God. Were religion attended to by the better sort of men with any thing like that close application of thought, which even they bestow on this world, each of them would be almost a Solomon in sacred wisdom, a Paul in piety, and only a little lower than an angel in dignity and happiness, e'er his removal hence.

Did not experience put it beyond all question, it could never be believed, that a rational being, with his eyes open, and in all the vigour of thought, should almost universally prefer trifles to things of moment, evil to good, and the thinnest appearances, to the most visible, the most glorious realities; that he should trust to prospects, ever found empty, and delusive in the pursuit, and vexatious in the end; that from the prospects set before him by religion, and for some time urged on him by faith and reason, he should wilfully turn away his attention, insomuch that as he would not think of these at first, so he could not think of them at length; and that therefore, with all his reach of thought, with all his cunning, scheming, and refining, he hath no other enjoyments, nor ever can have, than those of a beast, lives the life of a beast, wishes for the death of a beast, and, for ought appears, really desires no pre-eminence above a beast.

If everlasting happiness and misery are set before us by the express word of God himself, how is it possible we should not make them the continual subjects of meditation? Or if the horrors of eternal vengeance are too dreadfully insupportable to minds so miserably weak as ours; why at least do we not meditate on the happiness, on the life, immortality, and glory, offered? Why do we not taste and see, how good the Lord is? What! not so much as take a taste of his goodness! not so much as turn and behold the infinite patience of God, in all he suffers at our hands, and the inconceivable happiness he notwithstanding still invites us to! why is the deaf ear of the adder given to the ministers of his word? why are his sabbaths kept by men, no otherwise, than as a sabbath of horses, merely by resting from labour? why, purely to avoid the trouble of self-examination, are his sacraments neglected or attended to, as little better than outward ceremonies, or burdensome formalities? How

can you be so lost to thought, as to absent yourselves from the place where Christ hath promised to meet you, to be in the midst of you, to receive and enforce your petitions, with the Father, to feed you with the food of everlasting life? Or coming hither, how can you babble those petitions to God, as all do, who give not their minds to what they themselves are saying? Or how can you sink the psalms, the lessons, the sermons, the word of God, into so much idle babbling in regard to yourselves, who do not attend to them? what! are you come hither, impiously to turn, by a contemptuous inattention, all you say to God, and all God saith to you, into senseless sounds and empty gibberish?

Can you call the word of God your rule of faith and practice, and not meditate thereon? Can you call yourself the creature of God, and not meditate on your Maker? Can you believe yourself to be redeemed from infinite misery, and entitled to endless glory, by the gospel and blood of Christ, and not meditate on both with all your understanding and heart? While Christ your head sweats blood, and agonizes anew, at a fresh crucifixion by your sins, can you his member be asleep, and feel no part of the pain, like a mortified limb, fit only to be cut off? Can you say, the Holy Ghost is your comforter, and his assistance absolutely necessary to your faith and reformation, if you do not by meditation open your mind to the light, and soften your heart to the warmth of his grace?

Sorry I am to say it, my brethren, but I am not sure, that, even in the midst of this earnest endeavour to rouse you, your thoughts are not a wool-gathering among the brakes and brambles of a vain and perplexing world. How dared you to join with me in the prayer of David, that your meditations may be acceptable in the sight of God, your strength and your Redeemer, when, behold! you do not meditate at all, or but with half your attention? What are you about? What are you thinking of this instant? Christ is here, and here are your bodies too; but where are your souls? Are they wandering after your fleshly desires? Are they rambling after your worldly schemes or possessions? Are they dancing attendance on your wild imaginations? Awake; call in your thoughts; consider Christ is present. What! shall his minister so loudly call, and



call in vain on you to attend your God and Saviour? How shall I disperse the darkness from about your minds? How pierce the callus that benumbs your hearts?

In the name of wonder! why is every call of worldly business, though ever so disagreeable, and every amusement, though ever so trifling, industriously sought for, as preservatives against all those necessary, all those sweet reflections, wherein our good God purposes to engage us on his works, his word, and our own souls?

As these are questions which reason can never answer, they turn to reproaches, which nothing but the madness of our passions will ever attempt to refute. Let us soberly consider them as such; and having, for a time, banished all thoughts of this world, and all sensual desires, from the mind, that the soul may neither be tempted from without, nor damped from within, let us accompany David in his devout approaches to God.

In the first place, let us begin with him to read the glory of the good, the wise, the powerful Maker in his works. For this purpose, high and great as it is, we stand in no need of philosophical refinements and researches, of glasses or mathematical instruments, those artificial aids for the eyes of a superannuated understanding and piety. In this magnificent volume of the creation we have suns, stars, and worlds, for characters, too large and legible to be misunderstood, at least by him who knows already, that all things owe their being to a first cause. If, convinced of this, he desires to conceive, as far as so bounded a mind is capable of it, the grandeur of that cause, which gave birth to all things, let him cast his eyes upward, and he will quickly perceive, in how exalted a style 'the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.' Let him listen with the ears of his understanding, and he will hear, 'day unto day, uttering speech, and night unto night, shewing knowledge,' in an universal language, at once understood by the souls, and felt in the hearts, of every truly rational creature; he will hear 'the voice' of these great apostles 'going out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world,' and loudly proclaiming, as they go, the praises of that Almighty Being, who, through all ages, hath so guided all the heavenly bodies, although

inconceivably rapid in their motions, that they have never erred an hair's breadth from the line, nor a moment from the time, prescribed for their courses.

And, if he is one of those who have sense enough to admire an object, not for its novelty, but its grandeur, how will the sun, great and illustrious, far above all other visible objects, raise his conceptions of the Divine Majesty and power that made it, when he sees it 'as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,' all clothed in robes, too dazzling to be steadily beheld, 'and rejoicing as a strong man to run' his amazing 'race from one end of heaven to the other,' darting his beams through an unmeasurable extent of space, and giving warmth, light, life, and, as the literal bridegroom of this nether world, fertility, to all he touches!

Here the contemplative soul, transported, but not detained, with the object before it, will naturally cry out, how great art thou, at whose creating word this prodigious mass of fire and light started into being, and from whose almighty hand it issued in all its strength and glory! Nay, what must be the power of that hand, which hath scattered the heavens, as it were, with a sand of suns, to distances inconceivable!

And if this material light which we behold with our fleshly eyes, is so very bright, what must that unapproachable light be, whereof thy own glorious garments are formed, to which this of the sun is but darkness! I see, I see a ray of it, O sun of the soul! 'in thy word,' in thy religion 'or law, which is perfect, converting the soul; in thy testimony, which is sure, making wise the simple; in thy statutes, which are right, rejoicing the heart; in thy commandments, which are pure, enlightening the eyes; in the fear of thee, which is clean, enduring for ever; in thy judgments, which are true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey or the honey-comb.'

Thus will every good and sensible soul express itself, after having meditated on the works and word of God. But whereas in his word he reveals himself and his will to the understandings of men, in a much clearer manner than by his works, we ought to be doubly 'attentive thereunto,' so that 'our eyes may prevent the night-watches, to medi-

tate therein.' This is the book which we ought to peruse with all the powers, which we ought to study with all the veneration, of the soul, for it is the book of God, and teaches us who God is, who we ourselves are, and how we may be happy; happy here, and happier still in a world infinitely more glorious than this which we behold with our mortal eyes. Herein may be read whatsoever it concerns us most to know, that we may be converted and live; which it concerns us most to consider, that we may adore the miracles of creating bounty, of redeeming mercy, of sanctifying grace; and love as we have been loved. 'This is 'a lamp unto our feet,' so apt otherwise to stumble or stray. 'This is a light unto our path,' so rough in some places, and so narrow in all. When God speaks, who will not listen? When he promises, who will not believe? When he threatens, who will not tremble? When he commands, who will not obey? When he commands us 'to search the Scriptures,' that is, to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, who is he that will refuse to read them? or dare to read them, without submitting all his opinions and passions to them?

God did not create the world merely for our bodies, that we might, with the beasts, bask in the warmth of the sun, and wanton in the produce of the earth; no, he created it, that we having temperately enjoyed the comforts of life, might feast our understandings with the wonders of his works, and with love and adoration trace throughout this spacious field of observation that almighty hand which made, and that gracious hand which sustains, all things.

Neither did he publish his word, that we might, after a hasty reading, throw it aside, as we do by the books of men; but that we might make it the subject of our meditations by day and night; that we might digest its sacred and saving truths into our minds, as we do our daily food into our veins. We must never forget, that a dreadful judgment awaits 'the transgressors of God's law;' nor, 'that in keeping it there is great reward.'

From a deep sense of the Divine Majesty, felt in the contemplation of his works, and from a thorough apprehension of his justice and holiness, raised in us by our meditations on the word, the law, or religion he hath revealed to us,

nothing can be more natural, than to turn our reflections on ourselves, on the review of our past lives, and on the present, perhaps, dangerous state of our souls, clearly discovered by comparing them with the principles both of faith and practice, contained in the word of God. Here each of us may find reason to say, as the psalmist did, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made;' fearfully, as life and understanding may depend on a fibre, ten thousand times finer than a single hair, and even salvation on a thought; and wonderfully, as I am, in myself, a world, a living, a reasoning world, compared with which the great world I see around me affords but faint proofs of creating wisdom and power.

And here again, it will be as natural for the best of Christians, as it was for David, to cry out, 'who can understand his errors?' Who knows himself so well, as to fathom the depths of sin in his corrupt nature? 'O cleanse thou me,' my God, 'from my secret faults,' from those faults which are lost to my own memory and conscience, and consequently to all particular sense of remorse. 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins,' from the horrible sins of intentionally shutting my eyes against thy truths, of blasphemously denying thy being or providence, of impiously arraigning thy justice or mercy, of proudly defying thy judgments, or of wilfully rebelling against thy laws. If through my own extreme infirmity, or the violent assaults of the devil, I should ever, in any degree, approach the borders of so black a guilt, 'O let it not acquire an habitual dominion over me; so shall I be upright, so shall I be innocent from the great transgression.'

From these reflections on the state of our souls, compared with the rule of our actions, we must, in the first place, consider, what we all very well know, that 'eternal life, glory, honour, and peace, are promised by the God of truth,' to them 'who, by patience and continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality; and that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are threatened by the same God to all who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.'

In the next place, by an impartial examination of our own consciences we shall be able to judge, which of these

opposite characters is justly due, on the whole, to the lives we are leading.

And farther, in case we conclude, or even suspect, (which it is to be feared we shall) that we do not obey the truth, but rather obey unrighteousness, we are then to consider what is to be done. There is no resting surely for a moment in a state, dangerous at the best, and infallibly fatal, if persevered in beyond the term of grace.

After this, the violence of our affections and passions, and the inveteracy of our sinful habits, must be severely brought to the test. With these, the temptations that beset us, and bear in perpetually on our corrupt dispositions and habits, are next to be compared, and as severely examined, both in regard to what they promise, and what they perform.

Here, if the meditations already pursued, have roused us, and we are now thoroughly awake, a very alarming prospect (it is to be feared) will present itself to our eyes. All our former sins; all our present dispositions to sin; all the snares of our spiritual enemies; the wrath of God; the forfeiture of heaven for ever, and the eternal horrors of hell; will all crowd at once into view. Yet, as it is better to fear than to feel, alarming as this prospect is, it will be our highest wisdom attentively to fix our eyes upon it, till it hath wrought its blessed effects in us, a settled abhorrence of sin, a vehement indignation at our enemy, a thorough distaste to the bitterness found, instead of the sweetness promised, by temptation; and in consequence of all, a resolution, never to be shaken on any trial, instantly entirely to forsake our sins. I say, instantly, because 'we know neither the day, nor the hour of our master's coming,' and, therefore, there is no dallying with the work of repentance. If we trifle in this matter, we trifle with death, with our own souls, with eternity, with God. And I say, entirely, because there is no compounding between God and the devil, 'no serving both God and mammon, no offending in one point of the law without being guilty of all.' Dreadful, therefore, as the review of our sins, and the prospect of death and eternity, may be, the happy effects expected from both, ought to fix our attention on them, for, humanly speaking, there is no hope, but in this fear, no safety, but in the alarms

of this danger. Were the salvation of a soul a matter of little consequence to itself, or were heaven a prize of small value, to think but seldom or slightly of them, might well enough consist with reason; but whereas there is nothing else of high consequence to us but these, and as we all know there is not, what else but these, and the means of arriving at these, should we think of with a close or long continued attention? What does any man read the Scriptures, what does he fast, what does he pray for, but in order to these infinitely important ends? And does he not know, that to read without meditation is only to fix his eyes on blank paper, or a dead letter; that to fast without meditation is only to lose his meals; and that to pray without previous meditation, is only to address the Majesty of heaven with words and sounds instead of sense? All this he knows by experience, but he cannot think in this track without pain, and, therefore, he will think as little in it as he can. What then becomes of his hopes as a Christian? Or rather, what is already become of his reason, who can give up God and heaven to avoid the trouble of travelling to the one, in the service of the other? What sort of a reasoner he is who either cannot judge what concerns him most to think of, or judging, will rather think of any thing else?

But that one so faint-hearted, and so irresolute, may have some courage, let him listen to the words of God, who saith, ‘turn thee, for why wilt thou die? Work out thy salvation with fear and trembling, for it is I that work in thee both to will and to do of my own good pleasure. If you continue in my word, then are you my disciple, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,’ free from these most slavish fears. Then ‘shall my strength be perfected in your weakness.’ Then shall you perceive that ‘my grace is sufficient for you;’ and, what is still more, miserably as you are scared at the severity of my service, you shall soon find that ‘my yoke is easy and my burden light,’ infinitely easier than the yoke of the enemy, and lighter than the burden of sin.

Trust to these comfortable encouragements from him who loveth you, and hath given his life for you, and consider, on the other hand, how temptation hath performed the promises she made you. Have you not hitherto, on every

trial, found her vanity in the pursuit, and vexation in the end? And are you any longer to be caught with chaff? to be the fool and dupe of arts, already tried, and seen through? Surely, 'it is better for you that compunction,' like a true friend, 'should smite and reprove yu,' than that you should listen to temptation, though her 'words are softer than oil,' since you know, 'the poison of asps is under her lips.'

Against her allurements, therefore, steel your heart with the fortitude of a Christian, and with the understanding of a rational creature. Look attentively into yourself, although you should see nothing there but monsters of deformity. And look steadily forward on the way before you, although the tears of a thorough repentance, or even the horrors of death and damnation, should overspread it from your very feet to the farther end.

Then meditate with all the force of an awakened mind, as well on the necessity, as the difficulty of the work you have to do, on the shortness and uncertainty of the time it is to be done in; on the eye of God that is never off you; on the awful vow you made when you was baptized; on the contemptible emptiness of a world that passeth away like a morning cloud; on the inconceivable importance and grandeur of a world, where happiness or misery know neither bounds nor end; on the word of God, where all you are to do is commanded; where all you are to avoid is forbidden; where every motive to the love and fear of God, to the detestation of sin, and to watchfulness over yourself and your ways, are plainly set before you, and urged upon your reason, your heart, your conscience, with a divine force, not to be resisted by a thinking mind.

Think, therefore, and you shall be saved. But think with all the strength of your understanding, and all the ardour of your heart. Think with that strength of understanding you exerted, when you schemed for the profits, pleasures, or honours of this despicable world. Think with that ardour of heart which animated your pursuit of vanity and vexation; and God, though you are now thinking for him and heaven, will ask no more.

He, who in worldly affairs of small moment generally acts a giddy part, is called a thoughtless man. He, who in greater matters (worldly matters I still mean) shews neither



forecast nor care, is called a stupid man, or a fool. But by what name shall we call him, who, knowing his temporal interests, pleasures, or promotions, to be less than nothing, in comparison of his spiritual, gives nevertheless all his thoughts to this world, and thinks almost as little of God and heaven, as he does, who believes there is neither? Yet if this man shews some skill, and happens to succeed in the management of his worldly affairs, he is pronounced wise by the rest of mankind, even by those who scruple not in the least to call him a mad man, whom they see collecting pins, and scattering guineas. This gross abuse of words does inconceivable mischief in the world; for by this means it happens that one man's folly is countenanced by that of another; that while the life of the good man is accounted madness, only because it is singular, the stupidity of the worldling and the wicked is complimented with the title of wisdom, purely because it hath numbers on its side; and that every trifle is thought more of than the soul; the smallest degree of pleasure than heaven; a moment than eternity. Could the most unthinking wretch among us be once brought attentively to balance the infinite with the finite, the eternal with the temporary, and God with this world; it would be almost impossible for him afterward to lose sight of a difference so greatly striking, or to give up his life to a preference so inconceivably absurd, as that which hath hitherto governed almost all his actions.

To such a balance I call every soul that hears me, every soul, in which the power of thinking is yet alive. I call on the rational soul, formed in the image of God, and entitled to endless glory, to consider with due contempt the vanity, and with a just aversion the vexation, of every thing that is under the sun. I call on the rational and thinking soul, to think and meditate on God, on his works, on his word, and on its own infinite interest. And shall I call in vain? Is it possible the rational soul should be deaf to a call, made as loud as the trumpet of the archangel by the force of infinite reasons, and as sweet as the music of heaven by the promises, by the invitations of God himself, and by the sure and certain hopes of life, immortality, and glory?

And now, for myself, and for all who have heard, and will consider what I have said, I call upon God, and say,

‘let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.’

To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all might, majesty, dignity and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LXIII.

GOD WILL MEASURE TO YOU IN YOUR OWN BUSHEL.

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LUKE VI. 37.

*Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*

WHETHER it is, that most men are ignorant of themselves, or of the word ‘forgive,’ in this place, I know not, but there is nothing more common than to hear them saying, I forgive my enemies, I forgive all the world; and yet to hear those very persons, almost in the same breath, speaking ill of their neighbours, and even to see them doing unfriendly offices to others, some of whom they never had any reason to consider as their enemies. A general act of grace, like this, that costs a man nothing but words, and is contradicted in particular by his other expressions, and by many of his actions, shews only, that he either knows not what forgiveness is, or else hath learned a knack of equivocating with himself, if he means any thing, but a wilful lie, by his declaration.

To ‘forgive,’ in our Saviour’s sense of the original word, is to discharge a debt, or to dismiss at full liberty a debtor, who has been bound or arrested. By this he means, that every Christian who hath been injured, should think, speak, and act, in regard to the offending party, as affectionately and kindly as if no sort of injury had been done him. Christ, as our Redeemer, would save all men; and even as our judge, having satisfied divine justice for our sins, would justify all men; but there is one case wherein his justice as

a judge may give such limits to his goodness and mercy, as that mercy would prevent. The case is of those who appeal to his tribunal against one another. If such appeals are made, justice only can be done, and mercy must be excluded; but then he who by appealing demands justice, must stand to justice himself, and is to expect no mercy; whereas 'he who forgives, shall be forgiven.' No doubt, our blessed Saviour had nothing more in view, than to cultivate in all his followers that kind and forgiving disposition, whereby the spirit of his gospel is peculiarly distinguished. Here, nevertheless, where he expresses forgiveness by a law-term, and consequently turns our attention to his judicial capacity, a full liberty in his exercise of that capacity, in order to give mercy scope, seems to have been the main design of his promising mercy to the merciful, and of his elsewhere threatening the unforgiving with vengeance.

Here now is the great law of Christ in relation to offences and injuries of all sorts; a law infinitely sweet in this respect that, if 'we forgive' now, 'we shall be forgiven' hereafter; and infinitely dreadful also in this, that, 'if we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven.'

Who now is he that dare say, I will not forgive? He only is in his senses who is without sin. But as 'all men have sinned,' as every man hath sinned in an infinitely more provoking manner against God, than the rest of mankind can possibly have sinned against him, so an entire and unlimited forgiveness must be, not only the generous determination, but likewise the most self-interested act, of every rational mind.

But here perhaps you will say, 'all this I knew before, and have long wished to accommodate my stubborn heart to this precept of my Saviour. Wish, however, as I will, and do what I can, my resentments keep their ground, inso-much that I cannot speak kindly of my enemy, nor even keep an indifferent silence when he is mentioned; much less can I withhold my heart from pain, when he prospers or is applauded; or from pleasure, when adversity or contempt is thrown upon him.'

Well, but still you wish, and would be glad to be otherwise affected; and therefore though sick of a deadly dis-

order, have nevertheless the symptoms (and hopeful ones they are) of a recovering mind, a mind ready to make the most of such helps as Providence shall afford it, whether from the pulpit, or elsewhere. If instructions from the pulpit are not pleasing to you, one thing at least we hope, you will willingly take from thence, an exhortation to consult with the pulpit of your own reason, and the better part of yourself.

Go home to your own breast, and ask your heart these questions. 'Hast thou, my heart, no other passions but pride and anger? What is become of the humanity and benevolence, whereof, on some occasions, thou hast given such pleasing proofs? Wilt thou suffer thy pride to tyrannise over thy love? What an heart art thou, if rage, revenge, and mischief, can afford thee more pleasure, than forgiveness and acts of kindness and generosity?'

If an enemy is thus able to transform and degrade a man to the most odious class of beings, that man not only is now, but was, before the injury done him, a very despicable being, and liable, it seems, to an infinitely worse sort of injury, than can possibly be done in regard to fortune, liberty, character, or even life itself; an injury, I mean, in regard to virtue. The enemy who can turn a good man into a bad one, is the worst of all enemies. No man, however, can do this to us, without our own concurrence. We are all of us able, if not wanting to ourselves, to preserve an even temper under the most grievous provocations; and not only that, but a tender-hearted remembrance also, that the man who injures us, was perhaps once our friend, at least is still our fellow-creature, our neighbour; and may hereafter, if retaliation do not forbid it, nay, in case forgiveness should encourage it, become the most zealous promoter of our interest and honour.

But if, as I suspect, it is your pride that at any time makes you implacable, for 'only by pride cometh contention,' as a very wise man hath said, pray ask yourself, what that pride is, whether it is that passion, which makes the man who is enslaved to it, not less intolerable to himself, than to the rest of mankind; or whether it is only that laudable regard for the dignity of your own person and character, be it more or less, which no man is required to de-

scend from. If it is the former, you have only to consider the infinite troubles and mischiefs it is likely, if not properly restrained and mortified, to involve you in, and the certainty there is, that all who know you, will join to pull it down, and to turn it, till it is pulled down, into an engine of torture to yourself. But in case it is no more than a due regard to your honour, and you can justify it as a principle, yet you can never do this, till you can shew it to be a principle in you of somewhat more noble than revenge. Now, a revengeful disposition is the property only of a little and effeminate mind. Nothing is great, whose contrary is great. But a forgiving, which is the direct opposite to a revengeful spirit, is, of all others, the most exalted turn of mind, is an imitation of God himself, in that very attribute from whence his highest glory among men is derived. This way, into this upward path, bend your pride, and it shall one day raise you so high that you shall see the stars twinkling under your feet, as far as they do now above your head. If you would build high and firm, dig low in humility, in meekness, and in forgiveness, for a foundation, and your roof shall reach the heavens.

Howsoever strongly your pride may dispose you to resentment and anger, we will suppose you a man of at least common sense and prudence, and as such, better pleased to have a friend than a foe. The former will do you all the good, the latter all the mischief, he can. Now, to make him your friend who is at present your enemy, your surest way is first to be his friend, and in the spirit of a friend to begin with sincerely forgiving him all his offences and injuries; and then to let him see the proofs of this forgiveness in such affectionate expressions and kind offices, as may be sufficient to remove from his mind every suspicion of your retaining the least sense of his ill-treatment. It is in vain to say, you forgive, if you do not, as soon as opportunity is afforded, shew the fruits of that forgiveness. If you know it not already, you should be told, that the chief difficulty in doing good for evil is found in the first instance; and, strange as it may seem, that a good heart is not more powerfully won to love by the good it receives, than by that which it does. You know not how good you can be till you try. Make the experiment, and you will find, after

doing one act of kindness, more ease and pleasure in doing the next; and to this progress of a heart, melting in its own warmth, the great abatement of hatred in that of your enemy, under the influence of so much undeserved goodness, together with more or less of amendment in his behaviour towards you, will largely contribute. There is no resisting the charms of a conduct so great and so divine as this. If you hold on in it but a little (and surely you can persevere as long in goodness, as the worst of men in wickedness) you will conquer, and bring your enemy home in the fetters of gratitude and love, so captivated to your service for the future, as to make no great difference between your happiness and his own.

If you proceed in this manner, you will soon heal the rankling wound made in your heart by the injuries of others, and poisoned almost to a gangrene by your own pride, which for the present fills you with spleen, wrath, and revenge, at once the ugliest and most uneasy sensations, the heart of a human creature can possibly feel. There is no other balm but that of forgiveness, that can assuage their anguish; no opiate, but an humble and meek forgetfulness, that under the circumstances of injury and provocation, can give rest to the soul. With this rest, however, and the triumph made by the mind over itself, and over the indignities offered to it by baseness and brutality, a kind of pleasure is enjoyed, infinitely exceeding all the sweets of vengeance, even in the haughtiest dispositions.

Besides, compute what it will cost you to be revenged, what schemes, what cares, what watchings, what a waste of your power or interest, that might be so much better employed in advancing your family and fortune. Then consider, that as, not only your adversary, but Providence, is concerned to blast your cruel intentions, the whole may end in a shameful disappointment, or what is still worse, in ruin, in destruction, perhaps even in death, to yourself. Consider beforehand, how this will mortify your pride, how it will sting and gall your resentment; and how much better it had been to have stifled both at the beginning, and nobly risen above yourself and your enemy by a wise and generous forgiveness of all his injuries. What a difference is there between him who tramples under his feet the fiends of his

own pride and wrath, and thus triumphs over the insolence of inferior minds ; and him ' whose feet are caught in the net he had laid for others,' whose soul equally indignant and depressed, is forced to bite the ground under the heel of a successful and insulting enemy !

By this time you may have been made sensible, without going to Christianity for reasons, how much more wise and noble it is to forgive, than to seek for revenge ; but you no sooner look into the Scriptures for directions and motives in this difficult case, than you find the first delivered in a peremptory command, often and loudly repeated ; and the last, amounting to no less than an assurance of heaven, if you obey ; and of hell, if you do not.

Hear what God says even to the Jew. ' Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not revenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people ; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : I am the Lord.' And hear what he says to you as a Christian. ' Forgive. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for them that persecute you. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.'

First then, you are commanded by God himself to forgive, not this trifling affront, or that inconsiderable injury, but all affronts, howsoever provoking, and all injuries, howsoever grievous. If neither your natural generosity of temper, nor your unassisted wisdom, could hitherto prevail on you to forgive, yet now that you find the majesty of the Almighty hath interposed, and made it your duty by an express command, to consult with your pride any longer, is to rebel as the devil did, and on the very same principle or passion. The wise man tells you, ' pride was not made for man, nor furious anger for them that are born of a woman.' A wiser still hath told you, ' that a man's pride shall bring him low ;' and no wonder, since this passion, in its first instance, brought some of the heavenly host, down from the very summit of created glory, into the sink of the universe, into a pit of infamy and misery. And God himself tells you, ' that vengeance is his, and that he will repay.' How dare you who are but dust and ashes, who call ' the worm your sister,' and the earth your mother, presume to usurp the peculiar prerogative of your judge ? to thrust yourself



into the place of the Almighty? and to wrest the thunder from the hand of God? Remember, remember, 'that pride goeth before destruction, and so closely, that nothing comes between but anger and revenge. Remember the words of Nebuchadnezzar, after his humiliation, 'those who walk in pride God is able to abase;' and that you may know, he is to the full as willing, remember the words of Isaiah, 'The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory,' and yours more especially, because otherwise he must give up to contempt the honour and authority of his own command. Remember likewise, that though the injury should affect you, not so much in your pride, as in some other respect, for instance, 'if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man smite or wound you,' the forgiveness of it is equally required by the command of God. Consider, too, how much the case is now altered. so altered indeed, that you have no longer an offending fellow-creature only to deal with, but are engaged in a contest with the Almighty, if you go on to seek for revenge. It is true, God may punish your enemy for the injury he hath done you; but what consolation will this be to you, when you feel in yourself the vindictive effects of God's displeasure at your more heinous offence, who have shewn that you hate your brother more than you fear your God? If you lay these considerations duly to heart, you will infallibly forgive; or if you do not, you will have the mortification to remember, that your poor soul is reduced to a most desperate state, as having trampled on the command, and flown in the face of Almighty majesty.

As however, your low-pitched mind is more apt to be moved by a tender regard to yourself, than to the commands even of him whom the highest angel in heaven dare not disobey, there is still an argument for forgiveness in reserve, which may touch your soul to the quick in that part of it, where, if at all, there is any feeling left. The argument is couched in these words of my text, taken together, 'forgive, and you shall be forgiven,' and in these, 'if you forgive not, neither shall you be forgiven.'

Here your sins, by a mystery of divine wisdom infinitely transcending, and (if I may so express it) over-reaching, all the arts of the great deceiver, are turned into so many

engines, whereby your soul may be forced up, against its very nature to the highest pitch of virtue. A right sense of your sins will take down your pride, and fill you with humility and fear. Your humility and fear will teach you to forgive, and to reward evil with good; will teach you to act by other men, as you wish and pray, that God may act by you, that is, will dispose you to act like God, when he displays his goodness in the most beautiful and glorious of all his attributes. Behold how, by the wisdom of the gospel, your virtue is promoted by your very vices! Examine, therefore, your conscience with the utmost care and severity; shake out all your offences against God, against man, and against your own nature; throw all your sins of thought, of word, of deed, upon the heap; and to raise it to its utmost height, lay your wilful and presumptuous crimes, where they ought to lie, that is, uppermost, next the eye of heaven. View with amazement this enormous, this frightful funeral pile, whereon your body, nay your very soul is to be consumed, if God in his infinite mercy do not forgive you; and then ask yourself, whether, in order to be forgiven, in order to have the whole mass of your sins, both secret and open, reduced to nothing, you will agree to forgive your brother, your poor transgressing brother, who was drawn in to offend you by infirmities and temptations too like your own. Let your vileness you: let your wickedness terrify you. Thus humbled, thus terrified, you will find it difficult not to forgive.

Look back at your baptism, wherein your original sin was done away, and the pardon of all your actual sins, if duly repented of, ensured; and ask yourself with what face, after being in mercy thus admitted into the church of Christ, you can even there, in the very eye of God, and in the presence of Christ, become an exactor of justice, and a claimer of vengeance against one for whom Christ hath died, as well as for you; ask yourself, how so soon after being discharged of so great a debt by the common master of you both, you can 'seize your fellow-servant by the throat, and drag him to prison,' because he cannot pay a much smaller sum.

Then turn your eyes forward on the great day of accounts, and before you resolve to hold your insolvent brother to a settlement of the last farthing, consider, how you can ba-

lance with Almighty God. On him there is no imposing. His books are kept with infinite exactness. He is the only unerring accountant. Besides, with him there is no pity nor forbearance for that unhappy man, who hath shewn none to his fellow-creature. 'He shall have judgment without mercy, that shewed no mercy.'

When you have once struck a deep impression of this alarming prospect on your heart, let it be your next care fairly to weigh your sins against God with those which others may have committed against you. If you do this with any degree of impartiality, you will find, though you should be the best of men, and the most cruelly used by the rest of mankind, that their ill treatment of you bears no proportion to your offences in the sight of God, you will plainly perceive the former sinking into nothing on comparison with the latter.

The natural effect of this comparison, taken together with the proposal, in my text, will be, a firm resolution to close with that proposal, and to adore, in a transport of gratitude, the goodness of God for an indulgence, so infinitely tender; an indulgence, which puts your soul into your own hands, and gives you the happy power of wiping out the long and black account in God's book against you, by setting a full discharge at the foot of that in yours against your neighbour. You have the divine promise, that as fast as pity and forgiveness shall lengthen out the blank in yours, so fast shall the sponge of infinite mercy blot out your transgressions in his.

Thus, whether you look backward or forward, you see nothing but mercy, mercy to you and all men, on the part of God. And are you to shew no mercy? Are you to stop the current of God's compassion towards other men by holding them severely to account? You, who can give no account of yourself, but such as must inevitably throw you into outer darkness? To what madness hath your pride transported you, that you should either think yourself without sin on the one side, or on the other, resolve at once to exact vengeance, and implore forgiveness! O the provoking inconsistency! How you assume, and tremble, at the same instant! assume, as if you only were righteous! and tremble, as if conscious of approaching damnation! Whither

shall you fly for shelter! In your own unforgiving heart there is no refuge; in the mercy of God, though infinite, no relief; even mercy which you refuse, pleads against you; nor in the merits of Christ, though infinite also, is there any sanctuary for a soul so opposite to the mind of Christ, and so intent on mischief to the members of his mystical body.

But, methinks, I see you relent, and hear you say, you can, you will forgive. Happy change! wherein there is salvation both for you and your transgressing brother. But whereas your resentments have perhaps been wrested from you, rather by the fear of God's judgments, and a too selfish tenderness for your own safety, than by the commands of God, or the charitable disposition of your own heart; you ought to suspect the sincerity of your forgiveness, and labour by your meditations and prayers still more and more to reinforce the spirit it proceeds from, till you have made it evident to yourself, not only that the prosperity and honour of your enemy gives you real pleasure, and the contrary, concern; but that you can also place some share of your satisfaction in promoting the former, and lessening the latter. You ought by no means to rest contented with your progress, before it hath arrived at this stage of improvement, because it may require all this at least to produce in you, what our blessed master insists on, 'forgiveness until seventy times seven, in case your enemy shall proceed with his provocations, and injurious treatment of you, as you have done with your offences against God.

Here now you will be apt to ask, 'whether all this is expected from you, before your enemy hath come to himself, ceased to persecute you, and made the proper acknowledgments for his bad behaviour?' And I answer by asking two other questions of you; whether you find any exception for this case either in our Saviour's precept, or his example; and whether you were to choose, you would have the forgiveness of your sins, and acceptance with God, to depend on the repentance of an enemy so perverse, rather than on a charitable turn of mind in yourself, where the work of your salvation may be carried on in your own heart, and is wholly at your own discretion? Consider if your enemy never repents, on your rule, you can never forgive? and on God's rule, you can never be forgiven. Your making no other returns, but

of friendship, to repeated acts of enmity, will probably at length soften his heart, and sooth him to a better behaviour; but if it does not, your work of charity must go on to its own accomplishment, and be regulated by its own proper rules, which are not to be taken from the conduct of any man, least of all, from that of a bad man, but from the commandment of Christ, and from his conduct in the like case. It will be no excuse to say, Christ, being infinitely perfect, could easily exemplify a thousand virtues, which one so frail as you are, cannot possibly imitate him in; for I say, on the other side, that Christ had no sins to be forgiven, as you have, and therefore forgiveness in you is prompted by a motive, humanly speaking, much stronger than any our blessed Saviour could have felt the force of, the very motive, of all others, which carries with it the greatest weight, your own eternal salvation.

You will say too, though you are angry, and wish for revenge, you do not appeal to the final audit, you do not wish for eternal vengeance. No, you would be glad to see your enemy sufficiently humbled, mortified, despised, in this world; but you would allow him to be saved in the life to come. Indeed you do not know, what you yourself mean by sufficiently. Pride and anger know no bounds. 'He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darknes, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes;' knows, by no means, to what length his spirit of revenge would carry him; whether to murder, or even damnation, in case a more limited misery is not to be enjoyed, he cannot tell. Give not a loose therefore to the thunder of revenge, which if once let go, is not to be recalled or moderated. Christ bids you forgive, and certainly means, that you should neither wish for temporal, nor appeal for eternal vengeance. He means, that 'you should do good for evil;' and till you mean the same thing, you are neither like him, nor can possibly belong to him. He who commands you to love your enemy, could not surely mean, that you might hate him, and wish to be revenged of him, though but in the smallest degree. You pray, that God may not take vengeance of you, either here, or hereafter, for your sins. Do by your enemy, as you would have God to do by you. Be assured God will deal by you, as you deal by him.

But you farther complain, that, in case you should forgive, which you are willing to do, your enemy will be thereby only encouraged to greater insolence; and others, no better disposed than he, ascribing your carriage, neither to lenity nor principle, but to cowardice, or a passive stupidity, will be tempted to signalize themselves on one so lost to the common notions of honour, so that your reputation, your fortune, your person, will lie at the mercy of baseness and brutality on all occasions. Were you not a Christian, it would, I confess, be a very difficult matter to answer this complaint. It would but half satisfy you to say, that forgiveness is more likely, than revenge, to blunt the point of your enemies malice, and to conciliate to you the hearts of him and all other men. You readily allow, that, in good minds, forgiveness may, and doing good for evil, must, have that effect. But, with the far greater number, who are not so minded, you say, it will be attended with the untoward consequences objected. If you do not wrong the majority of mankind by this apprehension, you at least overlook the friendship and assistance of all good men, who will interpose in your defence against a persecution, unprovoked, but by the highest generosity. And what is worse still, you overlook the protection of Almighty God, who cannot be supposed to stand neuter in a contest between meekness and cruelty, both in perfection. Nay, what is yet more shocking, you overlook your own sins against God, you overlook the command and example of your blessed Saviour, who could never have wrought your salvation for you, had he not followed that very conduct he requires of you, under circumstances infinitely more provoking and cruel, than your patience can ever possibly be tried with. Do you hope for the pardon of all your sins, for deliverance from eternal torments, for all the glories of heaven, without a battle, without a struggle? What valuable purpose, even of this worthless life, did you ever accomplish, with less labour, pain, or self-denial, than is here made necessary to the attainment of heaven?

Beware of a relapse here, consider you are a Christian. Recollect your sins again. Fix your eyes on heaven and hell; and remember, that you cannot be forgiven, unless you forgive. Take therefore the measure as well as the reason of your forgiveness, from the degree of your own

guilt, which you hope to remove by that forgiveness; and then no degree of provocation will be too great for your charity to surmount.

If your judgment and heart have given themselves wholly up to the strength of the foregoing considerations, you are now in a right disposition, first, to abstain from every act of revenge; secondly, to repay the injuries of your enemy with benefits; thirdly, to offer up your prayers acceptably to God; and lastly, even to entertain some degree of love for those who hate you; that is (for so much of your duty as regards the rest of mankind) you are in the true Spirit of the gospel, and not far from Christian perfection.

In the first place, an abstinence from all acts of revenge is the lowest proof of the gospel spirit, and so necessary an effect of it, that the profession of Christianity, without it, is but an hypocritical pretence. Wherefore, if at any time you are tempted to revenge, remember the example of David, when he had Saul in his power, and pray earnestly to God, as he did, 'to forbid or prevent, not only the act of vengeance in your hand, but the very will to do it in your heart.' Be assured, this prayer is a prayer for yourself; and if heartily put up, will return with a sevenfold blessing 'into your own bosom.'

In the second place, to repay benefits for injuries, though it is going a step farther, is as necessary to the spirit of the gospel, and therein as expressly required, as an abstinence from revenge. You pray to God (do you not) for a great deal more than deliverance from the vengeance due to your sins; you pray to him for the joys of heaven, that is, for an infinite good, in the place of the infinite evil you have deserved at his hands. And how can you make this prayer to the all-knowing being, while you content yourself with the mere negative virtue of doing no harm to your enemies?

In the third place, take care how you forget that you can by no means pray acceptably to God, nor in the spirit of his gospel, not to say for pardon of your sins, or for heaven, but for any thing else you want, till you can pray as sincerely (I was going to say as fervently) for your enemies. The form of prayer he gave you, and his command, 'when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any man, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive



you your trespasses,' are sufficient to teach you, that you are in no condition to pray for yourself, till you can pray with a hearty good-will for your enemies.

But, in the last place, that you may forgive, do good to, and pray for your enemies, as well as for yourself, and all in the sincere and lovely spirit of the gospel; and that you may be assured, this comes from your very heart, you must obey the command of Christ, 'and love your enemies.' Hear the comment of St. Paul on this great law of his master. 'Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not. Re-compense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Revenge not yourself, but rather give place unto wrath. If your enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Be ye tender hearted forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another (no doubt he means when injuries arise) in love; and let your love be without dissimulation.'

'God is love,' and his religion, flowing from him as light from a luminous body, is of the same nature with him, is love also. 'On the love God and our neighbour hang all the law and the prophets,' so that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Accordingly humility, meekness, forgiveness, love, as exemplified in the life of our blessed Saviour here on earth, exhaust his whole history.

On the other hand, the religion, if I may so express it, of the devil, is of a piece with himself, and consists of pride, malice, revenge, persecution. There are other differences between the fruits of the good and the evil spirit; but herein is found that peculiar distinction, which Christ himself hath pointed out, and whereby he would have his disciples known from those of the evil being. The followers of Christ are marked in every feature, in their tongues, and in their hands, with love. The followers of Satan are marked in the same places with hatred. You see, you hear, you feel, the distinction, as soon as you come near enough to either.

Now, let a man profess as vehemently, and talk as eloquently as he will about religion, if he carries not the mark

of Christ, he is to be regarded but 'as sounding brass,' a mixture of impudence and noise; and should be heard only 'as a loud cymbal,' proclaiming the triumphs of vanity.

If you, to whom I am speaking, are one of that numerous class, who never err, who are perfect and faultless, Christ came not to call you, either to repentance or forgiveness. You sit too high on your infallibility to be touched by the text or discourse of this day. Look down, however, with pity on the rest of mankind, who move in a sphere so far beneath you; and as you cannot be affected with the worst they are able to do to you, to pass it over with the serenity and sublimity, natural to a soul so elevated as yours is, will be the easiest thing in the world to you, 'who suffer fools gladly because you yourself are wise.'

But in case you are one of those poor weak mortals who often stray from the path of true wisdom and holiness, you ought to know, that nothing can be so wildly absurd in you, as disobedience to the command of Christ in my text, not only as a command (for who with impunity shall disobey the Lord of all?) but as a proposal infinitely advantageous to you. Lest passion and prejudice should blind you in an affair, which hath already raised you to too great a degree of warmth, try the merits of this proposal in lower matters, and in other persons. Forgive, saith a master to one of his servants, in your hearing, forgive your fellow-servant the guinea he owes you, and you shall be forgiven the hundred you owe me. Forgive that other fellow-servant the reproaches he hath flung at you, and you shall be forgiven the theft you lately committed, when you was discovered stealing my goods. Forgive that third fellow-servant the blow you just now received from him, and you shall be forgiven the assault you committed on me, your master, for which you are now under prosecution. If you do not comply with me in this, you shall be paid your guinea; but then I will exact my hundred guineas of you to the very last farthing. You shall have satisfaction too for the affront offered you; but shall be publicly exposed to the infamy your theft hath deserved. I will punish the man who struck you, as justice requires, but will execute on you the rigour of that justice for your act of rebellion and violence against myself. As you measure from you, I will measure to you,

mercy for mercy, justice for justice, vengeance for vengeance. You demand an exact account, and shall have it; but you shall also give it.

You think this servant a perfect madman, when you hear him crying out, I insist on an account, I will be paid, I will have satisfaction. Do you indeed? Well then, Christ is the master, and thou art the man. What! will you not forgive a trifle, to be forgiven that which is infinite? will you plunge to the bottom of the lake, for the pleasure of seeing your enemy swim on the surface? How is it, that you judge so clearly in things of little moment, which relate to others, while in a case of the same nature, but of the last consequence to yourself, you are wholly stupid? Is it self that shuts your eyes? self! which of all things ought to open them, when your salvation is brought in question? Amazing! whom will you see for, if you cannot see for yourself? 'Whom will you be wise for,' if you will not be advised by Solomon 'to be wise for yourself?'

I have nothing farther to say, than only, in the most earnest manner to beg you would behold upon the whole of what hath been offered, the infinite excellence of the gospel scheme in reference to the doctrine urged in this discourse, and to embrace it, with your whole understanding and heart, as divinely just and merciful throughout; just, inasmuch as it turns you over to your own law to be judged, for 'with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again;' and merciful, inasmuch as you are graciously offered forgiveness of all your great, crying, and provoking sins against God, on the easy terms of forgiving the much smaller offences of men against you. Reject this proposal, and you are lost for ever. Receive it, and you do the utmost that man can do, to ensure your own salvation.

God give you understanding in all things, more particularly in this, to make a wise choice, and thereby 'to make sure your election and adoption,' as the child of the merciful and forgiving God, through Christ Jesus our Saviour, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXIV.

## THE PINNACLE OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.

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MATT. v. 43, 44.

*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 which despitefully use you and persecute you.*

THE law of God, more perfect than those of men, having required it of his people 'to love one another as neighbours,' which no human law ever did; the false interpreters of this divine law, as if a rule of contraries might here have place, did, in obedience to an untoward nature, and to unassisted reason, give it as a law too, that an Israelite 'should hate his enemy.' Barbarous conclusion! But so agreeable was it to the natural pride and resentments of mankind, that no ordinance of God was ever kept with equal strictness, as Christ and his disciples, though far from enemies to any one, did but too fully experience.

But our blessed instructor, having in my text repeated, and on other occasions confirmed, the law, not only condemns the foul conclusion of its interpreters, but, to the infinite surprise of those who heard him, and directly against the grain of a corrupt nature in all men, commands all Christians 'to love their enemies.'

Here the law, as enjoining somewhat of but little virtue, namely, the love of those who love us, the virtue of a mere beast, is left far behind, and a precept advanced, which sets its foot on all the pride, passion, cruelty, and, I may add, on great part of the wrong reasonings and false politics of the world; while it raises its beautiful head to heaven, and inspires us with the glorious ambition of imitating infinite perfection, and becoming 'the children of him who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'

Having heard the command of Christ, not to those alone, who through a superior understanding, and a higher pitch of spirit, seem destined to uncommon victories, or a crown of martyrdom, but to every Christian; let no one of us, prompted by his own baseness of mind, or by that inbred humbler his pride, presume to excuse himself on the footing of an affected humility, and say; let those who set up for heroism, try if they can bring themselves to a love of their enemies. I must build my hopes on much lower foundations, or not hope at all. I may perhaps find in my heart to forgive; but that heart forbids me to love, and yet I hope to be saved, as well as others.

Do you in good earnest? Saved by Christ, while you proudly kick against his precepts? You talk of low foundations; but had you true humility, you would want little more to prepare you for the love of your enemies. Your resentments are the natural children of your pride. Some other Saviour must be found for you, if you will neither obey nor imitate, to the uttermost of your power, that only Saviour, who prayed for his enemies, who gave his life for his enemies, which he had never done, had he not loved them more than his life. You must bend your mind, though ever so much stiffened by an untoward nature, to this command of Christ, as well as to the rest, or you can have no part in him. None can be saved, nor admitted into that society whereof love is the soul, but the children of God. Now God will own none for his children, but such as are like him, like him in this, as well as in his other features, kindness to the unthankful, and beneficence towards the injurious, on the only sincere and lasting principle, the real love of their enemies.

Christ, you see, begins with the principle, 'love your enemies,' as with the root, and afterward proceeds to the fruit, 'bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,' &c. He then gives you the reason, 'that you 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,' as well on those who rebel as on those who obey. And, to let you see, that, if you mean to be the disciple of Christ, more will be expected of you, than of others who are not, more than mere natural morality can teach; he goes on to expostulate

with all, and even to upbraid you, who are for obeying him only so far as ease and pleasure go hand in hand with duty, saying, 'for, if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans and sinners,' the worst sort of men, 'the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?'

Having thus shewn you what, in this instance, he expects you should be; not grateful only, but generous; not just only, but merciful; not a man of ordinary or moral goodness only, but a Godlike man; he concludes with an exhortation to the most exalted virtue, 'be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' As he is 'perfect God,' so be ye, as far as human nature can admit improvement, 'perfect men.'

You may sometimes forgive your enemies, nay, and repay their injuries with good offices, because you are well assured, that 'if you do not forgive, you shall not be forgiven;' if you do not good for evil to others, God will not do it to you. But Christ requires you should do it on a principle of love, on that principle which God acts by towards you, on that great, if not only, principle of eternal enjoyment, which, like a golden chain, binds all that are good together, and to God, their head. If this is not your motive, but self only, as of one who expects to be dealt with, just as he deals, your grounds for hoping acceptance in the sight of God may fail you. Self alone will never carry you above yourself; whereas it is not the gratification of so narrow a passion, nor the enjoyment of so poor a being, that you are to aim at, but the gratification of a love as boundless as that God, and those heavenly hosts which are its proper objects.

But to come down again to our immediate subject, unless your heart is really warmed with love towards your enemies, it cannot hope to be proof against new and repeated provocations; you cannot be long indifferent. If you do not love, you will hate; and 'he that hateth,' as the Spirit tells us by St. John, 'is a murderer.' There is no expecting forgiveness and good offices, that fruit so infinitely wholesome to the peace of Christ's church, and so infinitely delicious to the taste of God, but from its own

proper tree ; and what that is, Christ hath told you in these words, ' love your enemies.'

To sum up all, you cannot be a member of Christ, who healed, who prayed for, who blessed his persecutors ; nor a child of God, who is kind unto the unthankful and the evil ; nor consequently can you be with God and Christ for ever, if you do not imitate God, if you do not obey Christ, if you do not love your enemies. This being as plain and true, as the word of God, or the gospel of Christ, can make any thing, we ought to know,

First, who are our enemies in the sense of the precept ;

Secondly, what it is to love them according to the purport of that precept ;

And, thirdly, how we may bring ourselves to this love.

In the first place, all are not our enemies whom we are apt to mistake for such. He who reproves our follies, or thwarts our bad designs, or corrects us for our faults, is our friend ; and not to love him for so doing, is to be our own enemy.

Neither are those to be looked on as enemies who prosecute us for, or give evidence of, our crimes before a court of justice. This they do as friends to civil society, as lovers of truth and right ; and to regard them for it as our enemies, is to declare war with mankind and common justice.

Farther, they are not always to be set down in the catalogue of our enemies, at least in our Saviour's sense, who speak ill of us, or do us injuries, for perhaps we have furnished occasion to the unfavourable report, or given provocation to the unkind treatment. In all cases we only hate where we lay the blame. To do otherwise, is to act like idiots. Now, here we are to blame ourselves, and should hate ourselves, had we only the low degree of modesty to think we may do wrong ; or of impartiality, to find, we have done wrong, when every body else perceives it.

Neither do they rank themselves properly, and in our Saviour's sense, among our enemies, who think ill of us, or treat us but indifferently, through mere mistake. Our consciences tell us, they take us for quite other persons than we really are, and that perhaps on such appearances, thrown



out by our own indiscretion, as we ourselves always yield to in the like cases. They strike in the dark at somewhat too like us, but not at us; and shall we return the blow, or hate them for their error, without confessing, that we act like brutes rather than rational creatures?

None of these are our enemies in Christ's sense, but our neighbours and brethren, whom, as such, we are to love on the footing of common charity, if not of common justice.

No, our enemies, whom in the text we are commanded to love, are they 'who hate us without cause,' or rather, without the appearance of a just cause, and who have given the infallible signs of that hatred in acts of injustice or cruelty, perhaps for doing good, and even possibly to themselves. Such were the enemies of Christ and his apostles, whom nevertheless they loved, blessed, prayed for, and persevered in doing good to.

That these are the enemies our Saviour commands us to love, is plain, not only from his representing them as 'cursing, hating, despitefully using, and persecuting us;' but from his comparing them with the enemies of God, who fight against his goodness with their wickedness.

These being the men whom the text commands us to love, we ought, in the second place, to consider what it is to love them according to the purport of the precept.

Our Saviour's example, in this case, as well as in most others, is the best comment on his law. He, we know, so loved his enemies, as to bear every thing at their hands, to do them the most kind and affectionate offices on all occasions, and to lay down his life for them at last, in order, if possible, to save them from eternal misery.

Could we, by our death, so save the souls of our enemies, the charity prescribed in my text, would undoubtedly require it of us; nor would it, by any means, require too much; for what is the offering of our lives for the salvation of others, but the offering of a trifle, on comparison, not our own, but the property of God, in order to confer an infinite benefit on our fellow creatures? What is our death, who otherwise must soon die however, as criminals, not martyrs, to the eternal death of one who shares the same nature with us! How far is this short of the charity of St. Paul, who declared with an oath 'that he could wish to be accursed from

Christ for the Israelites,' whom he calls ' his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,' though they were hardened unbelievers, and bitter enemies both to Christ and him !

As, however, we are not called to such proofs of our love, even for our friends, I instance these things only to shew the degree of that love which is required of us towards our enemies.

It does not follow nevertheless, that we are to love them as warmly as our friends and benefactors. We should be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren, though no more than their temporal safety and happiness were to be gained by the sacrifice. With the wicked, the treacherous, and malicious, we are not obliged to consort, as we do with well-hearted men. They would destroy us for the mere pleasure of doing mischief; whereas it is our duty to preserve ourselves for that good, which God, the church and our country have reason to expect from us. Were there, indeed, any probability of reclaiming men so unhappily minded, we ought to run all hazards, we ought to venture into the fire of their own raging passions, and even of God's wrath, which surrounds them, in order to pull them out. There is a possibility, that the inferior heats of their pride and anger may be extinguished in the prevailing sun-shine of our charity.

You observe, I speak not here of forgiveness, an easy duty, that may be performed on a selfish principle; but of doing good with a kind intention. To bless men we do not love, and to good to do them, is acting against the grain of our own hearts, and too much forced to last; and to pray for them with affections cold and indifferent to them, is both contrary to the nature of prayer (which to be successful ought to be ardent), and a mockery of God.

Having hitherto inquired only what sort of enemies they are whom we ought to love, and in what sense or degree it is that we are to love them; the duty appears to flesh and blood, in the best natures, exceedingly difficult, and, in the worst, impossible. ' What! to require it of man, weak, proud, passionate, and resentful man, not only that he should forgive, but do good for evil; and not only that he should do good for evil, but do it out of love! love so very tender and ardent, as, in some cases, to exceed even the

love of life ! and to the most odious of men ! This is against nature, and men must be made over again before they can digest it.'

True, most true indeed. But was not the gospel given to change our nature, and make us over again into new creatures ? Do you hope to enter into heaven with that very nature about you, which threw the devil out of it ? It would be much easier to climb thither with your body, gross as it is. No, this proud, revengeful, stubborn nature must be subdued ; and a humble, a forgiving, a benevolent nature must be acquired in its place, or the company of angels, and the enjoyment of God for ever, must be given up. ' Heaven,' it is true, ' is taken by violence,' but by violence done to our own stubborn and refractory nature, not to the conditions of our covenant, nor the commands of Christ.

How then, in the last place, shall we bring ourselves to this love of our enemies ? How shall we raise our groveling hearts to so high humility ?

Before we enter on the expedients requisite for this purpose, it will be proper to observe, that nothing is more common than to feel contrary passions struggling for mastery in the same breast, and at the same time. How often is a father angry with a child whom he loves ? and where is that anger which hath not some mixture of hatred in it ? The brethren of Joseph were not without a degree of natural affection for him, when, through envy, they entertained a thought of putting him to death, as is plain from their relenting afterward, and selling him to the Ishmaelites. It frequently happens that ' a man's foes are they of his own household,' his father, his son ; and no foe can be so dangerous, because he cannot help loving them. One man naturally loves another, and if they are countrymen, neighbours, or fellow-Christians, the love is still the stronger. This, however, does not always hinder them from occasionally hating one another. Now, it is in the power of every considerate man to increase this love, or hatred, and to lessen and stifle the opposite turn of mind, by banishing from his thoughts the incentives of the one, and by dwelling on the motives to the other. A man may call down angels, or conjure up devils, in his own heart : which he should choose to do, let reason judge.

If we would cherish the love of our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians in our breast, howsoever injurious they may have been to us, we must, in the first place, earnestly desire and wish for this amiable disposition. There is but little time, and indeed, but little difference, between the earnest desire, and the actual acquisition of any Christian grace. Nothing comes between, but a vehement endeavour, and the assistance of God's spirit. The heart naturally forms itself to that figure and turn, which it strongly wishes to cultivate; and if it is such a figure as God hath prescribed, he never fails to put his creating hand to a work so pleasing in his sight. Now, to excite in us this earnest, and prompt us to this vehement endeavour, nothing farther is required, than a due consideration of the necessity we are under of raising ourselves to the love enjoined by the text, as laid before you in what hath been already said.

In proportion to the strength of this desire, it will be so much the easier, first, to conquer our resentments, and then to replace them with the love required.

As to the conquest of our resentments, nothing will so properly begin the work as taking down our pride, and labouring to reduce our minds to a true Christian humility. In most cases, anger, which suppresses the natural and religious love we bear to all men, proceeds from pride alone, and in the rest, when the attack is not directly made on our honour, we are too apt to think it more or less concerned, and to give it a vote in our revenge.

Here we should review the long and mortifying catalogue of infirmities or sins on record in our consciences, that we may be sensible how little of honour or esteem is really due to us, or could be reasonably claimed by us, were the shameful truth known as well to the world, as it is to ourselves. And though, on looking inward, where we are but partial and imperfect judges, we should come out somewhat magnified in our own conceit, this ought to be no rule to others, who know not the dignity of our personages.

Were the act of contempt, whatever it is, immediately thrown on us by the hand of God, so far from stomaching or complaining, we should confess it but a share of what we deserve. Now, it is really, though not immediately, inflicted by that providential hand, which often makes men,

sometimes the meanest of men, its instruments 'to pour contempt even on princes,' and therefore to resent it, is indirectly to fly in the face of God.

In no case, not so much as even in thought, should we ever assume to ourselves more merit, or more importance than we are sure we have in his sight, who knows us perfectly. To do otherwise, is to usurp, and that by deceit and hypocrisy, on the opinion of the ignorant, wherein there is, indeed, somewhat so very base and low, that it is a wonder how any one guilty of it, can possibly entertain a high thought of himself.

Of all our sins, the presumptuous are the most offensive in the sight of God. David prays 'to be kept back from them,' that he may be 'innocent from the great transgression,' for which there was no sacrifice allowed in the law. Presumption, and pride, the true parent of presumption, were the chief ingredients in the unpardonable sin. Almost all our sins, especially when we sin against light and the reproofs of our own consciences, partake, more or less, of this fearful aggravation. Consider now, what there is, or can be, in you, so likely to make amends for your past pride and presumption, as the opposite virtues of humility and self-mortification. Could you enter thoroughly into this thought, you would lick the feet of an insulting enemy, with more pleasure than you ever tasted, during your whole life, in the sweetest act of revenge.

The second expedient to quell our resentments which stifle, for the time, our love of mankind, is through the eye of sound experience and faith, to examine the value of those things, about which we quarrel with one another, such as our worldly interests, our credit among a few neighbours, our points of ceremony and precedence, matters of no great moment in themselves, and trifles, too contemptible for children to contend about, if compared to the infinitely greater things, wherein, as Christians, we are concerned. Let a Christian ask himself, whether it becomes a candidate for heaven, for a crown of endless glory, to be angry about a pin. It may shock, but it must be said, that our bitter and implacable resentments about earthly things, thoroughly refute, and render even ridiculous, all our professions of Christianity. Do not say you are a Christian, if you have

not 'removed your affection from things on earth, and set it on things above;' neither presume to call yourself a rational creature, in case your professions and actions are more at variance than you and your enemies. Take care, you are not your own bitterest enemy. 'He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer,' hath the spirit of a murderer, and 'we know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' Is then the very principle of eternal life destroyed in you by your anger and hatred? And for what? Could you admit the light, and see that which you are in danger of losing for ever, the cause of your hatred would be too minute to be visible.

The third expedient for the reduction, if not the prevention, of our resentments, is, to stay, ere our passion is suffered to boil over in retaliation, and weigh the injury coolly in the balance of that reason God hath given us, in order to find out how far it ought to be deemed an injury, indeed, whether it is really an injury or not. Men frequently nourish in the depths of a festering heart, the most malignant resentments, which on better lights, on cooler reflections by themselves, or on some after explanation with the other party, they find utterly groundless, and built only on the air of their own suspicions, or on that which hath issued from the poisoned mouths of mischief-makers.

As to our own suspicions or apprehensions of an injury, they will, if we do not take care to prevent it, be so realized and magnified by the imagination, that not even a repetition of provocations could more effectually increase our resentment. This infirmity of our minds we may learn from experience as well as from the words of the wise man; 'the beginning of anger is as when one letteth out water,' which, if ever so little way is made for it, will quickly widen the passage, and pour out with redoubled force, till it becomes as difficult to stop it, as to gather it up again or recal it. Here humanity, charity, and reason should be called to our assistance, in order to make head against the growing passion in time. It is natural, but of most pernicious consequence, to chafe our resentments by suffering the imagina-

tion to dwell on aggravating circumstances, or the tongue to run out in furious expressions, which greatly increase the inflammation, as the motion of the lion's tail is said to lash him into rage. For this wild beast within us we have a chain always ready at hand, and that is, the pain and danger he never fails to bring along with him. What baleful lightning he darts from our eyes ! How frightfully he distorts our faces ! How does he shake our limbs ! Yet these are but the faint signs, often restrained as much as possible by shame, of inexpressible agonies within. Now, is such thunder to the mind, such an earthquake to the body, such a volcano vomiting fire, and threatening destruction to every thing near it, to be encouraged and prolonged ? are pangs, not unlike these of the damned, to be dwelt on, to be courted, to be pursued and aggravated, by a reasonable creature ? No, you will say, but anger, when violently provoked, breaks out like thunder, too suddenly to be checked. And I answer, its sallies do not prevent its agonies. They come together, and the one should instantly be applied as a cure for the other. The liver of this mental mad dog, should be taken with the soonest, as an antidote against the poison of his bite.

But supposing the resentment should be kindled only by tatlers and mischief-makers, who, for ends best known to themselves, have given the devil vacation, and undertaken for him this his most envenomed office ; less consideration and caution will be required to quench it. Were anger ever excusable, these intentional brokers of mischief, of all human monsters, would be its most justifiable objects ; and indeed, of all others, sooner or later, they are the most apt to get a scorch from the over-boiling of the furnace, who are employed in the management of the bellows. Few disturbances arise among neighbours, which derive not either their original from the invention, or the greater part of their malignity from the malicious arts of these meddlers. 'Where there is no wood, the fire goeth out ;' so where there is no 'tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth.' As it is the listener who makes the tatler, it is impossible to account for his anger any other way, but by setting him down in the list of those fools, who, industrious to cut out mischief for themselves,



retain a liar to regale their ears with fictitious causes of resentment, when mankind are grown too fond of peace, justice, and another's reputation truly, to furnish real ones.

In case however we have unhappily given way so far to the real or apparent motives of resentment, as to speak or act in a vindictive manner, and this hath provoked our enemy to new insults or injuries; we ought to deduct all such injuries; subsequent to our first act of revenge, from our apprehended cause of quarrel, and charge it to the account of our own indiscretion, pride and unchristian turn of mind. The original injury done us was probably but a small one; this we repaid with interest; and that, our adversary hath retaliated with somewhat, in our opinion, too grievous to be forgiven. See what a fire is blown up out of a spark which a small kindness, or only a silent forgiveness, might have quenched, Supposing the adversary, as here I do, to have begun the mischief, Christianity, which owns no distinction between the aggressor and avenger in point of guilt, ought long ago, to have put a stop to its progress, by that love in every man for every man, which nothing but passions, too outrageous for religion or nature to tolerate, can ever deface.

In the last place, we should do well to consider, that we have a common enemy, whose perpetual study it is, to expunge from our minds the beautiful image of God, who is love; and to erect, in its stead, his own hideous and horrible image, made up of infernal hatred and malice. Our anger is but his engine, vomiting destruction at others, and recoiling with deadly force on ourselves. What else is his design, but to dash us one against another till a miserable shipwreck is made of peace, charity, and all our hopes? To this work he halloo's the foolish part of mankind, as idle people do their dogs on one another, for sport; and, so infinitely ridiculous it is, that sport it might be to men, as well as devils, were the ill effects to end with this life. In the midst of your anger at your neighbour, who does you an injury, stay to consider coolly, whether God may not be angry with you for your greater provocations; and in consequence of that anger, may not have left this man loose upon you for a punishment, or rather perhaps for a trial, whereon is to depend your being forgiven, if you forgive; and even blessed,

if you bless. Should this be the case, as possibly it may, you will find, that you yourself are your own enemy, that you have been the first mover of the injury you resent, and therefore should resent it against yourself in fear and trembling, not in anger against your neighbour. While therefore you have the tempter and yourself to be angry with, and God to fear, how can you give way to resentment against your weak brother, who is only the unhappy instrument of that suffering, which you have brought upon yourself? Who, but a fool, would stay to quarrel with one enemy for some petty injury done him in his character or fortune, who had to deal with two other enemies in an actual attack upon his life?

Having by reflections like these exercised from your heart the dæmon of anger, it will be the easier task to fill the vacancy with a spirit of a better nature, and infinitely more pleasing to yourself.

If the rigour of your resentment is relaxed, peace hath, no doubt, taken its place, and is ready to introduce to your now mollified and unruffled thoughts, her beautiful attendant, pity. And can you any where find a more moving object of your pity, than that man who is your enemy without cause? His health, prosperity, and insolence, may impose upon you, and prevent your thinking him miserable. But hatred vented in iniquity and injury, is misery, is a corroding distemper, that cannot be cured without poison, that is, without doing mischief, which is poison to the soul of the doer. If you examine him through the eye of faith, which strips every thing of its worldly disguises, you will see him betrayed by his bad principles, torn by his ungovernable passions, and tortured with the stings of his guilty conscience; possessed by one of the most malevolent and rancorous devils; an object of God's indignation; and made over, if a woful repentance do not save him, to miseries infinitely more frightful, than those he already feels. Can you see a soul in this condition without pity? If you can, you would not be grieved to see him in the torments of hell. You startle! and good reason. Yet your enemy actually suffers a share of those torments, and is hastening to a full completion of them. Does it not increase your pity, now that you are no longer angry, and add the compassionate fears of a

man and a Christian, to think, that you, though innocent, are unhappily the occasion of all this? That shudder you feel at the mention of his being damned on your account, shews you, all along, loved him, and wanted only your compassion to rouse your humanity and affection. What can your enemy do to you? He 'can only kill your body,' and probably wishes not to be so cruel; but if he does, with the weapon he aims at that, he runs himself through the soul; for the point next himself is infinitely more sharp and deadly, than that which he turns on you. If he is, in other respects, a good man, how does your heart melt for him! and how does it tremble, in case the rest of his behaviour is of a piece with his treatment of you!

Allow him, however, some abatement of their jury done you on account of ignorance, of the strong appearances of provocation on your part, and of those weaknesses in him, and all men, which you find, and lament, in yourself. He is not your enemy, but because he is just such a one as you are.

Having by this allowance, which you must sometimes claim, as well as give, increased your good-natured concern for him; proceed next to strip yourself of the prejudices and bad opinions of him, which you entertained in the time of your late resentment. Go farther still, and do justice in your own breast to his good qualities, for who is so bad, as to have none? Perhaps he is, this instance only excepted, a good and amiable man. It may be, he was formerly your friend, nay, in some degree your benefactor. If you are not very unreasonable, you will listen to the good things others say of him, and if you are not extremely partial, you will by no means judge of the whole man by that part of his conduct, which relates only to yourself. You will not suffer it to be said, that you have a memory only for mischief.

But though he should not have been heretofore at any time your friend, perhaps hereafter he may, by receiving good only at your hands, for evil, and kindness for mistaken hatred, become the most zealous and useful of all your friends. We have instances of converted enemies, who have loved in proportion to their former hatred, and to the generosity, which made the change. Our Saviour hath observed, that 'he is apt to love most, who hath been pardoned most;' and

he means, when there is natural goodness of temper to work on. The passionate, through an extraordinary redundancy of warmth, are usually the most injurious, and as usually the most generous. It is worth your while to suppose your enemy to be of this cast, at least for sometime, till you can make an experiment on him, whether or no, the furnace of your charity and love may not melt him down into gratitude and affection for you. 'Heap the coals on his head,' and try him in that heavenly fire which God hath kindled up in your heart by the best of all religions. On this charitable, perhaps highly rational supposition, you may entertain a certain degree of regard for him, or at least for what he may be. Do him the justice that a statuary does to a block of marble, wherein, rude and misshapen as it is, he sees the figure of an angel, and actually brings it out, but not without great labour, and the touches of a very delicate hand in paring away the rugged and superfluous parts, those parts, which might, at first, have hurt him, when he began to roll the unwieldly mass.

As you have ceased to resent, and began to pity, these two farther steps may help to improve that pity into some low degree of esteem and affection.

This affection may be carried a little farther by considering your enemy as the instrument of Providence, where-with the great interests of your soul, and the solid glory you aim at, are more effectually promoted, than they can be by all the kindness of your friends. Neither your own estimate of yourself, which may be a little too favourable; nor the reproofs of your friend, which, through a tenderness too common, may touch but the surface of your faults, will teach you so well how to judge of your own infirmities, as the censures of an enemy, who will not spare, who will not fail to search every open you give him to the quick. It is high time for you to watch sharply over your own conduct, when you know the eye of malice is upon you, wishing for an opportunity to take advantage, and at once, to rejoice over you, 'and magnify itself against you.' But, what is more than all this, it is your enemy only, who can put it in your power to forgive, to reward hatred with love, to do good for evil, and so to wipe out the dreadful score that is against you in the book of God.

Although therefore he is far from intending you any kindness, yet as he is become your watchman, your monitor, and, if you do not yourself hinder him, the greatest promoter, among men, I mean, and that at his own expense, of the noblest Christian graces in your mind, and consequently of your eternal happiness and glory; you ought to consider him in the light of an involuntary benefactor, as the step next heaven in Jacob's ladder; and while, in a triumph of joy, you prepare to set your foot on it, should kiss it as a martyr does his stake, and pour the overflowings of the love you owe to God, on this effectual, though unhappy, medium of approach to him.

Consider again, if God created, and Christ died for, and united your enemy to himself, as well as you, whether you can call yourself a Christian, till your love of Christ extends itself to this his member. Do you hope, that the righteousness of Christ should atone to divine justice for your transgressions, and make you an object of love to God, if you will not allow that righteousness to atone with you for the transgressions of your brother, and make him an object of your love? Is he not a member of Christ? Can you love the head, and not love the members also? Are not you, your enemy, and we all, 'one body of Christ?' Is it not love alone that unites us? Love to the head and the whole body? And if it is, is he not cut off from that body, who hath not this love? If no other argument can prevail on you to love your enemy, love him for the sake of Christ, in whose unbounded love to you both, all sense of his unkindness ought to be lost; and in its place, the sweet, the tender, the loving spirit of Christ kindled up within you towards this invader of what? Why, of that property you hold only by permission; or of that honour you have no real title to; or of that life no constitutional health can ensure you for a single moment. If the commands, if the merits of Christ, weigh more with you than the injuries of men, you will forgive, you will pity, you will love your enemy, whom that blessed redeemer is yet perhaps ready to receive, in case you will grant his pardon, admit him to your heart, and afford his weakness that assistance, which no other mortal hath it in his power to impart. Does the Saviour of man, and the Son of God, wait for this step in

you? And can you delay a single moment to make it? No, you have pronounced the pardon of your fellow-creature and fellow-Christian, and having thus past a compassionate sentence on him, have, in the sight of infinite mercy confirmed the sentence on yourself.

After having gone so far, you will be ready to hear and obey the farther directions of Christ, which cannot be too difficult for virtue so truly noble as yours. 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.'

Him, whom you call your enemy, Christ calls your brother, and desires you to go to him in the affectionate spirit of a brother, in order to a good-humoured examination of his behaviour to you. Look up therefore to the command and example of Christ. Pitch your soul far above the little pride of ceremony. Wait not a moment for forms, nor for the first step on your adversary's part, who, poor man! is too weak to make any; but armed with an obstinate resolution 'to overcome evil with good,' and to perform what your blessed master commands, fly to him in the spirit of Christian humility and meekness; tenderly, patiently expostulate with him on the grounds of his displeasure and its effects. Rather plead your own innocence, than harshly insist on his hatred or injustice; convince him by the most solemn protestations of your readiness to do him every good office in your power, and that you have no earthly interest, no point, but peace and love in view. The task assigned you is, I own, no easy one. But surely it is as pleasant as it is difficult. If your resolution should begin to stagger, think of that pleasure, and remember, you have already so far conquered your pride and passion, as to pity and love your adversary. Remember the glorious purpose of your overture. Remember, you go in the name, at the command, and by the example, of Christ. Remember, you are the hero and champion of his cause against

that of perverseness and malice ; and going not to a ball, but a battle, wherein humility is to encounter with pride, and a steady gentleness with perhaps outrageous sallies of brutality. Remember, the more he chafes, the more he hardens himself against reason, the more glorious will be your victory over him, or at least over yourself, and the common enemy of you both, in case you act up to the dignity of the Christian character. Let no fury nor fierceness of his shake your resolution, nor drive these considerations for a moment, from your view. Arm your soul with patience, with pity, with love ; summon all the vigour of your religion to your assistance. Receive every unkind thing he says on the woolpack of a soft answer, which may turn away or deaden his wrath, though coming from his, as from the mouth of a cannon. Let your pity and love spread themselves over your face in tender looks, and infuse honey into all your words. A carriage so soothing, managed with proper address in giving way, or bearing up, as occasion points your course, is too much to be resisted by any one, not absolutely lost to nature.

If you pursue your purpose with perseverance, as one who loves, and not as one who undertakes a task ; and if you pray earnestly to God for his assistance, you will probably gain your brother, not only to yourself, but to God ; or, in case you do not, one thing you cannot fail of, and that is, God's high approbation of your great attempt. It may be reasonably questioned, whether his all-seeing eye beholds any thing in this world so pleasing to him.

But if all this should prove ineffectual, and, as our Saviour saith, your poor obstinate brother will not hear you, then take with you one or two more of those common friends, whom he most regards, and try whether he will hear that reason, and those expressions of your love, from them, which he is so deaf to in your mouth. These men, though no orators, will say more in three words, than you, had you the tongue of an angel, can do in ten thousand. Every thing however that passes between you, being evidenced and established by the report of these friends, as competent witnesses, will, at worst, justify your character, and give you all the advantage you can desire in the next step to be made, if this proves unsuccessful, which is,



To 'tell it unto the church,' and so leave it with those whose office it is to impart or refuse the communion of Christ and his body. But in case 'he shall neglect to hear the church,' and shall despise the interposition of Christ and his members; then 'let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,' as one with whom you can, no longer, have any brotherly or Christian intercourse. Nevertheless, after all, you are not allowed to challenge him into the field. You may shun, but not shoot him, for you are not at liberty to put every heathen or publican to death, wherever you can find him.

Supposing, however, that in any of these steps you do go home to his heart and prevail, which it is most highly probable you will, the love of him, which you could not, ere this, perfectly bring your heart to, will now be the pleasing consequence. Your enemy will henceforward be your friend; and as it was, in some measure, goodness of heart in him, not unlike your own, that won him, one of your most faithful and affectionate friends. That man, whom lately you could hardly help representing to yourself as a monster, is now a good man, and loves you as he does his own life. Mark the sudden redness on his face! the eager shaking of his arms! when he runs to embrace you. Did you ever taste such pleasure? Indulge it in another, and a yet more affecting light. Your poor Christian brother, who was, some hours ago, in 'the gall of bitterness, in the bond of iniquity,' in the jaws of the great devourer, is now set at liberty, is now re-united to Christ and you, and that by an act of yours, so truly glorious in itself, so exquisitely sweet on reflection to your good-natured heart, and what is still more, so singularly acceptable to the God of peace and love, that we may safely pronounce you a greater conqueror than Cæsar, and an happy man; for by one high effort of goodness you have wiped out the account of all your sins, and saved the soul of your brother alive, for which all good men love you, for which God loves you, for which heaven rings with a loud hallelujah.

Is revenge so sweet? The rage, with which one at enmity with his brother, turns on the assailant of that brother; and the warm embrace with which they meet in foreign countries, who hated each other at home; shew, that a

considerable degree of love may lie a long time dormant under a quarrel, and concealed even from the heart it warms. It is this which breaks forth in such tears of tenderness, and transports of joy, on a thorough reconciliation of well-hearted enemies, as no enjoyment of our nearest relations, or most beloved friends can produce.

And are we not all 'brothers, all strangers and pilgrims' in this world? Why then do we not fight for one another against the common enemy? Why do we not fly into each other's arms, on the first reflection after a quarrel? Can a mere accident of seeing a brother assaulted, or of meeting our adversary in a distant country, as if our love and hatred were only local, do more than the love of Christ, than obedience to his law, than the whole of our religion, in the breast of a Christian? of a Christian who owns that every other Christian is by nature 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh;' and by the baptism, the gospel, the charity of Christ, soul of his soul, and spirit of his spirit? Oh! it is too shameful a reproach to our professions, and to the name we borrow from the most benevolent of all beings, to be endured so much as in thought. Let us renounce Christianity, before we begin to hate, or cease to love a Christian.

O good God, the God of peace and love, teach us, we beseech thee, to know that thy speaking peace to us, and receiving us as thy beloved children at the last day, depends on our speaking peace and shewing love to one another, as our brethren. Teach both our understandings and hearts this lovely, this important lesson, for the sake of Christ Jesus, the mediator of our peace, with thee; to whom, in the unity of the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXV.

## THE GOOD FEW REQUIRE BUT A NARROW ROAD.

## MATTHEW v. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

To all his disciples throughout all ages and countries, did our blessed master deliver this inimitable sermon, from whence the words, repeated to you, are taken. If this particular precept was more especially intended for the future preachers of the gospel (as yet there were none such appointed) the same may be said of all his other general precepts, wherein the hearers are not expressly distinguished from their teachers. All are 'to repent, to bring forth fruit meet for repentance, to believe, to have charity, to be poor in spirit, to be meek and merciful, to be peace-makers, to be pure in heart, to hunger and thirst after righteousness;' but the clergy more than others. It is true of all Christians, that 'they are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world;' but it is, no doubt, with reason expected, that they, from whom this salt and light are to be received by others, should be higher seasoned, and more thoroughly illuminated, than the generality of those they preach to.

The same, in a great measure, is to be expected from all those, who, though not called to the ministry, have had the advantage of a liberal education, have been entrusted with the distinguished talents of much knowledge, large fortunes, and high stations in the world; and by Providence, the proprietor of all these, called to be his stewards, and the governors, leaders, and patterns of mankind. Nay, the precept extends itself down to the lowest ranks of Christians, to the master who works on a loom, to the father who labours with a spade, to every the poorest and most illiterate Christian, on whom the light of the gospel hath shone, although through the darkest cloud; for even these may let an unbe-

liever see, how much more may be done by a little faith, than by all the vain philosophy of this world.

As to the sense of the precept, it is plainly this. Let all your discourses, conversations, writings, carry with them a portion of the light you have received. Let them be seasoned by the spirit, enlivened by the warmth, and brightened by the beams, of 'Christ who is your light.' Do not ostentatiously set off this light, but give it leave to sparkle, as through a heart of purest crystal in the eyes of all your acquaintances, that by it they may see what you are within, and comparing your outward actions or works, with the light or doctrine, that breaks forth with so much lustre from your well-instructed mind, may perceive a close conformity between them. The effect of this will be, that pleased with a heart so purified, so refined by the Spirit of God; and edified by a life so justly regulated according to his holy will, they must love you, adore your heavenly Father, who hath begotten you in his own likeness, and resolve to follow you, both in principle and practice, to that glorious sun, whose rays you drink in and transfuse into flowers of a ravishing scent and hue, and fruits of a most delicious taste, fruits from the tree of life.

You see now in the sense of this incomparable precept, what good you may do to mankind, what service and glory you may render to God, without stepping a hair's breadth out of your own way, or so much as intending any thing but your duty, and the pursuit of your own happiness.

Great as the force or beauty of such an example is in itself, it will be doubled, when compared with that of him 'who walketh in darkness,' whose life, at best, is given up to folly, but generally to so even a mixture of that and wickedness, as makes it impossible to judge, whether he calculates worse for time or eternity, and whether he is more to be pitied for a mad self-murder of his own unhappy soul, or abhorred for the havock he makes every where about him among the miserable partners of his crimes, and the despicable copiers of his excesses. He so spreads his darkness before, and over other men, that they cannot see his bad works, or if they do, see them only in such a disguise, as procures an imitation, and serves to please and glorify their common father which is in hell. Foul as this original is, it

is oftener copied, than the fairer one of piety and virtue, because every clumsy bungler can daub a likeness of vice, which is in itself a caricatura; but to hit off a just resemblance to the beauty of holiness, as exemplified in the life of a genuine Christian, a judicious and steady execution is required. As a good and bad life are built on very different foundations, this on a corrupt nature, and that, on principles of true religion; so they work, by way of example, with most power on minds of a like turn to those from whence they are originally displayed. Where principle hath taken place, good examples; where corruption prevails, bad ones, strike in with almost irresistible force. Their efficacy, however, is not inconsiderable, when exerted the contrary way. Good examples, if sufficiently numerous and illustrious, frequently make converts among the most degenerate slaves to vice; and bad examples still more frequently overpower the principles of religion in good minds, and seduce them first to a desire of tasting the forbidden fruit, and then of making a meal on it every day.

It is in this last light, that example should be considered, as a matter of the utmost consequence. Did example go no farther, than to make good men better, and bad men worse, this alone would be enough to give it a very high degree of importance. But when its power is found to be so great, as to change the natures, or stifle the principles of men, it must surely merit the closest attention of every thinking mind, especially as every one is more or less exemplary, whether he intends it or not, and therefore more accountable by far for what others shall think of him, than most men are willing to conceive. All men are naturally weak, and stand perpetually in need either of forbearance or assistance from other men. Each therefore is answerable for all the good he might have done to others, and did not; and for all the mischief he hath done them, when it was in his power to avoid it, whether he intended them any injury or not. Now, if a man may do a great deal of good or hurt to others by his example, which experience shews us he may, as well as by his tongue or hands; so far as the opinions conceived of him by his neighbours are founded on his real conduct, so far is he accountable for those opinions. If a man is weak in giving way to a bad example, so is he likewise in not

having a skin tough and hard enough to defend him from the push of a sword, or the impression of a bullet; and he that carelessly shoots him might as well blame him for being vulnerable, as he that seduces him by a bad example, for not being proof against its infection. Nay, he who does not encourage the virtue of his neighbours by a good example, should be classed with him who refuses them a little food, without which he knows they must starve.

None, but such as are unacquainted with human nature in regard to its surprising proneness to imitation, will think I overstrain the importance of an example, either as to his duty who sets, or his virtue who is affected by it. Imitation, in many instances, perhaps in all, to a certain degree, is mechanical and involuntary, as may appear by the propagation of a yawn, by the effects of imagination in pregnant women, by the similitude of faces observable in people of the same nation, and by the likeness we insensibly contract to those we live and converse much with, in looks, gestures, and accents. There are not a few of us, who like the mimic bird, that, without any note of its own, sings or chatters only what it hears from others, seem to have scarcely any peculiar properties, but, as it were, to borrow themselves from those of one knows not how many contributors. These breathing pictures, or walking statues, would be saints if they conversed with saints; and would deserve nothing but the gallows, were they to spend their days with profligates. If there is in our nature so strong an inclination to mimicry, when we do not at all intend it, that inclination must, no doubt, work with double force, as often as, through vanity or a desire of excelling, we set ourselves to copy what we admire in others.

But whether our disposition to imitation is merely mechanical, as it is in that awkwardness we cannot help contracting in a long acquaintance and familiarity with people of no breeding; or intended, as in that genteel and easy carriage, which we endeavour to learn by accommodating ourselves to the air and manner of the polite, it is certain, all imitation begins in the mind, and works with the greatest force, when a morally good or evil action is copied, because, in this case, either the infinite motive of religion on the one side, or the most violent of our passions on the other, lead

their strength, as that of so many additional springs, to the power of imitation.

The habits of individuals, and the customs or fashions that prevail in, and characterise whole nations, are all the effect of example, be it wisdom or folly, virtue or vice, design or whim, that gave birth to that example in the first setters. A man hath, in a manner, his whole conduct prescribed to him by precedents set him, either in his former actions, or in those of his acquaintances, especially the most eminent. Perhaps I might safely say, the world is not so much governed by religion, laws, kings, and other magistrates, as by the universal correspondence kept up between the examples of the great, which soon grow into fashions among the many, and the imitative disposition, so deeply rooted in all. Hence arises that distinction between the inhabitants of two different countries in the same climate; the one frugal, the other luxurious; the one polite, the other barbarous; the one brave, the other dastardly; which is called the national character. 'We are members one of another' in a civil, as well as in a religious sense; so that, like blood, the produce of our food in the natural body, custom the effect of examples, circulates through all the parts of the spiritual and political, imparting the qualities of the whole to each limb, and of each limb to the whole; till all is assimilated and settled into one general habit, either sound or distempered, according to the tendency of the examples that prevail.

Though example is generally on the side of folly and vice, yet in its own nature it is indifferent, and may be attached to wisdom and virtue.

Since then we are capable of doing one another so much good or hurt by our examples, we should be exceedingly watchful over all parts of our behaviour, not only as men prudently attentive to our own happiness; but as men also who mean not to surrender all pretensions to humanity, to the love of our country, and to Christian charity, which, all of them, call aloud on us for the countenance of good examples, to support the piety of the church, the virtue of the state, and of course, the strength of the one in this, and the happiness of the other, in both worlds.

If we consider what are the effects of our conduct among



those who no otherwise interfere with us, than barely by seeing how we act, we shall conclude, we owe them the benefit of a good example, as much as we do any other debt. If by making our light to shine before them, we may bring them to glorify our Father which is in heaven, nay, and guide them by that light to him and their own happiness, it must undoubtedly be one of the most important duties we have in our power to perform, either towards God or man, to set the best examples we can. The sin therefore of setting no example, is that of neglecting the cause of religion and virtue, of refusing to do our fellow-creatures the greatest good in our power, which will cost us nothing, but what we must otherwise have done on our own account; and of standing neuter between God and his enemy.

If so great is the crime of a neuter, when God is a party, what must be that of declaring for his enemy by an example of folly and wickedness! This is not stopping the tribute of honour and glory due to God out of the talents he hath entrusted us with, in order to add a proportionable weight to the good examples he intended we should set; but is turning all those talents, whether of understanding, wealth, power, or length of days, and the whole importance of the example arising from thence, directly against the honour of God; and furnishing the irreligious and the peevish with a temptation to blaspheme his Providence for joining so much wealth and folly, so much power and wickedness together.

What then, you will say, is to be done? We see the consequences of setting mankind at liberty from the ties of religion, and know, that no other ties can prevent their running riot into rebellion, rapine, and misrule; and we see also, that in case the upper class of mankind should shew a contempt for religion, the lower classes would soon get into the fashion, and become as errant atheists as their betters. We are therefore willing to go to church, and pay some respect to the religion of our country. Is this all you can do? All, unless you would have us become hypocrites and dissemblers in a business of so sacred a nature. But, in the name of common sense, are you not dissemblers in going so far? There is not only this objection against your conduct, that it subverts itself in the very principle, but two more of no less weight. Your going to church is

either a good or a bad action. If it is a good one, then you do it with a bad intention, namely, to keep the populace in ignorance, that they may be governed by stricter rules of morality than you think fit yourselves to submit to. If it is a bad action, and done only with a view to that peace and order which good men, as well as you, wish to see established in the world, even upon mistaken principles, rather than on none; then you do evil that good may come of it; and I must tell you, that, as sure as there is a God, such a conduct must be extremely offensive to him, because it is built on the reproachful and blasphemous belief, that the sins of dissimulation and imposture are necessary to the government of a world which he made; and so made, as either not to need the interposition of his own wisdom, much less of your cunning, or as intended for a part of his providential empire, to the government of which, under almighty wisdom, no arts borrowed from the author of deceit can possibly, to say no more, be requisite. But secondly, your method is liable to this farther objection, that appearances of this kind are never given, but by halves; that they cannot long be kept up; and that the vanity of boasting the discoveries you have made to the dishonour of religion, the sensual desires, the covetous or ambitious designs, the violent passions, the inveterate habits, which opened your eyes to the weak side of Christianity, cannot be held within a disguise as feeble as it is flimsy. How long is it to be supposed, you will wear a mask, put on, much against the grain, for no immediate benefit of your own, and merely for the sake of keeping others in some order; a consideration of no great weight even to the reason of one who can think religion so necessary, and yet so false?

Besides, this conduct, instead of doing any honour to religion, serves only to bring on it all the reproach due to the many enormities of your infidel life, which, were you not mistaken for a Christian, must be ascribed to their real cause, your utter want of principles. This pretence of Christianity therefore, which so many now-a-days give into and defend with very specious arguments, is but a cunning piece of folly in some, and a double artifice in others, whereby they propose to throw the odium of their actions

off that infidelity which encourages, on Christianity which cries aloud against, them. The cause of Christ never stood in need of, and disdains, such aids, if aids they may be called. No, let Christ have either sincere friends, or open enemies; and let his religion stand on its own truth, or sink under its falsity, as the judge and guardian of truth shall determine.

There is a great majority of these, whose obscure characters and low situation in the world confine the influence of their examples to very narrow bounds. However, there is no man so inconsiderable as never to be imitated. He must be too little to be seen, who is too little to be copied. Besides, the generality of imitators are short-sighted, and we know the eyes of all such are magnifiers. Similitude insensibly grows out of mere observation. Natural wit, beauty, bodily strength, personal peculiarity, and the most trifling superiority in circumstances, excite observation, and with it a degree of respect, in the vales of human life, which those on its eminences look down upon, as sunk in one indistinct and promiscuous level. The poorest parent is an object of some veneration to his offspring, and consequently of imitation, through which he propagates piety or irreligion, sobriety or drunkenness, honesty or knavery, as fast as he does children; for children, as if all eye, are led by their sight into any thing that strikes that sense, especially in the behaviour of their parent, whom, as newcomers, they are obliged to take for a guide in a world altogether strange to them. How careful therefore ought he to be, who is surrounded with natural mimicks, perpetually taking off his likeness in every action, and preparing to spread and hand down his manners, as far in point of time and space, as his posterity shall extend themselves in the world! Masters also, in respect to example, are a sort of second parents, and what their servants did not, or could not learn in their father's house, they perfect themselves in under the government of their master. They either have not been taught, or have not time, to read; and therefore, as imitation generally looks upward, they take the behaviour of their master for a summary of all that excellence in higher life, which they are so ambitious of copying after. Him they read, him they transcribe into themselves,

till their minds have put on his livery, as well as their bodies. A family is the most important seminary in the world, a nursery, wherein are formed all the members of the community, wherein every child of God, and every servant of the devil, receives the rudiments of virtue or vice, and those infinitely more by example, which makes the fashion, than by instruction, which is under its discountenance.

All mankind are exemplary in a greater or less degree, but they most whose fortune or station hath lifted them most into view, and set them highest. They are seen far and near; and such is the compliment paid, by the pretended renouncers of this world, to its pomps and vanities, admired as far as they are seen, and imitated as far as the narrower funds of their inferiors can stretch to. Their vices grow into virtues, and their virtues into heroism, as they descend on the observation of the herd.

Piety and virtue, not only for their native dignity, but for their great singularity, in a person of distinction, look nobly, and produce the most happy effects among his inferiors, discouraging the vices of the bad, and invigorating the virtues of the good, whose laudable dispositions seem to kindle at his; so that, as if they were inspired by some preternatural impulse, they improve on a spirit not their own, and act and live above themselves.

Infidelity and wickedness in a person of distinction look nobly too, extinguishing the virtues and fomenting the vices of all beneath him. Privileged by his example, the creature, who is as poor in pocket as he is in soul, sets up for grandeur, on a second-hand sneer at religion, on his week of keeping, or his hour of gaming, till distress and despair drive him to that road, which terminates in the gallows; or, at best, till sober poverty degrades him again to Christianity. The sower of tares enlarges those seeds in the richer soil of a great fortune, from which otherwise he could not expect so plentiful a crop, on a change to hungrier grounds. There are several sorts of exotic vices that cannot be raised, but in the hot-bed of wealth, title and figure, which nevertheless thrive apace when transplanted thence into common earth. It is often a diverting, but it should be a shocking sight to the great ones of the world, to see how their vices are mimicked by the little ones, who,

influenced by their examples, as if possessed by some demon, run, regardless of all that decorum which gives a sort of grace to politer wickedness, into downright brutality and madness.

The great and powerful impose what customs they please on the inferior part of the world. The examples of kings particularly, are more absolute than their commands. The court follows them; the capital follows the court; and the nation that, as fast as eager imitation can snatch the fashion from above; till the manners of the head are visible in the very feet. Even that religion which a people have thought of consequence enough to be fought for with the utmost bitterness, hath not been considered as too great a compliment to their princes. The ten tribes of the Israelites that followed Jeroboam, followed him to his golden calves; and, excepting a very few, continued in his idolatry, or sunk into worse, during all the reigns of his successors. The other two tribes went, most of them, into the religion or superstition of their kings, with a readiness at every change, that seems astonishing to one who knows not how few in any country really and sincerely give their hearts to religion. During the usurpation of these kingdoms, cant, enthusiasm, and hypocrisy took the place of Christianity in the great ones, and prevailed almost universally. In the reign immediately following, profaneness, atheism, and dissolution of manners, ran down from the throne to the lowest of the people so fast, and took so firm a possession as they went, that the present debauchee and scoffer at religion may probably thank the court in that reign for his not being at this day a formal hypocrite, or a sour enthusiast. How ought they to watch over their own behaviour, whose every action is mimicked by a multitude, perhaps a nation! How little are the most ordinary actions of great men their own, when each of them is attended with so long a train of happy or fatal effects upon the people.

The actions of the clergy are still less their own. They owe a good example as a debt to Christ, whom they take upon them to represent, and as a debt to their people, by whose labour they subsist. I say not this from an opinion, that the people would imitate them, were they saints of the first magnitude to a man. No, they are too much hated

and despised, for reasons quite foreign to their moral characters, to be considered as objects of imitation. Besides, the people, I know not how, have got it into their heads, that the clergy are, or ought to be, creatures of a different species from themselves, acting on principles, and bound to duties, so very foreign from those which are to govern the rest of mankind, that imitation, for want of a common footing to build on can here have no place. If one of us behaves himself pretty well, which in such times, I think, is no small matter, lives soberly and modestly, waits on his duty with perhaps a little more than ordinary care; our lay brethren look on it as nothing. Why, say they, is he not a clergyman? Who thanks him for being good? and say it with such an air, as plainly shews, they do not think themselves obliged to be sober, modest, honest, by the same laws that bind their teachers; or shews, at least, that they believe they do very well, if they are but half so good as the clergy, perhaps the worst of the clergy. I speak not of all the laity. God be thanked, there are here and there some of them, who are fit to be patterns to the best of us.

But in case a clergyman shall generally misbehave himself, his example instantly acquires a force exceeding that of the greatest king, so far as the sphere of his notoriety extends. His bad actions, although tenfold more odious in him than they would be if done by another, are, by an astonishing juggle of thought, snapped at with the greatest pleasure, not only as matter of universal reproach to his order, but as so many comfortable licences for all manner of wickedness in laymen. If a clergyman, say they, can do such things, what may not we do? They know best how far a man may go downhill without plunging into the abyss; and surely a layman may go twice as far as a clergyman, and not find himself, after all, in a more desperate condition.

Now, although this is very bad reasoning, and worst of all among Protestants, who will have their clergy to be teachers of the most limited kind, and not guides; yet as it is likely to be the reasoning of thousands every where, till all false reasoning is banished quite out of the world, it will, no doubt, be severely required of us as a primary duty,

that we do the rest of mankind no harm at least, if we can do them no good, by our examples. A clergyman, by preaching for twenty years with the tongue of an angel, shall not edify his hearers so much, as he shall corrupt his seers by one material slip in point of conduct. Their ears are asleep, while their eyes are open. Our sermons, they know, may be borrowed, but our actions are our own. On the merits of these they severely try our faith by the rule of St. James; and indeed we should think it our greatest happiness, that they will not allow the smallest share of that toleration to our immoralities, which they do to their own. This is being kinder in effect to us, than they are to themselves.

Since the influence of example goes so far, that few men think they are obliged to be better than their superiors, or than the generality of people on a level with themselves, detraction may be considered, not only as one of the blackest in the catalogue of vices, but also as one of the greatest corruptors of mankind, inasmuch as this agent of mischief is perpetually employed by ill-nature, envy, and suspicion, to take off from the merit of good actions, and aggravate the sin of bad ones; to represent a worthy man as less worthy, and a wicked one as more wicked, than he really is; and by these means to poison the almost only fountain of action in the minds of the giddy, and of those who are naturally disposed to conceive ill of their neighbours. Thus it is that the slanderer destroys the effects of good examples, and makes the most of bad ones; sullyng the lustre of the noblest virtues, and swelling frailties into crimes; increasing the apparent number of offenders, in order to increase the real. This is doing the whole work of the enemy. It is gratifying malice; it is accusing, it is corrupting souls, all in one act. It were an office of far less inhumanity to make a collection of contagious fevers and plagues, and then to go about through the world communicating the infection. Thus, on the other hand, it is, that the fool is entrapped into a greater degree of wickedness, than the mistaken example he follows will authorise, and so loses his whole excuse; and thus a disposition to think too hardly of others converts the opinions, the suspicions, the censures of the malevolent into so many principles of wickedness in himself. A bad conscience, like a



bad stomach, turns all it receives into foulness and poison for the whole man.

To draw at length towards a conclusion, let me once again remind you, that example governs almost all the affairs of this life; that it relieves the poor in one place, and oppresses them in another; that here it cools devotion, and thins God's house and table, while it gives warmth and spirit to religion there, 'and compels numbers to come in;' that fraud, perjury, and tyranny, carry all before them by the example of the great ones in these countries, while in those, justice, moderation and mercy, present us with the bright side of human nature, and almost make even this life happy.

It is every man's duty to forward the happiness of others, as much as he can; and if his example is of any importance (as whose is not?) to make it 'shine like a lamp before men,' that it may light them to happiness, not like a meteor to mislead. Is it not infinitely a more pleasing employment 'to go about doing good,' and encouraging others to do good, than to go about like 'a pestilence, that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day?' a pestilence that infects the minds of such as still sit in religious darkness, and a destruction that ruins souls in the day-light of the gospel?

When we come on our last trial, the judge may very pertinently ask us, why this neighbour of ours was guilty of fraud, or that dependant, of drunkenness? to which it will be no satisfactory reply, to say, we neither lent our mouths to the intemperance of the one, nor our hands to the deceits of the other. To have furnished an example was as bad. We hear it as commonly, as absurdly, said of a spendthrift, who ruins his fortune, his health, and his soul by debaucheries of all kinds, that he hurts nobody but himself; as if, beside the necessary partners of his crimes, his example were not too contagious, to be harmless.

As all men live in society, no man can hurt himself, without hurting others. This is more importantly true in a religious, than in a civil sense. 'We are all members, one of another, in the body of Christ.' No one therefore can maim his own soul by sin, without, in proportion, incapacitating himself to do the office of a member, and maiming the body

itself. Besides, a distempered member (such are the effects of example) is sure to infect the next, and spread its own unsoundness into all that are near it. How grievous an injury this must be to others, he who can think at all, may easily conceive; and how it will be resented by Christ the head, who feels this second crucifixion more sensibly, than he did the first, in every part of his body, may be sufficiently understood by those terrible expressions of his; ‘offences must needs come, but woe to him by whom the offence cometh. Whoso shall offend one of these little ones (the smallest of Christ’s members) it were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.’

Directly opposite to this woe, and equally great in its kind, is that blessing which he will receive, who makes the light of his good and holy example so ‘to shine before men,’ as to discountenance and reprove the evil deeds of some; to encourage and ripen the good inclinations of others; and to give all occasion to cry out, what a worthy, what an excellent man is this! How just in all his dealings! How charitable to his poor brother! How forgiving to his enemies! How regular, how constant, how warm, and yet how unostentatious, as to every duty of religion, in his closet, in his family, in God’s house, and at his table! How fast he ascends towards God! How he burns in the love of God, and brightens, as he rises, ‘increasing still more and more unto the perfect day!’

Glory be to thee, our Father which art in heaven, who giveth such grace unto men. Hallowed be thy name, O Father of lights, for the benefit of this happy example. Thy kingdom come in us, as in him, that thy will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, as thou hast given it to him, even the bread of eternal life in thy son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honour, now and for evermore. Amen.

## . DISCOURSE LXVI.

## A CROWD MUST HAVE A BROAD ROAD.

PROV. XII. 2.

*Be not conformed to this world.*

WERE there no other world nor life after this, the wisdom of conforming to the precept in my text rather than to the world, might be at least as easily maintained, as questioned, I mean, in times like the present; for, howsoever disagreeable it may be to deny ourselves the sinful pleasures of this world; or inconvenient, to live in opposition to its vain and idle customs; it is certainly far more disagreeable to bear the expense and effects of those pleasures; and more inconvenient, more troublesome and burthensome, to follow the customs of the world in a course of life almost wholly artificial, and slavishly governed by the practice of others, who are governed at random themselves by whim and folly, to say no worse.

But whereas there actually is another world, whither we are to be transplanted by death from this, and where for ever we may enjoy, if qualified for it by an habitual exercise of piety and virtue in this place of trial, so great a degree of happiness, as not all our highest transports of pleasure here can help us to conceive; and whereas the ways and customs of this world, where our stay is by innumerable accidents rendered so uncertain, and on the footing of nature must, at best, be very short, are for the greater part, destructive of that piety and virtue, whereon only our hopes in futurity can be rationally founded; the word of God, in a thousand places, calls on us to consider ourselves 'as strangers and pilgrims here,' to fix our eyes by faith on heaven, as our native country, and to remember, that, which way soever our journey leads, whether upward or downward, it can neither be very long nor pleasant. My text, in particular, casting an eye at either world, and finding the customs or fashions of this, an infinite hindrance to all the necessary qualifica-

tions for happiness in that, not only cautions us, as many other places of Scripture do, against 'Setting our affections on things below,' but also against falling in with, and forming our manners by, the reigning practices of mankind, which at once proceed from, and feed, the corruption of our nature.

That a practical attention to this caution may give us the appearance of singularity among the weak and foolish; or be ascribed to pride and hypocrisy by the malicious; I shall readily own. But all men of common sense, who hear us declare, as Christians, that we belong to another world, will do us the justice to allow that it would be infinitely more foolish and ridiculous in us to look wholly unlike our profession, than to look ever so unlike the people we are to pass only a few days with, on our way homeward to that better and more abiding country, we say, we are bound for. It is but fit, that we, who neither can make, nor even wish to make, a long stay here, should follow a different rule, in most parts of our conduct, from that which those very wise people observe who look on this world as their only home, set death at defiance, and have no thoughts of ever removing. It would be acting like coxcombs, a character, of all others, the most absurd in the professors of religion, either to set ourselves out in the pink of the mode for so short an appearance, or to think of travelling, especially in the narrow way, so craggy and so thorny, in a very fashionable dress, as far, in this case, from looking ornamental, as from being convenient. A small conformity therefore with the custom of the place, in two or three indifferent particulars, will be a sufficient compliment to people, we mean so little respect for as those about the inn; where the children of this world do not sojourn, but inhabit. One acquainted with their actions only, and not at all with their bodily constitutions, must conclude, they know of no other world but this, have no other home but here; and hold possession of it by a tenure that can never expire; for why otherwise should men so 'wise in their generation,' men capable of wisdom in any one thing, take so much pains, indeed lay out all their thoughts and endeavours, in improving (for such they think it) on the present spot? To make the most of what they have, an infinite deal of art is called in to help out nature,

till at length nature is buried under an endless medley of refinements ; the thing lost in the manner ; and necessity itself set aside for mode and fashion. Who, in the genteel world, eats to satisfy his hunger, drinks to quench his thirst, clothes himself to keep out the cold, or does any of the three, to support life ? And who in the lower ranks aims not at an imitation of the higher, in these things, with all his little might, nay, beyond his power, and above his circumstances ? Awkward ambition ! Miserable rack ! Whereon these wretches are stretched between want and pride, between poverty and splendor, till their scanty substance, and too often their feeble consciences, are put wholly out of joint. It is the tyrant, fashion, that thus inverts the order of nature among the people of this world, properly so called ; that gives the night for action, and the day for sleep ; that turns their stomachs at the wholesome and delicious food of their own country, only because it may be easily had ; and whets their appetites for foreign poisons, only because they are far-fetched and expensive. It is in a great measure owing to this total departure from nature and necessity in the rich and great, that so many of the poor go half-naked, and pine for want of food ; while so many of their betters, who feed and dress only for the fashion, never consider, that food and raiment are still necessary things, nor that a man without meat, must be hungry, and without clothing, cold. Nature, necessity, the laws of our country, the commands of God, and, what is more with the men of this world than all these, their visible interest, pass for nothing in opposition to custom. An individual might as well think of encountering an army, as resisting this usurper, who never wants a bigotted crowd to back him. Supported by that, he conquers all, governs all, and persecutes all, who are so singular as to dissent, till they are thought fit only for a dark room and straw ; for he is not considered as mad, who acts against reason, but he who acts oddly ; and he only is thought to act oddly, who acts as few others do. The power of this tyrant is derived from our pride, cowardice, and living together. He or she is greatest, who is soonest and highest in the fashion. Few have sufficient resolution and greatness of soul to bear up against the stream of custom, and condemn the ridicule of crowds, though known to be

made up of fools, as long as living, dealing, and conversing with them, is necessary. The greatest slaves to custom, therefore, are those who live most in the world; and they who submit least to his power, are such as spend their days in retirement. This tyrant can subdue a multitude together with more ease, than one person by himself. Contagions of all kinds are propagated fastest in places that are most populous; and custom may be called a contagion, because through the corruption of our nature, it becomes the vehicle of little else but vice, which, carried by example, flies from mind to mind, infecting souls, as the plague does bodies. Pity, that for so contagious a disorder, there are too few good and wise examples to furnish us with an epidemic cure!

This observation is verified by another made on the poorer sort of people, and on such as live at a very great distance from towns, the fashion, whatever it is, reaching these more slowly, and those more imperfectly, than the rest of mankind. Yet even among these it is aimed at, and adored at a distance, when it cannot be attained to. The young labourer, in the wildest part of the kingdom, will have his new coat, though as coarse as his sack, cut as near to the last fashion as possible; and the poor girl behind the most distant mountain, who never once inquired about religion, asks what is the fashionable cap, and hath her kenting shaped by the pattern of the finest lawn or cambric on the head of the princess. Fashions of this kind, however, take some time to go down; but the dissimulation, treachery, ingratitude, and ambition, of high life, run like electricity, and reach the dregs of mankind, as in a moment. In regard to these modish vices, all ranks of people have received the last polish, and are within the very precincts of the court.

Many practices in trade are deemed lawful by dealers who still mean to be honest, which, if they would examine them by the word of God and the royal law, not by common practice, the same men would abhor as much, when done by, as to themselves.

It is a law of custom, that young gentlemen, who, apt as they may be to learn, know yet, merely for want of time, but little of the vices of their own country, and consequently but a very little of any thing else, must travel for the vici-

ties and vices of foreigners, that we islanders may not be too far behind the mode of pride, expense, and wickedness, established in nations more early refined than ourselves. A young hopeful, who goes abroad with nothing but his native propensity to conceit and lewdness, checked by some modesty in the outward appearance, which he and his wiser parents call awkwardness and bashfulness; comes home full of contempt for his own country, and for virtue; with assurance enough to do any thing; and as to religion, with a stock of Popery for low folks, and of Deism for himself. Now it is an heresy against custom to question, whether all this is not improvement.

I know nothing wherein the tyranny of custom is so remarkably seen, as in the established rules and notions of honour. To debauch the daughter or wife of a friend is honourable. To run him through the heart in defence of these gentlemanlike actions, is still more honourable; more honourable, though done with all the palpitations of a coward, who trembles between the opinions of men and the judgments of God, and of a fool, who prefers the former to the latter.

Behold the tyranny of custom in another instance, wherein, notwithstanding all his affectation of politeness, he destroys the very shadow of hospitality at the houses of the great, whom you must pay, as you do other inn-keepers, for a dinner or a night's lodging, it being all one to you in the conclusion, whether you reckon for your accommodations with the landlord, or his waiter; and to him, whether you discharge the account immediately with himself, or apply your debt to the payment of his servant's wages. This custom might be justifiable as the only expedient to keep at a proper distance from the great, a number of low and spunging acquaintances, were it not, that we hear them pressingly invited, no doubt as customers rather than friends, by one who hath the utmost contempt for their conversation.

These two or three specimens may serve instead of a thousand others, which it will be more agreeable for every one of you to recollect, than to hear from the pulpit, whereby the usurpations of custom, and the slavery of mankind to this notional tyrant of their own creating, may be easily set



in their proper but shameful light ; shameful indeed, both to those who stand high enough to impose by example such practices on their inferiors, and to those inferiors who are content to follow in the rear of stupidity and infamy, to make borrowed stupidity their honour, and aspire to infamy, without a capacity of distinguishing themselves even in that. O despicable ambition ! How low a thing is pride ! surely it were better, I had almost said, genteeler, to turn downright Christian, than to value oneself on being only the tail of a body, that, at best, hath but gross folly for a head.

But this tyrant stops not at folly, nor will he be confined to particulars. No, he establishes enormities of the blackest kinds, and of the most extensive influence. He even works miracles ; for what else is it to transpose, as he does, the very nature of moral good and evil ? to turn day into night, and night into day ? to juggle the whole world and the course of all its affairs, its pleasures, troubles, interests, and even produce, into quite other things than they really are, to human apprehension ? to change its inhabitants into so different a kind of creatures, and so exceedingly for the worse, that Adam would not know his sons, nor Eve her daughters ? to regale himself with the sacrifice of their lives, nay, their souls, by thousands, on the sea and in battle ? to force commerce, with all the arts, and most of the sciences, into his service ? How many beasts, birds, worms, must they strip or embowel for his clothing ! from how many distant parts of the globe must they bring him the materials of one meal ! How many nations, some of them the most refined in point of understanding, hath he taught to adore a piece of timber, and pray to a lump of stone ! How many Christians hath he persuaded, contrary to their own nature, and the repeated commands of Christ, to disbelieve their own senses, and, from motives of Christian charity, to burn their fellow-creatures alive, to murder emperors with poisoned sacraments, and blow up kings and parliaments with gunpowder ! By what an amazing miracle is it, that he teaches us of this church to place the spirit of religion in kindness, good nature, and love ; and then to despise that religion ? and so many among us of another

persuasion, to place that spirit in sourness, contention, and hatred, and then to love it.

Under this general perversion of religion, it is no wonder, if all the virtues, justice, modesty, temperance, by a little additional discountenance of custom, should be suppressed; or all the vices, oppression, luxury, lewdness, dishonesty, by the help of numerous examples, especially from the upper end of the world, should be encouraged and supported. The daily observation, if not the consciences, of you all may save me the trouble of particularizing on this disagreeable, perhaps, offensive topic.

There was once a good being who went by the name of custom, and made it a title of honour. He was the son of right reason, and the brother of true religion, and as such you cannot mistake his father. During the reign of reason and religion, his interest with mankind greatly strengthened the hands of that government. Whether he is dead, or to what distant part of the universe he is banished, we cannot tell, we hear no more of him.

Very different is the pedigree, as well as disposition, of him who is now on the throne. He is the incestuous offspring of pride, and his bastard daughter culpable emulation. The head of the whole family is spoken of, Gen. iii. He was nursed at a vast expense by vanity and folly in that court, where the mint of fashion is kept. He arrived to his present height of power by successfully inculcating two short maxims. Do as others do; follow the many, and of those, especially the great. Wealth is his element, but he can subsist in poverty. As wisdom or piety approach him, he shrinks and dwindles into almost nothing; and if the latter repeats my text, he instantly vanishes into vapour. When pride, imagination, and wealth only are with him, his size and strength increase to such a degree, than he can turn and tumble the whole world, which way he pleases, with as much ease as a little ball. Although he is exceedingly starched and stiffened up to forms, and, when it makes for his purpose, pleads antiquity as decisive in all things; yet he is perpetually contriving new fashions and ceremonies; and is said to be the inventor of innumerable arts, such as fraud, lying, oppressing, thieving, robbing, together with

those of cooks, tailors, tiremen, and milliners ; and of one science, which consists in the discovery and enforcement of a new necessity, the necessity of unnecessary, useless, and pernicious things. Others say, it was the God of this world who revealed these inventions to him, and ordered him to institute them as a sort of mock sacraments for the more effectually urging on the minds of mankind his two goodly maxims already mentioned.

This is but a very imperfect account of that usurper and his practice, to whom this world bows, as to its second God ; that seducer of individuals ; that corrupter of magistrates ; that prostitute of legislators ; that overturner of states ; that destroyer of kingdoms ; that oppressor, and at the same time, mocker of mankind ; that waster of this world, and peopler of hell.

What need of any more, but this and your own experience, to set you at liberty ? To a sound understanding, to know and abhor him ; and to a manly resolution, to abhor and utterly renounce him, is but one and the same thing. There is no power which it is so slavish to submit to, as that of custom, because whosoever blindly resigns himself to it, resigns, at the same time, all right to choose for, and act of himself. He puts himself under the direction of a thousand guides at once, all leading different ways in the dark, and each to some unhappy end, in a path so foul, so craggy, so full of pitfalls, that the road which is above to the wise, though narrow, is not half so troublesome as this which leads downward ; yes, downward, for notwithstanding that it is the path of pride, and crowded with great ones, it is not the path of true honour, unless it is honourable to have neither will nor choice of one's own, but to be hedged into one track, and either led by the knaves before, or driven by the fools behind, like other beasts of burden ; proud, however, to shake the fringes and tinkle the bells, though a groan now and then at the weight of the load makes the base of the consort.

Do as others do, and be not singular, saith custom. Go with the stream, saith the world, that is, do good or evil, go to heaven or hell, with the multitude.

But Christ tells you which way the multitude is going ; and the spirit saith, ' follow not after a multitude to do evil.

Be not conformed to this world ; but be changed, be transformed in the renewing of your mind ;' if you mean to ' prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is,' which he hath declared, as the rule of your behaviour now, and the measure of his love to you hereafter. Whatsoever is good and fit to be done, that do with all your might, though no mortal does it but yourself. Whatsoever is foolish or wicked, avoid as you would eternal misery, though all mankind joined in the practice of it.

Temporal good and evil are fixed by the unchangeable nature of temporal things. Moral or spiritual good and evil are fixed by the indispensable laws of God. The happiness of man here follows a right choice of the former. His happiness hereafter is tied to a right choice of the latter. Could custom change the nature of things, such as light and darkness, food and poison, sickness and health, pleasure and pain, or could it repeal and transpose the laws of God, concerning fit and unfit, right and wrong, rewards and punishments ; it might also change the nature of happiness in both worlds, and justify all its conformists. But nature must have her way, and God will have his. Distress, sickness, death, would pursue those who trample on nature, though there were more of them than there is of the sand on the sea-shore ; and guilt, shame, despair, damnation, those who rebel against God, though they could outnumber and outshine the stars of heaven.

No degree of power or superiority over inferiors ought to enforce an example beyond the reason of the thing to be done, or of the rule prescribed for it in the word of God. Great as the authority of a parent is, and ought to be, over his children, they are to obey him only in things lawful and honest ; and surely his example should not go farther than his command ; nay, not so far, for ' all things that are lawful are not expedient.' The son, modestly speaking, hath a right to be less a fool than his father ; for no law, but that of custom, to whose sovereignty, principally as a law-giver, we preptorily demur, hath ever yet pretended to authorise an entail of folly.

It is enough for the duty of servants, if they obey, and more a great deal, than they are bound to, if they imitate their master, as children their parents, in all things lawful

and honest. Their service would not be worth his wages, had they not the sense to distinguish between right and wrong in his conduct, so far as that conduct may be either way a pattern for theirs; and if they have sense enough to serve a foolish master, God will expect they should use their sense in considering how to serve him, whose infinite goodness makes his a much easier service, and whose infinite authority supersedes, not only the examples, but the commands of all created masters.

The examples of the clergy, who are but men, and to my certain knowledge, sometimes the weakest of men, are to be limited by the same rule. Mankind are more severe, and justly, on their faults than the faults of others, and therefore less tempted, one should think, to be led astray by theirs, than by lay transgressions, especially as their sermons, or at least their texts, furnish antidotes as fast as their misconduct can scatter poisons.

The conduct of saints and persons inspired is not always to be followed, because being left by the spirit of God, in many cases, to themselves, they have, through human frailty, been guilty of such actions, as were beforehand expressly forbidden, or afterwards severely reprov'd by that spirit. Moses, David, Solomon, and Saint Peter, though distinguished by the most eminent gifts and graces, have proved sufficiently on some occasions, that they were but men. Now to imitate them in their evil and not their good actions, is to prefer sin to virtue in a character, where they shew each other in the strongest point of light. This therefore is a choice that can never be made, but by a mind equally lost to common sense and goodness.

The example even of Christ himself goes not beyond this rule. It only excites and shews us how to do what his precepts have already rendered right and fit to be done; and never becomes a law, but when his express command enacts it as such. He did many things, all of them infinitely good in him, which it would be presumption in us to attempt, or wickedness to do.

Much less surely are the customs that obtain among the rich and great to be imitated in all things, as is too common, without distinction. They may indeed give a countenance to folly, and bring wickedness into vogue in the upper

orders of men. But still it should be remembered, that those vices which are very fashionable in one of family and fortune, sufficient to bear him out in the wildest excesses, look but awkwardly and pitifully in a man of inferior condition. To what a state of beggary would one day of that magnificent wickedness, which is applauded in the great by all their flatterers, reduce a man of much narrower circumstances. Custom, forward as it is to propagate folly and wickedness in all ranks of men, forbids the vulgar nevertheless, yes, and upstarts, to tread on the heels of their betters in the highway of sin; nay, pronounces that very action wise in a great person of the best education, which it condemns of the grossest stupidity, though otherwise circumstanced alike throughout, in an indigent person, whose extreme ignorance hath always been as well the constant companion, as the necessary effect, of his poverty. A plain man for instance, is not to imagine, that absenting himself from the place of public worship, or neglecting the Lord's table, shall pass for a sign of shrewdness, or a mark of distinction in him, because they are admitted, and by many admired, as such, in a man of high rank and fortune. If he does, he will find himself wofully disappointed. Custom itself will hand him down to his place, and punish him with that contempt which is due to his presumption. To be irreligious and atheistical is that peculiar privilege which custom reserves for and appropriates to the great. Now if you whom Providence hath blessed with moderate or scanty circumstances, seeing the great man stop with his coach and six at the eye of the needle, as too narrow for so huge an equipage to pass through, should, therefore by a puff of your vanity, swell yourself to too great a bulk in your own imagination for that entrance, be assured, the whole world would laugh at your damnation. The world can well enough bear (because it is used to the show) to see the pomp and splendour of its lords descend in state along 'the broad way;' but how great is its indignation at your impudence, who being only one of the little, will needs thrust yourself in among such fellow-travellers, as if a straiter road were not wide enough for you who must foot it! In all this you most admire that impious pride in the wealthy, for which, of all things, God hath them most 'in derision;' and this you get by 'setting your affection

on things below,' on things as low in their nature as their situation, and capable only of riveting your little soul to the earth, or carrying it still farther downward. When Popery was in vogue, the road to heaven was so taxed by those who took upon them to mend it, that a poor man could hardly go to the charge of a journey thither. The way downward to an opposite place is now so crowded with wealthy and fashionable travellers, the accommodations of all sorts so very dear, and every little pleasure raised to so extravagant a price, that a man of middling circumstances cannot afford to make the jaunt, at least like a gentleman, if his skill and success in gaming are not extraordinary. This is probably the reason, why some, jaded with pleasure, and impatient of the expense, do, towards the close of life, contract with an undertaking priest, at a much cheaper rate, for a near cut the contrary way.

Awake out of sleep. Rouse your understanding; and consider, how little true wisdom is found in those who give the fashion; how they are bred up in pride, wantonness, and vice of every kind; how they are bogged in the thick clay of this world, how Christ hath told them, that 'it is as easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, as it is for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven;' how the apostle hath told us, that 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;' how David saith that, 'man being in honour continueth not, but is like the beast that perisheth;' how the rich, who die like other men, turn all of them preachers of this doctrine at the last, and cry out 'vanity and vexation of spirit,' as the true character of the lives they have led; how unable even the agonies of death, deepened by those of despair, are to find a tongue to express the hideous prospect of that which is to follow. God hath forbidden you 'to go in the way of evil men,' or so much as 'to enter into the path of the wicked, for their way is darkness,' so that 'they know not at what they stumble,' nor that 'they lay wait for their own blood, and lurk privily for their own lives.'

But 'they prosper,' you say, 'and come not into trouble like other folks.' Be not carried away with this appearance, to distrust Providence, or to slight the service of God; but



come hither 'into his house,' as David, under the same temptation did, and ye shall 'behold the end of these men.' His word which we here consult, will open your eyes, that you may see these men, 'formerly so prosperous in ungodliness, set in slippery places, and cast down into destruction.' You shall then correct your ignorant doubts, and say to yourself, 'how are they brought into desolation as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.'

'Christ's kingdom is not of this world.' Of his kingdom you profess yourself a member, from that day when you renounced the prince of this world with all its pomps and vanities. If you are really of Christ, you will despise those trappings of slavery to pride and folly, and lift your mind to a nobler kind of grandeur, the glorious grandeur of being truly religious, and of ardently loving God, at a time when it is become fashionable to forget him, and the effects of his goodness, even while we wanton in them. This is a greatness, which you may more easily raise yourself to, and preserve yourself in, than the wealthy can in theirs. This is true greatness, which no degree of poverty can hinder, which death cannot destroy, which all that are wise and good in heaven and on earth shall see, shall applaud, shall magnify Almighty God for in their hymns, while you are yet in your rags, and longing at the gate of Dives for the crumbs that fall from his table. God sees your faith, your patience, your love of him in the midst of contempt and indigence; notes the honour your perseverance in these exalted graces does to him, and his religion, and marks the difference between that and the slight they cast on both, who are neither so contented nor so thankful for all their wealth, as you are in the midst of your poverty. At the very instant that the high heads of this world pass you by, as one beneath their notice, the angels, the principalities, the powers in heaven, look from their thrones on you and your triumphs, with a joy which all the raptures they feel, and all the glories they possess, cannot divert. Great is the kingdom of your Lord, and great are you already in that kingdom, though so despicable here, where pride, folly, and ignorance prevail, and Satan reigns by permission for a time.

But fashionable as it is grown to forget God and contemn

his service, there are every where some among the great who, in spite of custom and numberless temptations, esteem it their highest honour to worship him at his house, and in their own, with a humility and constancy, equal to yours. These souls, ennobled by religion above their wealth and titles, shine down from the highest stations of life in all the lustre of piety, probity, and humanity. Kindle at the warmth, and pursue the light of these suns, and not the false lights, or contagious heats, of those, who being set on fire of hell, glare on you from above with malignant rays.

Consider with yourself, you to whom the customs of the world are yet a temptation, Is the folly of him who cunningly schemes his own confusion, the extravagance of him who pursues the ruin of his own fortune, the wickedness of him who labours to bring corruption on his own nature, remorse on his own conscience, and endless misery on his own soul; a fit object of your imitation? Can your reason reconcile itself to this? Can you hope for honour in following him, whom, with your own eyes, you see hastening to infamy? in being the ridiculous, despicable fool of fashion, and that only at second hand? Can even your pride stoop to this? If it can, how low, how abject a thing is that pride! How does your enemy at once insult the grossness of your stupidity by a snare so palpable, and tread your little soul into that dirt, which the parade of custom raises on the broad, the downward road of false honour!

It is certainly every man's duty to himself, who lives in the light of the gospel, to be guided by his own eyes, if he pretends to see at all; and not slavishly give himself up to the direction of others, who probably care very little which way they go; who perhaps are led themselves by such a train or succession of examples, as there is no tracing to any other original, than folly, it may be, wickedness, grown gray and venerable by length of time; or to pursue to any other end, than infamy and misery, made still more dreadful by the prospect of eternity.

Instead of following one another to ruin, let us beseech God to fix our imitation on the glorious example of our blessed Saviour; and, when through infirmity we fail, to accept of his merit and mediation for us, that our lives, though at an infinite distance, may follow his in virtue, and our

souls ascend at last into those happy mansions which he is gone before to prepare for us. To him, in the unity of the ever blessed Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LXVII.

### HOW TO CHOOSE A GOOD HUSBAND OR WIFE.

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#### GENESIS II. 18.

*The Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.*

THERE is no one thing that shews so clearly the depraved and dissolute turn of the present times, as the growing distaste to matrimony, avowed by many, and the arguments, not less impertinent than the jests, made use of to spread that distaste among the young and giddy part of mankind. The tendency of both can be no other, than either to establish universal lewdness, or bring on a universal desolation. If those arguments have any truth in them, it can be only on a maxim that all, or almost all, the individuals of both sexes are too wicked to choose or be chosen into this state; or else that a good man and a good woman had better live asunder than together. I say again, if those arguments are true, this world is a sort of hell rather than a place of trial; and if they are false, it is little better for listening to them, and acting on them, as it does.

But be this as it will, no human creature can subsist happily, if at all, out of society; nor can there be any such thing as society, to answer the end of a comfortable, not to say happy subsistence in this world, without matrimony. We may fairly therefore conclude, with God and nature to vouch it, that 'it is not good for man to be alone,' and that a young person of either sex must be cursed with very unhappy dispositions, or at least in other respects very particularly circumstanced, to be an exception to this rule.

And yet it must be owned that many matches are unhappy, that more are likely to be so ; nay, and that few are blessed with that perfect satisfaction, which the state, rightly understood and embraced, is naturally qualified to afford, or the parties themselves thus joined, expected from it. The libertine in principle lays this to the charge of the institution ; and the women are blamed for it by the rake and the witling, to whom the more distinguished faults of that sex are nevertheless chiefly owing. But marriage is the institution of God, and, say what the irreligious will, is founded on, and fitted to, the nature God hath given us ; so that to argue against it, is to commit a violence on nature, and to insult its Creator in one of his earliest and most universal laws. And to accuse the weaker sex with all the miseries of the married state, is in the event, nothing else but accusing ourselves, who either by the bad education we give them, or by the wrong taste in us, to which they are, in some sort, obliged to accommodate themselves, make them what they are ; for it may be laid down for a rule, that, in general, women ever were, and ever will be, nearly what the men please they should be ; for so much as they are better, the unconquerable goodness and modesty of their own nature, humanly speaking, merits all the thanks.

No, the growing number of unhappy marriages is really owing to the erroneous notions entertained by most people concerning the state of matrimony itself, to the absurd or wicked customs of the world, to the foolish humours, the sensual desires, the pride, the covetousness of mankind, and in some places, to the ill-judged laws that have determined the civil rights and privileges of married people.

Few people know, and fewer still consider, that a married couple, though joined together on a footing of superiority in the husband and subordination in the wife, are one flesh or body ; and that this body can have but one interest, one scheme of comfort and happiness, to which division and destruction are precisely the same thing.

Notwithstanding that this is the decree of God, as plainly written in our nature, as in his word, yet the customs of this world, equally foolish and impious, draw the man and his wife asunder, by the enticement of separate pleasures, satisfactions, and even interests ; and this too strongly tends to

the separation of their affections. They themselves are previously so wedded to separate views, that they almost always propose to themselves, in marrying, such as are mutually wide of one another, and cannot be perfectly accomplished together, at least in any consistency with that one common view, which both ought to make the sole end of marrying.

They who marry on whim or humour, build a castle on the clouds, and see it tumble to the ground in ruins before they can enjoy themselves in it a single week. The sensualists lay a foundation almost as insecure, and accordingly seldom prolong their satisfaction beyond the end of the first month. When pride is the chief motive to matrimony, it never fails to inspire the one party with tyranny, and the other with rebellion. It is no wonder, and as little matter, if they, who through covetousness sell themselves into this state, are treated afterward as slaves and beasts, rather than as free and rational creatures. Conjugal love can never subsist on its own free and generous footing in that country, where the wives are by law put almost on a level with the servants; nor can the benefits of subordination, though in particular cases become absolutely necessary to peace, be hoped for in that other, which hath made them legally independent on their husbands.

To make marriages happy, the state itself ought to be well understood; the true and rational ends of entering into it, carefully considered; the customs of the world, so far as they are culpable in themselves or detrimental to those ends, thoroughly despised; and the wrong motives to marriage already mentioned, either wholly laid aside, or kept in so distant a point of view, that but a very slight disappointment shall be suffered, in case they happen to be but indifferently provided for. They who will not take this advice, and yet are weak enough to hope for happiness in a married state, run the hazard of acting over again the tragedy of their first parents, and of expulsion from that paradise they vainly promise themselves, while a feast on its forbidden fruits is preferred to all its solid and wholesome joys, till time and woful experience open their eyes, and convince them, that all their sensual, worldly, and ambitious views, were but so many temptations or illusions; and that, instead of being made happier than God hath allowed them to be, they are

become as miserable as their enemy could wish them in this life.

Such things are they to avoid who intend to marry wisely ; and the things they are to aim at, are the true, the natural, the Scriptural ends of matrimony. These are judiciously distinguished and set out by our liturgy, and are but three ; the raising up of an honourable and legitimate posterity ; the preservation of virtue ; and the social assistance and comfort which two persons, thus joined together, may receive from each other, but not possibly from all the other persons or possessions in the world.

It is, no doubt, an unspeakable satisfaction every reasonable father receives from a well-grounded belief (which in regard to a spurious brood, can never take place) that his own real issue are to be the objects of his love and care, and are to inherit the fruits of his labour and frugality. But it is a much greater, to find one, in whom he can safely centre all his otherwise dissipated and criminal affections ; in whom he can repose an entire confidence, and from whom he is assured of large returns for every instance of love, of tenderness, of generosity, which the kindest heart can give to the most beloved object, an object able to sweeten all his afflictions, and redouble all his comforts. The pleasure of an ordinary heart arises from the satisfaction it receives from without. The happiness of a great and noble soul, from the satisfactions it imparts. A truly good couple feast on both in their highest human perfection, and know no greater joy, excepting that which they hope for, when death shall divorce them, in order to a yet infinitely happier marriage, with their Redeemer.

Behold the important and blessed ends, which they ought to have in view, who would wish to be wisely and happily married ; and tell me, whether family, whether fortune, whether titles and posts of honour are to be set in competition with these. On these let the youth of both sexes (for to them only I direct this discourse) fix their attention ; and then let them hear the advice I am about to give, which, if followed, will hardly fail to furnish each of them with ‘ that help meet for each,’ which God, as my text sets forth, graciously intended they should obtain.

To avoid repetition and confusion, I speak, for the most

part, as to men, but intend what I say equally for the other sex. In the first place, let every one who thinks of marriage, consider with himself, whether he is qualified for that state or not, whether he labours under any incurable or loathsome disorders of body, which may, when known, prevent the possibility of his becoming, or continuing, an object of conjugal affection.

If he is free from all impediments of this sort, let him next consider, whether he is not naturally, or habitually subject to disorders of a yet more disqualifying nature; I mean those of the mind.

A proud disposition is very unfit for a state, wherein so much meekness, complacency, mutual resignation, and mutual forbearance, are necessarily required. A haughty spirit can never brook a superior, nor bear an equal. It is impossible it should become one with any kind of temper. With an humble one it cannot, because it is of so different a nature; with a proud one it will not, because it is of the same; for none hates pride so much as he that is most addicted to it himself. Besides, hatred is but one degree, and that a small one, more opposite to love, than pride. Pride is founded on the conceit of too much worth to admit of any services or kindnesses but as a small part only of what it merits; and therefore he always insults, who pretends to oblige, the proud; for what can be added to one who is already self-sufficient? It is easy to see what a contempt of kind offices is likely to do in a state, where happiness cannot subsist but on love; and where love hath nothing to feed it, but a lively sense of mutual kindness, ever apter to overrate, than undervalue, each act of friendship, and even each affectionate intention.

In the next place, an angry temper is enough to render him, who is subject to it, unfit for a state which hardly admits of a medium between the highest sweets of peace, and the bitterest effects of war. The ties of matrimonial union are of too tender and delicate a nature to resist the violent shocks of so rude and outrageous a passion, which often, like thunder, in one furious moment, blasts and batters to the ground that affection which had been the lovely growth of many a year's endearment. It is only among doves, and other the meeker kind of brutes, that we observe any thing



like marriage. Lions, tigers, wolves, and the like fierce and fiery animals, are not known to associate in pairs. As often as a human lion and lioness happen to be joined, we know too well, and they know to their cost, what sort of lives they lead; and when one of this stormy disposition is married to another of a gentle and delicate turn, the boisterous carriage on the one side, together with the silent suffering grief on the other, present us with a sight as piteous, as the other is hideous.

Hardly less opposite to that state, wherein all the happiness hoped for must spring from love, is a dark and sullen temper, which can neither love, nor be loved. There is no planting tender affections upon this rock. Were you to fill a vessel, like this, with honey, or with a compound of all the highest sweets in nature, the whole would sour in a very little time, and turn to vinegar and gall. Such a mind is the proper element of secret discontents, which it nourishes in a surly silence; of virulent humours, which it begets on itself, without the concurrence of another, by a sort of diabolical generation; and of hatred equally causeless and unaccountable.

Again, a man of scattered affections and a fickle turn of mind, should beware of binding himself for life to one. Such a temper can never be united to another. To a fickle one, it cannot, because in both there is a disposition to fly off. To a constant one it cannot, because if but one of the parties varies, it is sufficient to separate that from the other which is fixed. To be tied by the conscience, and at the same time set adrift by the heart, places the mind in such a state of distraction, between duty and pleasure, as makes it impossible to provide for either. A marriage can never be happy, if one of the parties cannot please the other. But it is impossible to please that person whose temper one does not know. Now, the fickle is of all tempers by turns, and it is as easy to foresee which way the wind will blow next, as to guess, of what mind he will be to-morrow.

Again, the jealous ought not to marry; for in marriage there can be no happiness without mutual confidence. Destroy that once, and the warmest love, though otherwise the very life and soul of this union, becomes the grand bone of contention. Neither strong appearances, nor even manifestly bad actions, will leave deeper impressions on a sound mind,

than his own crazy suspicions will force on the jealous, when nothing amiss hath been done, nor even the smallest appearances, have been given. But as no human creature is perfect, nor always on the watch, small faults will be committed, and sometimes the probability of greater will arise, when nothing but absolute perfection, or, at worst, but a sufficient stock of care and caution is wanting. Now, he that hath jealousy for a natural distemper, and is, over and above, infected with a general ill opinion of human nature, arising either from a very corrupt turn of mind in himself, or from a criminal experience, is sure to make the most of every thing to realize appearances, and magnify faults into crimes.

Lastly, one of a selfish disposition ought never to engage in a state of life so social, as that of matrimony. The satisfactions of the selfish are greatest to him alone and apart from others. What the rest of mankind, what even his nearest relatives, father, mother, children, wife, enjoy, he looks upon as so much lost to himself; and hath no notion, that enjoyments of any kind can be increased by being shared. Now it is participation only that in a married state improves every comfort, every pleasure, up to perfection; that heightens ordinary fare into delicacies; and raises cottages into palaces. He that cannot place his happiness at least as much in giving, as receiving, may be married, but can never have a wife. There is more of exchange and commerce in the matrimonial, than in any other sort of society; and here, therefore, of all markets, it is most unreasonable, nay iniquitous, to think of trading, if we cannot find in our hearts to lay out.

What then, you will here cry out, are all people subject to these infirmities, many or most of which are natural, to abstain from marriage? The answer is, every one should abstain from that which is likely to bring him into a worse, instead of a better condition, than his present one; and whether matrimony will probably better the condition of one who is very proud, passionate, sullen, fickle, suspicious, or selfish; let all people, whom it may concern, judge for themselves. A low degree of these culpable qualities is not sufficient to render any one wholly unfit for matrimony; nor even a higher, if the mind, from true piety and its other virtues, hath force sufficient to master it. But in whatsoever degree, dispositions so untoward, affect the mind, in the same degree

will they endanger or lessen the comforts hoped for in that state. But when I insist, that persons enslaved to the unhappy dispositions mentioned, and governed by them as the distinguishing properties of their minds, ought not to marry, I by no means intend to exclude even them absolutely from that state. It is to be hoped, that the door which shuts out their faults, may lie open afterward to their persons. As none but a good man or woman, can possibly be a good husband or wife; and as none but the good can be happy, whether married or single, whether here or hereafter; it must be surely the purpose of every thinking believer to correct in himself all such highly criminal dispositions, as lay an everlasting and insurmountable bar (till they are removed) against the smallest rational hope of happiness in either world. He, who being subject, in so high a degree, to properties of so very bad a nature, will not repent and amend, I still insist, can never enter into the paradise of marriage with a good wife here, nor into the heaven of an alliance with Christ hereafter. God never created a help-meet for such a man as this. He therefore does but deceive himself, and in this case most fatally, who thinks of deceiving another, and hopes that his ill qualities will fall heavy only on the person he espouses. They will fall with double weight on him, and worry his conscience, as well as his peace. That man is a fool who expects more satisfaction, or less vexation, in a married state, than he is prepared to give. All uneasiness, as well as pleasures are here reciprocal. If the married pair have but one happiness, they have likewise but one misery. Good offices in this state are authorized to propagate their species; and ill ones take a licence to be at least as fruitful in their kind.

Whosoever hath looked carefully into himself, and finds no impediment to wedlock there, may now turn his inquiry outward in order to find a help-meet for one so principled or disposed, as he is, or takes himself to be. As the impediments of body and mind, on which I have sufficiently dwelt, render the person subject to them equally unfit to choose, or be chosen; and as therefore no prudent person, conscious of them in himself, would ever marry; so neither ought he, if he could avoid it, who hath no such bars, wed with another that hath. But the question is, how he shall know this. If

it is no easy matter thoroughly to examine and find out one's self, it must be still more difficult to penetrate into the dispositions, the culpable dispositions more especially, of others who naturally abhor all prying into their faults, who in order to match well, as it is called, use all imaginable arts to keep their failings out of sight ; and as many more, to parade off every natural and acquired advantage, and to make a shew, without seeming to intend it, not only of spotless goodness, but of excellencies sufficient to render invisible the blackest spots, if they had them.

Though this now is folly, folly indeed of the grossest kind, yet certainly it requires no small degree of wisdom to detect it, and to keep clear of its snare, which is but the more apt to catch, for offering the catcher as a bait. It were better therefore, that before any steps are taken towards a match, the parties should be competently acquainted with each other on a footing of indifferency, wherein masks and disguises are less apt to be used. However, when an opportunity of previous knowledge cannot be had, qualities so extremely bad as to forbid the banns, are generally too headstrong to be totally concealed, even after overtures are actually made. They will be apt to peep out a little ; and that together with the industry and constraint applied to keep them in, which cannot be so easily hid from a discerning eye, may give a sufficient alarm. If the bait only is seen, it may succeed ; but, as the wise man says, ' in vain is the net' itself ' spread in the sight of any bird.'

But in the name of common sense, why nets or artifices of any kind in a case like this ? In a married state the ill qualities of one party will equally ruin the peace of both, and the grievous disappointment that must follow on an unavoidable discovery, will still farther inflame the cause of discontent. Marriage is but a shorter hell, if it does not unite the husband and wife into one ; now it is impossible to pass any impositions on either, without passing them all on that one ; and therefore they can carry with them no wiser sort of cunning, than that of the devil, all whose schemes, howsoever destructive to the unhappy souls he deludes, are sure to leave the contriver in the hottest place of punishment at last.

For this reason it is, that were I to advise, two persons who

mean to go together, should, instead of concealing, actually discover, yes, actually discover, to each other all their faults and infirmities, whether of mind or body, in the full aggravation of every real circumstance. This is the honest way of dealing, and may prevent a too late repentance, in case they should not find themselves made for each other. But if they marry after all, no room will be left for disappointments or reproaches, for upbraidings or charges of imposition on either side, they having by this wise and ingenuous step, taken each other for neither better nor worse than they really are. This sort of conduct may have another very good effect. A couple, thus joined, not being able on the utmost trials afterward to discover a single fault, of which they were not mutually apprized beforehand, will not be by any means so apt to suspect each other of greater faults than they are justly chargeable with, as those who marry in the dark.

There are, beside the more distinguished impediments, already insisted on, some others of a less interesting nature, and yet of too much consequence to be wholly passed over in silence, such as a great difference in fortune, family, education, temper, understanding, and the like. The habits and pursuits of mankind are carried so wide of one another by these, as to make it very difficult to unite under the influence of causes so apt to divide.

A great inequality of fortune before marriage is too often remembered by the more wealthy party after it; and if not as well remembered by the other, fails not to breed abundance of heart-burnings, perhaps upbraidings, to the great disquiet of both. Of the two, it is wiser and better to buy than to sell; but all markets of men and women are generally as unhappy in their consequences, as they are indecent and unworthy in their own nature.

Nor does a great diversity of family, though a matter purely notional, occasion a less diversity of mind. It is not easy to make one out of two, taken from the upper and lower ends of the world. The one knows as little how to soar, as the other to descend. Family makes almost as great a difference as species, and it is unnatural to couple creatures of different kinds.

Fortune and family produce a third difference, as custom hath ordered the matter, more considerable than either

in itself, a difference, I mean, of education, which, more than nature, determines the manners of mankind to courses often so directly opposite; and what it determines, so rivets by inveterate habits, that a compound of fire and water bursting forth in thunder, is not too strong a similitude for that marriage which joins the hand of one high-born, high-bred, and richly endowed, to that of another, low-pitched in all these respects.

From nature, heightened frequently by fortune, family, and education, arises a fourth difference, that of temper, so very great, that even its goodness in two minds is not sufficient to prevent the ill effects of its diversity in kind. From a mixture of two very different wines, although both of the best sorts, a strong fermentation first, and then a jumble of no value, is to be expected. But if either, or both are bad in themselves, the compound is sure to be wretched.

A great disparity of understanding, as it is a hinderance to union, ought also to be a hinderance to marriage. In conversation, the more refined cannot relish the rude, nor the stupid comprehend the lively and acute. In conduct then can be no contribution of counsel. Contempt perpetually breeding disgust on one side; and envy, hatred on the other; the rational being and the mere animal can never grow into one.

Difference in point of religion ought likewise to be considered as no trivial objection to a match: first, because as religion is the only spring of all the conjugal, as well as other virtues, no one should wed with another, who hath so little of it as to make the exchange of it a compliment to the greatest mortal on earth; and secondly, because when the attachment to different religions is too strong for such compliances, that attachment threatens the parties with discord and contention, as is usual, about the very principle of love and peace.

In choosing a partner for life, regard is not to be had only to the absence of bad or improper qualities, but also to the possession of such as are good and suitable. This hath been strongly supposed in all I have hitherto said. True piety is the parent of real merit, the best improver of every good natural disposition, and the only corrector of the bad.

Piety is the power of God in man, giving birth to virtue where nature had denied it, and growth wherever it is already found. This humbles, this sweetens, this tames the most wild and untoward dispositions; and therefore may serve for a summary recommendation of the person blest with it, as the fittest, or rather the only object of choice. All defects of fortune, and many of person, may be prudently dispensed with in one truly and highly religious.

As to person and countenance, it will be sufficient to observe, that neither ought to be disagreeable, because disrelish; though arising from a single feature, may spread an imaginary ugliness, not only over the rest of the body, but also over the most amiable qualities of the mind. However, good sense, good humour, and a fund of cheerfulness, are enough to give stature to the lowest person, and a degree of beauty to the homeliest face, if the beholder is not a fool, I mean, if he is not one of those who can see with nothing but their eyes.

Upon the merits of this important choice in reference to all the heads of advice here offered, it is the business of every prudent person, after consulting fully with himself, to ask the opinions of his wisest and most experienced friends, of his parents more especially, if they are still alive, and the rather, because, as a Christian, he cannot dispose of himself without their approbation. He is to give them a child, at the same time that he gives himself a wife; and should, with a tender, a dutiful, and a grateful heart, consult their comfort in the addition of so near a relation; as they, from the hour of his birth to this day, have ever anxiously consulted his, in every thing that concerned him. He should remember, that his parents are older, and in all probability much wiser, as to affairs of this nature, than him; and that God, the universal parent, is the watchful guardian of their rights.

And to that all-wise and infinitely gracious Father ought he to apply with an entire resignation, and with a heart full of devotion, for that only guidance which can never, like that of men, mislead him. Let him earnestly beseech God not to leave him to himself, or the arts of others; but to forward or frustrate his present intentions, as his unerring wisdom and never-failing goodness shall judge for



the best. As I am conscious of many and great defects in all I can say to you on this very interesting subject, to make you full amends for them all, I shut up the whole with this last advice, wherein there is no room for error, nor indeed for any addition, and so leave you in the hands of God.

It is an observation, equally common and unintelligible, that marriages are made in heaven. They cannot surely be all made there. An unhappy marriage is, at most, but permitted by Providence; and why permitted, unless for the punishment of such as neither consult with God's word, nor seek his blessing on their designs? Now, the reason why they do neither, is plain. Having all along consulted with the enemies of God, that is, the flesh and the world, nay, and sometimes with the devil also, in forming their designs, they know full well, those designs are of too corrupt and sinful a nature ever to be sanctified. They are therefore afraid to bring them before God, but not afraid to carry them into execution, as if he that will not bless, were unable to curse, a practice so insolent and impious.

Here now, I know you will be ready to say, if mankind were to make use of all these precautions, to cast about, and consult at such a length, there would be few marriages. Admitting your observation for a truth, I answer it by saying, there would then be few, if any, unhappy marriages. Is it not a wiser course never to marry, than to marry on one principle, and hope for happiness in marriage on another? To marry for pride, and hope to live together in mutual condescension? To marry for wealth, which one of the parties purposes to hoard up, and the other to flaunt away in articles of vanity; and yet to hope for agreement in their manner of living?

But I am fully persuaded, that, were the young people of both sexes resolved to take the course I have been recommending, instead of diminishing, it would greatly increase, the number of marriages, and even bring them to a much speedier conclusion than the present methods. It is a long way about to adjust all the punctilios of family pride, to examine into fortunes, to search old deeds and records, to draw long settlements with a number of wary clauses, and to examine every piece of gold with all the nicety of a critical mammonist. Two minds, wisely and honestly deter-

mined to be open, might, moderately speaking, find the way to know each other sufficiently in half the time. This is undoubtedly the way of nature, which never moves in a curve, when she can take along a straight line. In countries where nature is followed, there is no sound person of either sex to be found who is grown old in celibacy; whereas here, where nothing but art and refinement is studied, a great part of mankind live and die unmarried, to the unspeakable damage of the community, and with a still more deplorable injury to virtue. As to the condition of particulars (the good of the public and the interests of virtue out of the question), it is plain to common observation, that the troubles incident to an unhappy marriage, if not in their utmost extreme, are but amusement to the solitude, the gloom, the melancholy, the peevishness, the suspicion, the contempt, the desertion in calamity, sickness, and death, ever found about him or her who hath protracted a single life to gray hairs.

All this, and more than this, which no force of words can describe, and still more than that, which the day of judgment only can disclose, might be prevented, were people masters of sufficient sense and resolution to break through a set of customs, as whimsical as they are tyrannical; as demonstrative of stupidity, as they are productive of misery; and going one step downward in point of fortune or family, to make a choice (for here they may choose) of the first suitable objects they meet with; and so spend their days with that choice, in one degree less of pride and pomp than custom tempts them to aim at. It is easy to see what a speedy multiplication of marriages this practice would produce, though attended with all the precautions insisted on in this discourse. A conduct so disinterested and religious would infallibly bring a blessing on every match so made, provided they, who in wedding thus take care to bow only to the true God, are as careful to observe his command, in making no marriages with the worshippers of other gods, riches, titles, or inordinate pleasures, the idols of a deluded world. But why did I speak of going downward in point of fortune, since the prudence and good economy espoused will probably bring in more wealth in the event, than expensive vanity, though for the present more amply endowed,

is able to produce in hand? Poverty coming with a great fortune, and wealth with a person of none, are not uncommon things. But supposing it were otherwise, it were infinitely better to have a good husband or wife with poverty, than the reverse. 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith. Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.' If, as our Saviour tells us, 'the life is more than meat,' we may safely venture to say, a comfortable life is much more to be regarded by one who is about to marry, than a superfluity of wealth; for 'neither does a man's life,' nor the real comforts of his life, 'consist in the abundance of the things he possesseth.' Yet how many marry fortunes only, and consider the husband or wife that brings them merely as a trifle thrown in, and find out at leisure, that these trifles, which, if rightly chosen, might have brightened every day of their lives, are now able only to make them miserable.

Marriage is considered by both sexes as a matter of so great importance, that little less than one half of all the cares and labours of mankind is laid out on ways and means of making young people agreeable in order to advantageous matches. I am not going to plead for a diminution, but only for a better application of these cares. Since marrying well is, and ever necessarily must be, a business of the last consequence, every one ought, in the first place, to know that this consequence is not by any means so materially derived from the fortune or family, as from the principles, dispositions, and habits of the persons; and that to marry well, is to get a prudent and good man for a husband, or a prudent and good woman for a wife.

In the next place, it ought to be universally laid down as an invariable and indispensable rule, that such only are to be sought for, and that superior merit is ever to decide the choice, against all other considerations. This will be the rule of acceptance and preference with unerring wisdom at the last day; and can it be a wrong rule now? a wrong rule to choose that person by, who is to make a full half of one's self for life?

In the last place, were this a universal rule (so strong under worse rules even now is the desire of being well mar-

ried, and so greatly would this increase it) the world would soon be reformed, would soon put on a new face of religion, of virtue, and of all that high and lasting happiness which flows from both. Young men, instead of being fed up from their childhood in little else than idleness and impertinence, in pride and folly, would be strongly tinctured with the love of God and goodness, would be trained to humility, meekness, and diligence in some useful calling; and as they advanced in years, instead of foppery and effeminacy in dress, instead of drunkenness, lewdness, swearing, and quarrelling, would use their utmost endeavours to erect on the firm foundation, early laid in their hearts, the noble superstructure of profitable and ornamental knowledge, of manly arts, of humanity and kindness to all men, of honour and integrity unshaken in all trials, and of undaunted bravery in the service of their king and country. This, and every thing of like kind, they would do, as knowing no other accomplishments capable of recommending them to a happy match, and as knowing also, that these could hardly fail to give them the heart and hand of any woman they should think fit to ask.

And as to the other sex, were real merit alone permitted to fix their titles to good husbands, an eternal adieu would be bidden to almost all the present arts of catching men. It would no longer be the sole business of their lives to learn, nor exhaust, as it now does, the whole care of their mothers, to teach them alluring looks and airs, to inquire after the newest fashions, to study the colours best fitted to disguise or set off their complexions, to hold long consultations with the undertakers of beauty about the best sort of washes, and to spend one half of every day in the deep mystery of setting pins. No, religion in all its most beautiful and affecting colours, would be presented to the first dawns of reason and sensibility in their minds. Humility, modesty, sweetness of temper, and a thorough command of their passions, would be next introduced, and practised into habits; and the last stage of their education would be filled with maxims of prudence, with materials for entertaining and profitable conversation, and with the rules of good economy. From a course like this they would come forth into the world, not, as now, ridiculous compounds of pride and affectation, contemptible pageants of dress and fashion;

but adorned with angelic graces, sparkling with native jewels of their own polishing, and dressed for an assembly in the new Jerusalem.

Now these methods would neither shorten the stature of the men, nor darken the complexion of the women. All the natural advantages of face and person would still be preserved; and I will venture to say, due regard being had to neatness and cleanliness, set off to infinite advantage by the majesty of the more manly virtues in the one sex, and by the delicacy and sweetness of the female graces in the other.

Here is a picture but imperfectly sketched, which nevertheless I wish you would impartially compare with the despicable trifles and pernicious arts, wherewith the sexes labour to please, to ensnare and impose on each other in this artificial world. What a glory diffuses itself round that! what a ridicule! what a satire on mankind grins from a bare mention of this! If you have eyes to see, behold the infinite difference; and God give you understanding in all things; particularly this, through Christ Jesus our Saviour, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXVIII.

### HOW TO BE HAPPY, THOUGH MARRIED.

#### EPHES. v. 31.

*A man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

WHAT is here said, was intended for, and is as true, with a mere verbal alteration, of a woman. She also will leave her father and mother, that is, her nearest and dearest relations, in order to find a yet closer and more beloved relation in a husband. Neither, however, would do this, did they not hope, on grounds apparently promising, for more satisfaction and happiness in a new state of their own choice, than in the old, to which they were introduced by their birth, and

wherein they cannot expect to continue, but for a short and uncertain part of their lives.

Their hopes are not likely to deceive them, if, on both sides, due care and circumspection have been employed in making and fixing the choice; if they are good in themselves; and in person, temper, principles, and schemes of living, agreeable and suitable to each other. But requisite as this suitableness is, somewhat farther is necessary to their happiness. Their notions of matrimony ought to be the same; and to be so, ought to be taken from the real nature of that, and the account given of it in the word of God, by no means from prejudices or imaginations of their own.

As to the nature of that state, it will be sufficient to apprehend, that it is a society of two persons, who, while it continues, ought to have but one interest, and pursuant to that, one only scheme of life, calculated, agreed upon, and uniformly pursued by both, in order to one and the same sort of happiness, whereof both are to be equal partakers; and likewise of the reverse, as often as troubles or afflictions shall occur, whether the occasion of happiness or affliction shall visit them both at once, or begin with the one or the other. They are to enjoy each other's comforts, to suffer each other's sorrows, and even to be well and sick of each other's health and distempers. All this arises from the very nature of an alliance, founded on sameness of interest, and on the highest degree of love which the parties are capable of entertaining. Now, it is not in the nature of things, that either such an interest or such a love, should subsist in a society of more than two, and, therefore, polygamy, though practised by many nations, is a monster, abhorred by nature, a monster, made up of a single head and a plurality of bodies, ever necessarily at variance among themselves.

This natural notion of matrimony is confirmed and enforced by the word of God, in that remarkable passage from whence my text is borrowed, wherein the inspired apostle represents the 'union between Christ and his church,' by the 'union between a husband and his wife,' and this again, by 'the union between the head and the members in a natural body.' Christ loves, provides for, and governs his church, just as the good husband does his wife; and he again loves, provides for, and governs his wife, just as a

wise and careful head does the rest of the body. Invert this order, and you will see a good wife loving and obeying her husband, as a sound body does in regard to its head, and as the church does in regard to Christ. Here a sameness of interest and happiness is clearly set forth as necessary to matrimony, that the husband and wife may know themselves to be but one, 'one body or flesh;' and the subjection of the wife to her husband is as plainly laid before us, that, if differences should arise, they may find an easy and speedy determination, without the interposition of a third person, which seldom leaves the contest it was called to, in a better state of agreement than it was before. Were human nature as it should be, the husband's right to govern would always lie by as a dormant title, and the happiness of the married state would be sufficiently provided for on the footing of unity alone, the first and most lovely foundation whereon it is built by the holy Scriptures. But whereas our nature is corrupt, and more or less ill-disposed in the very best of mankind; the second, which enjoins the subordination of a wife to her husband, is there also added, that peace at last may be recovered, when love is lost, or in danger.

It is true, that, in nature and reason, the right of governing ought to go with the superior understanding, whether placed in the husband or wife. But then, in regard to each particular couple, who shall decide its place? Of all points this is the last to be determined by a contending husband and wife. Nor can any third person possibly do it for them, both for want of knowledge and authority. All he could do, would be to decide in particular causes of difference, which, besides that it would be endless, must, by adjudging the superiority of reason in this instance to the one party, and in that to the other, leave the general merits of their understandings respectively, as much in the dark as ever.

To prevent or remedy this, as occasion may require, the God of peace and order, who alone can judge in such a matter, and who will no otherwise than by his word, and the reason he hath given us, interfere with the contests of man and wife, hath, once for all, ruled the case, and commanded the latter to obey the former in all things lawful and honest. I will not say, this rule is founded on a greater



degree, generally speaking, of natural capacity in men than in women, for I know, although much may be said for it, yet a good deal may be said against it. But one thing is certain, that men in general have more strength of body than women, and therefore in all struggles for the upper hand, let superior reason lie where it will, may come off eventually conquerors. Now, pre-eminence of authority, supposing an equality of understanding, should naturally go with pre-eminence of strength. This strength of body, however, gives the man a great advantage over the woman in point of acquired knowledge; for while the delicacy and feebleness of her body, and her bearing and suckling of children, confine the woman to domestic cares, for which, besides, her course of education must be calculated; the man, by his strength, is fitted for, and carried out to labour, trade, war, and the like, which afford him a far greater opportunity of improving his natural talents, of growing in experience, and gathering knowledge, particularly the necessary knowledge of men and things, wherewith he is, or may be concerned. Add to this, that to fit him the sooner and better for affairs, the course of education, as to the higher and more important branches of learning, runs unavoidably in his favour. It would be as easy, as it is unnecessary, to shew, that women are no better fitted by nature for the learned employments of law, physic, or divinity, than for the spade, the sword, or the exchange. As then the great affairs of the world must pass through the hands of men; must be managed, determined, and finally settled by men, it follows unavoidably, that in the hands of men the right, as well as the capacity and power, to govern, must be placed.

I say not these things as a party (for on many occasions I could have wished, had it been lawful, that the wife had been to govern), but only as one whose duty it is to speak after God and nature, and to inculcate the general law of both. But where I asked, to what end I have taken such a compass on this particular part of my subject, I should answer, that I have done it to give all married people who hear me a right notion of the state they are in, of the terms of union for which their vows are solemnly plighted, of the tender and ardent love they ought to nourish in their hearts towards each other; and, when that love is not as warm as

it were to be wished, of that peace, order, and decency, which the submission of the wife only can in that case maintain. To prevent those unhandsome, and otherwise endless, bickerings, which so often make the married state unhappy, nothing would be of so much use, as a due consideration, both in the husband and wife, of the nature of that united state they are in, which can give them but one happiness, or one misery, and a serious consultation with the word of God. This would teach them to know their places, and to keep them, without mutual encroachments. This would set God always before their eyes as the awful guardian of their vows, as the blesser and rewarder of their duty, if conformable to the terms engaged for, and as the avenger of their crime, if that duty and those terms are slighted, especially if obstinately and perseveringly slighted.

The expediency of this conduct having been, for the time, sufficiently recommended, consider now (I speak to the married only) that unity of heart and understanding being as essential to the happiness, as unity of interest is to the nature, of matrimony, it is, in the first place, your grand business, whether as husband or wife, to aim at the attainment and preservation of this unity, as early and as studiously as you can ; or if it is once hurt, or lost, to labour in the second place, with all your might for the recovery of it, as not only the foundation of all your happiness, but the only preservative against the greatest misery, known or knowable in this life.

If, after having lived together for some years, you find yourselves still one, one in understanding and heart, one in good agreement about the same scheme of life, in order to one and the same interest or circle of satisfactions ; you are then fitter to advise others, than to be advised yourselves ; and have nothing more to do, than to proceed, as you have begun, and to let nothing, but the means of your eternal salvation prompt you to louder or more repeated thanksgivings, than the sense of your present enjoyment. Let nothing, but the means of your eternal salvation, be prayed for with more vehemence of heart and soul, than a perpetuity, during life, of that peace and love, which by the good providence of God, you have hitherto been enabled to maintain inviolably towards each other. Your singular happiness is, no doubt, an object of envy to the enemy of all good, as

was that of your first parents in paradise. 'Watch therefore and pray,' lest either his malice, or your own weakness, should, after all, open your eyes as fatally, as they did theirs, and teach you the difference between matrimonial love and discord.

In case you are but lately married, and therefore have not had sufficient to try your tempers on each other, it is your business seriously to consider, that, circumstanced as you are, you must infallibly become either comforters or tormentors to each other. Indifference is inconsistent with the very nature of matrimony, which, if it does not unite you into one, cannot leave you two, simply as you were before marriage; but must make you two opposites, two bitter, treacherous, or suspected enemies to each other, and to your common happiness. Ask those who have been long married, whether or no, there is any medium between happiness and misery in that state. Their uniform report will be, that there neither is, nor can be, any such thing.

Such being the case, you must be worse than mad, if you do not use your utmost endeavours, first, to keep, at the greatest distance, every cause of dispute, and every occasion of disgust; and next, to say and do every thing that may nourish that love and confidence, which are the food of your union, whereon again depends absolutely all your happiness.

As to the first, argue not about trifles, which no two ever disputed for yet, but in order to the vanity of a victory, for in themselves they are not of moment enough to defray the charges of the breath expended on them. But then consider, that in every victory of this sort there are two, one triumphing, and the other triumphed over; and that a victory or triumph is the act of an adversary, not of a friend; nor at all possible where there is but one. In all cases therefore of none, or of little weight, the best way is to let the first speaker carry it, lest a spirit or habit of disputing, although begun about trifles, should proceed to matters of more consequence, like a spark among straw, which sometimes burns the house. Besides, people seldom dispute, be it about what it will, but little sallies of wit, tart expressions, inuendos, squinting at unpleasing topics, or the sly arts of seizing advantages in an argument, all of them irritating

things, are wont to intrude, and too much enliven the conversation. This is not rubbing, as it is softly called, but really brushing a part with nettles, which is already sensible enough, and perhaps a little disposed to inflammation.

But if you should happen to differ about a matter of moment, consider first, whether it is of moment equal to the love and peace you wish to live in; and, if, as I will venture to pronounce it beforehand, it is not; that is the wisest and best person of the two, who, after a sweet and soothing use of one or two reasons, first seizes the opportunity of sacrificing it to mutual love, by a free and cheerful surrender. In case however you are both too weak to run for this prize, supposing conscience out of the question (take care you force it not in) then the wife must give it up to her husband with all that good humour and good grace, which become the character of her greater gentleness and pliancy of temper. She is as ill made for disputing, as for fighting.

You must take care also to prevent on both sides, every the smallest appearance of emulation, or aiming at preferences in the eye of the world, still remembering, that you are not two, but one only; of alienated affections, which stab the very heart of your union; of coolness, which threatens its life; of separate interests or secrets, which split you again into two, and tend, by a sort of partial divorce, to join you with others; and of jealousy, that unpardonable reproach to the honour of the suspected, that dagger to the heart of the suspecting party, that incurable poison to the love and peace of both. I need not tell you that pride begets anger; anger, hatred and revenge; and these, a dissolution of your union, and the ruin of your peace; and therefore that the whole baneful plant, root and branch, fibre and twig, must be extirpated from the very ground.

But it may be necessary to remind you, as of a thing not so commonly observed, that wrangling, even though it should run up into railing, is not more prejudicial to your union, than those dark and sullen humours, which find the way to express more hatred, and a worse turn of mind, by silence and sour looks, than resentment is able to do with all its foam and sputter of words. The intimate and affectionate footing you are upon should teach you, that too much openness, or too much cheerfulness, are things impossible in your case;

and that there is no one expedient of so much power to prevent or remove misunderstandings, as candid and good-natured explanations, prudently timed to soft occasions, wherein the real, or imaginary causes of discontent may be tenderly handled and healed ; or shewn to have had no other foundation, but mistake.

But when all these methods of human contrivance are likely to prove unsuccessful, and heart from heart begins to start aside ; it is then time for you to bring the causes of your uneasiness before God, to compare them carefully with your marriage vows of obedience on one side, and of love on both ; and then kneeling down at your bed side, there humbly to confess your faults to him who cannot be deceived ; to form your resolutions of better behaviour hereafter on the particulars of that confession ; and then most earnestly to implore the assistance of the blessed Being you are before, who infallibly will hear you, and enable you to rise in a frame of mind, much better fitted for the observation of your vows, and for the improvement of love and good agreement between you.

I hope it will not seem, although after advice of so sacred a nature, improper to speak to you of one thing, which many esteem but a trifle, but which nevertheless experience shews to be a matter of great consequence in preventing mutual disgusts and distastes between married people ; I mean the preservation of that delicacy in dress, and in behaviour, on all occasions, to each other, as far as is consistent with the intimacy of married people, which you were so nice observers of before you went together. It is now of ten times more consequence to keep, than it was then to win each other's affections. And yet, for what purpose, but to win, were all your decorums and engaging civilities in the time of addressing ? Why, if not for this end, did you then take so much pains to be clean, to shew yourselves every where, especially where you expected to meet, in your most becoming apparel ? to put on your best looks and most attractive smiles ? And why were you so watchful to keep every thing out of sight, though ever so necessary or natural, that might give the smallest offence ? You must own, it was because the contrary conduct would have made you disagreeable, or less pleasing at least. And are not your tastes the same

still? Or, have civilities and decorums changed their nature, and lost their power to please? Was it of the last consequence to gain, and is it of none to keep the affections of each other, now that you are joined for life, and are hardly ever to be asunder? You must surely be sensible, that the want of that delicacy I am recommending, hath made a very disappointing and disgusting change in those agreeable persons you took each other for, the day you were married.

By a careful and constant observation of these rules, the causes of distaste and dissension may be wholly banished, or so effectually nipped in the bud, that the methods of promoting and increasing your mutual affection may have nothing to check their operation.

These are, first, a strict fidelity to each other, not only in regard to the indivisible and incommunicable right in either to the person of the other; but also in keeping each other's lawful secrets with an equal continence of tongue, and in promoting the common good of the family, each in your own proper province, according to the scheme of economy agreed on, with all your skill and application. This fidelity will beget such confidence, and that such esteem and love, as all other good qualities are incapable of producing. This is that solid virtue which lays a rock for the foundation of matrimonial union, whereon you may build your happiness as high as your other good dispositions can carry it, without much fear of a shake, even from your less commendable qualities, and without any at all from the treacherous designs of others.

But if to this severer virtue you can add 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' of a gentle and condescending temper, which not only 'in the sight of God,' but of your partner also, is of great price, you will wonderfully promote the harmony, and by that the love, you wish to establish. Single people may safely enough indulge themselves in particular humours and ways of their own, if they are not sinful; but married people must pare away abundance of unblamable singularities, in order to fit into the matrimonial mould, and grow into one.

Meekness and patience, if not too much let down to slavishness and insipidity, will be necessary to the preservation and improvement of the matrimonial union, in the midst of

those many untoward accidents, which by falling singly on one of you are apt to occasion a ruffle, too easily caught by the other, like an infection, if patience and presence of mind are wanting. Here you the party not first attacked by the temptation, though really feeling, and appearing to feel, with the other, are to keep on your guard, that you may serve as balm to the grief, or as a bridle to the passion of your beloved friend. This, on cooler thoughts, will infinitely endear you to a grateful mind, that will soon be glad to have been comforted under the first onset of affliction, or restrained from some wild extravagance by the staidness of your temper.

Provided these amiable dispositions are accompanied with kindness of heart, and a studious endeavour on all occasions to please, with unstinted expressions of love, which can never appear fulsome, if sincere, and with a manifest readiness ever to prefer the satisfactions, while reasonable, of your more beloved half, to your own; no heart is insensible enough to be proof against a behaviour so charming. If you persevere in it for a little time, you will become an angel in the eyes of your best friend, especially if you have an opportunity, and lay hold of it, of repaying some acts of unkindness with such instances and proofs of love. These will go home through the heart to the very soul. The fire of love, so extremely penetrating, will melt both your minds, and run you down into one mass, which the art of your enemy, skilled as he is in the fire of an opposite nature, shall never be able to separate.

Such is the power of these heavenly dispositions, when exerted in their full vigour, though on one side only; what then must they be able to do, when felt in equal perfection, and with equal force, on both? Here the consequence must be a union, so entire, as to be inconceivable and almost miraculous, in the opinion of others, not so happily affected.

In you happy pair, it is (I speak as to one) who can thus unite that uninterrupted peace, and love sweeter than life itself, are to be found; that fruits infinitely over-paying all your patience, humility, and command of temper, are administered by the hand of rewarding Providence, not in stinted meals, but in one delicious feast, as lasting as your days; that authority and obedience lose their names, and



almost their natures in an overpowering love, the husband no more knowing that he directs, than the head does that it moves the hand; and the wife no more feeling that she obeys, than the hand, that it is moved. Heaven only, which every good couple is hastening to (through this paradise as a porch), can raise you to greater happiness, or indeed to higher glory in the judgment of right reason; for marriage, so circumstanced, is truly honourable, if the reduction of every bad disposition, and the exertion of every good one, here nobly exemplified, are objects of esteem.

On this side of matrimony God shines with the light of his countenance, and all is bright, beautiful, and smiling; but on your side, in whom the union of hearts is lost, night, tempest, thunder, spread darkness, confusion, and misery. Do you not desire, and will you not labour to recover that union, which is the foundation of all the happiness you wish for, and the only preservative against the greatest misery in this life? that misery you feel in pangs like those of the damned, and like them, in bitter accusations, charge on each other?

There are many, whom it is lost labour to speak or preach to, who are of so crooked and perverse a nature, that neither the power of reason, nor their own intolerable sufferings, have any effect on them. These are the 'wicked who are estranged and go astray from the womb; whose poison is like the poison of a serpent; who are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and will not hearken to the voice of charmers charming never so wisely.' To their own teeth, stings, and poison, they must be left for a cure.

To you only, who, although of better principles and nature, have gone together on wrong motives, and who, through an unsuitableness of mind and temper, pursue wrong, or contrary drifts, I address myself in this last part of my discourse; and do, in the bowels of Christian charity, earnestly beseech you to consider, that neither of you apart can be happy or miserable; that, differ as you will in other respects, in this at least you must be united, that you are tied down for life to the same condition. This should render you extremely cautious of dividing your interest, or laying down separate schemes for attaining even the same ends. If neither can work out happiness, or so much as contentment,

independent of, or in opposition to the other; surely, it should be the ruling maxim of both to aim at but one common happiness, by one and the same set of means.

Consider again, what it is you contend about, whether it be your diversions, your expenses, the management of your affairs, or smaller matters depending on opinion and humour. Be it what it will, without the verge of God's commandments, it cannot be worth obstinately insisting on, since the forfeiture of quiet, contentment, and mutual love, is the price. Give it up therefore as a sacrifice, as a peace-offering, to prudence and the prospect of happiness.

Your whole unwillingness, of either side, to do this, proceeds entirely from pride. You seek a victory, or you cannot bear the thoughts of a defeat. But both the example and religion of your Saviour teach you, that in such cases, to yield, is to conquer, and that there is no other defeat or slavery, but submission to your lawless passions. Yet in the face of this Divine Instructor, whose name and seal you still pretend to carry, you go on to dispute every inch of ground, without so much minding the importance or insignificance of the things in question, as the increase or diminution of the power you thirst after, till you find the sovereignty you are establishing, is like that of the devil, only a sovereignty in flames, in the midst whereof you reign indeed: but reign by terror, in misery and chains. It must surely be a very vain and a very horrible sort of mind, to which pre-eminence so tyrannical, and yet so infamous, can afford more pleasure, than all the sweets of that kind and generous commerce, which easiness of temper, and conjugal tenderness, settle between an affectionate and mutually condescending couple.

If you cannot enter with each other into a close, cordial, and temperate conference on the necessity of sacrificing every thing to peace, which I would recommend as an expedient the most prudent and promising that can be thought of; you should at least separately call yourselves to a severe account for the causes of your unhappiness. In this work, ask your understanding what you are doing, and your conscience, why. If you examine fairly, you will find enough, either of injuries, or unchristian resentments, to charge yourself with, and to justify Providence in the scourge of

your present sufferings, if not your husband, or wife, in being the instrument employed to inflict them.

Then ask the feelings of your own mind and heart, whether the life you are now leading is fit to be continued, and in what it is likely to end. As soon as these questions, and their right answers have made the proper impressions, it will be your next business seriously and firmly to resolve on an immediate reformation of all your conjugal faults. Your attempts to break the other party of his or her faults, either because they were ill managed, or because no management can prevent their seeming arrogant and invidious, have always proved unsuccessful, and probably ever will. Besides, you ought to consider, that yours are so many acts of provocation to those committed on the other side. Look therefore at home, and set every thing to rights within yourself, where you have a power; and then you will find, that a great deal more than one half of the preparation for peace is finished; for exactly in proportion as your power of rightly governing your own passions increases, in the same will your influence over those of your consort increase also. You know not yet, how irresistibly, and how like a charm, the meekness and sweetness of one mind communicate themselves to another. Be assured, it is just as swiftly and as powerfully, as the infection of bitterness and wrath (how that works you know too well) conveys itself from mind to mind. However, if this method is taken on both sides, it cannot possibly fail. Peace will be its first-fruits, and a plentiful harvest of love, of comfort, and happiness, will immediately follow.

Since you are not one, but two, give me leave to remind you of a few things separately, and you first who are the husband.

You should never forget, that your wife hath put her person, together with her fortune, into your hands, as into those of the man she loved best, and confided most in; and that she did this, in a pleasing expectation of finding in you a generous and strenuous protector against all ill treatment from others, and all the distresses and troubles, which a man is better able to repel than a woman. To your stronger arms, and more courageous bosom, her feebler nature hath fled for refuge in the bustle of a crowded and boisterous world,

through which she knew not how otherwise to make her way. How base, how unmanly a breach of trust would it be in you, to treat her with coldness, contempt, or cruelty? to become her chief oppressor? and to force from her broken heart the melancholy wish, to be again where you found her, exposed alone to a world, hard indeed and deceitful, but less insensible and treacherous than you? It is true, she is not without faults; and who is? Are you? But is she to be broke of those by methods fit only to be taken with a beast? Have you no pity for her weakness; you who must be lost for ever, if infinite pity is not afforded to your own? It is the property of a coward only to use any woman ill; of a treacherous and cruel coward to use that woman ill, who hath no protector under heaven, but you; and to whom you made the warmest protestations before, and the most solemn vows at, your marriage, of love as lasting as your life. What man in the world would hurt a dove or sparrow, though but a brute, to which he had neither offered, nor promised protection, if it should fly to his breast from the talons of a hawk? But, if you will not hear me, hear the word of God, to you and to all married men; 'Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church;' for which he thought it not too much to give his life. 'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth, and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.' Take notice that you are here (without any condition of proper behaviour on the part of your wife), forbidden to treat her with bitterness, and commanded to shew her that love which Christ hath for his church, and you have for yourself, and to do her honour. Nay, you are 'to see, that you love your wife, even as yourself,' though she should be not a hair less infirm and faulty than yourself.

On the other hand, you who are a woman, and married, should never forget you are either. You should, at all times, and in every instance, bear in mind, that as a woman, gentleness and pliancy to every thing but vice is your distinguishing character. The person and face of an angel, without these peculiar ornaments of your sex, will not

make you beautiful, nor even tolerable. There is nothing conceivable so unnatural, or so shocking, as you are, when you put on a masculine, not to say a boisterous, spirit, and set up for an object of fear. As you was made to be loved, not dreaded, you are furnished with every preparative for the former, by the kind indulgence of nature ; and not with one for the latter, unless you will ascribe to nature that which she most abhors of all monsters, an affectation of rudeness and imperious violence, accompanied with so much fearfulness of mind and weakness of body. And as a married woman, you are still farther from your natural element, if you aim at a superiority over your husband, whom you are obliged by nature, by Scripture, and by your vows, to obey. As one weak, you sought at first for a protector ; hath your vows of submission given you so much strength, that nothing but that protector will now serve you for a slave ? You want to carry all your points, and do what you please ; and we, in a violent stretch of courtesy, will grant you have none but good ends in view, but must, at the same time, take leave to demur to your manner, both in point of agreeableness and prudence. If the agreeable way in every thing is the best, it must be more so in you, who was peculiarly calculated to please. How do you shock us with the reverse ! Your manner is likewise altogether foolish, and shews you know not where your power is placed. It is not placed, as you imagine, in a knack of disputing, nor in the brandish of a high hand, nor, when these fail, in fits, either brought on by struggles too violent for your wretched frame of body, or opportunely pretended, as the last shift. No, your power lies in managing the softer and gentler passions. Here you might be irresistible, and do every thing, did not the insolence of your spirit set you above this amiable method. In the other way you can do nothing that will not cost you a thousand times more than it is worth. But I foresee you will be more apt to be angry at the most useful advice from a man, than at your own folly and pride ; I therefore earnestly beseech you, as you regard your vows, and fear God, to hear him at least, who saith unto you and all other married women ; ‘ Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord ; for the husband is the head of the wife,

even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Let the wife see that she reverence her husband. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands.' This last precept is followed by another, enjoining meekness and quietness of spirit, and forbidding an expensive vanity in dress. Compare your conduct, and the spirit it proceeds from, with these words of God, and judge for yourself, whether you know better than he does, what you should do. Consider also, that these precepts are positive, unconditional, and leave you no excuse for a failure in your duty, let your husband's behaviour be what it will.

Now tell us, both of you, whether, after all, you are determined to go on as heretofore, and give us a proof of less sense in two pretenders to rationality, than we often find in two oxen or sheep, who grow more tractable, and go more quietly in their yoke, the longer they have carried it; whether you are still resolved, at your own expense, to shew the world a monster, with one body and two heads, each of them furnished with two faces, to smile or frown on each other, as dissimulation or rancour shall set their features; and whether, in a word, you can think of any longer racking your minds between the wide extremes of fond and angry fits, in so swift successions, that all the good part of mankind are amazed, how, after such transports of tenderness, you can ever hate each other; and all the bad, how it is possible, from hatred so keen, to return again to instances of endearment, not exceeded between those who never quarrelled. Here is the very sting of your condition. These starts of affection serve but to give you a more thorough sense of the mutual hatred which immediately follows, and fills you with bitterness of soul. Could you live asunder, or avoid all occasions of kindness, you might at length take sanctuary in indifference. A palsy might take the place of this ague in your passions; and once for all, benumb those too exquisite feelings, which contrariety, at present, rubs into rawness, and keeps perpetually alive. Time, which alleviates other miseries, would then cease to

aggravate yours. What an enemy would you think him, who should deprive your food of all its relish, or cook it for you with gall ; who should rob your nights of sleep, poison every moment of your time with grief or vexation, throw all your affairs into confusion, and ruin both the morals and fortunes of your children ! This enemy you are (I do not say to each other but) you, the husband, to yourself ; and you, the wife, to yourself ; for want of considering that you cannot hurt or vex her, nor you hurt or vex him, without equally hurting, vexing, and tormenting yourself, for you can have but one and the same condition.

You have indeed another enemy, who blinds your understandings, who inflames your passions, and spreads the darkness and fire of his own abode through yours. Well were it for you, if death itself could put an end to the evils he schemes against you. But unhappily, they are rooted in your souls ! Pride, rage, revenge, malice, cruelty, towards that very person, whom, by all the ties of nature, all the laws of reason and revelation, and by the most solemn vows, you are bound to love and cherish, are crimes of the deepest die, and riveted in the very soul of you, who profess obedience to the commands of Christ as necessary to your eternal salvation, and know full well, at the same time, that Christ hath expressly commanded you to ‘ love even your neighbour as yourself, to forgive your enemies,’ nay, ‘ to love your enemies.’ Your religion tells you, you cannot possibly be saved, without the humble, the meek, the forgiving, the benevolent, the charitable spirit of your Master and his gospel, towards all mankind. It expects of you, if you are married, the highest proofs of this spirit towards your wife or husband. Now, how can you hope to be saved, whose spirit is yet, in all points, the very reverse of this ? You cannot be acquitted, as a good son or daughter, as a good father or mother, as a good master or mistress, or as a good neighbour ; and at the same time condemned as a bad husband or wife. You must, on the whole of your life, be either acquitted or condemned ; either rewarded or punished ; rewarded only as a good Christian, which you can never be, if you are not a Christian, but a perjured traitor, in regard to your marriage vows.



Repent, therefore, before it is too late ; and God give you understanding in all things, in this more especially, for the sake of Christ Jesus our Saviour, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now, and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LXIX.

### VANITY OF VANITIES.

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#### ECCLES. I. 14.

*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

THIS, if I mistake not, is the severest reflection that ever was made on the world. Whatsoever keen or contemptible the imagination can paint, or experience prove to us, concerning the follies, the vices, and the miseries of mankind, it is all summed up in this comprehensive saying, and delivered in the sharpest and most expressive terms. The preacher does not condemn one work of man as vanity, and another as vexation of spirit ; but he unites the two, and pronounces them both, of each work. The very sting of the reflection consists in this, that howsoever vain and trifling all our works are found to be, this does not prevent their giving us vexation of spirit, such is the littleness of our souls ; and that howsoever great the vexations are which they bring upon us, they are, notwithstanding this, mere emptiness and vanity, so that we get nothing to recompense our vexations, such is our stupidity and folly. They are perfectly insignificant ; yet they make us miserable ; and this we cannot but know. They make us miserable, but we cannot be made sensible of their insignificance, nor learn to despise them ; and therefore, during our whole lives are never to be disengaged from them. Their vanity eternally disappoints us, and their bitterness ever torments us : however, we place our wisdom in the pursuit, and hope

for our happiness in the accomplishment of them. Yet 'what profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? None at all.'

The Wise Man does not level these reflections at the works of God in this world. No, God, he saith, 'hath made every thing beautiful, so that nothing can be put to it.' Nor does he condemn the religious and virtuous works of men, which, though done under the sun, are performed with a view to things above it. He speaks very highly of 'true wisdom,' of 'charity,' of the 'fear of God,' and of their effects in the lives of good men; and recommends an 'early piety' to youth in the most affecting terms.

But the works of men, which he so severely lashes, are such as 'are done under the sun,' with no higher prospects than of worldly profit or sensual gratification; with no intention to reform and improve our nature, or to please our Maker; and with no view to any being or motive above the sun. This appears plainly enough, by the particulars, to which he applies the general censure in my text, and which he expressly pronounces, vain, vexatious, or both.

'Vanity of vanities! saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities! all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, although there is nothing new under the sun. Moreover, I saw under the sun,' saith he, 'the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressor there was power. There is one alone, and there is not a second, he hath neither child nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail. When goods increase, they also are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which

I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. As the rich man cometh forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil; that in all points as he came, so shall he go; and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it; this is vanity. All the labour of a man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. For what hath the wise more than the fool? Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. I said, that this also is vanity. This also is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all. I saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to all men. That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.'

Such are the observations and reflections made by the Preacher on all the works, pursuits, and possessions of men, considered as relative to this life only, and as beginning at the birth, continuing during the life, and ending with the death of the man. But lest we should understand these reflections as intended only to represent the vanity and vexation incident to other men, and not to the Preacher himself, who was the wisest of men; that which he draws from observations on others, he confirms by experiments made on himself.

‘ I the preacher,’ saith he, ‘ was king over Israel in Jerusalem ; and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven ; and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. But I perceived that this also is vexation ; for in much wisdom is much grief ; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in my heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth to me, and why was I then more wise ? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity. I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure ; and behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad ; and of mirth, what doeth it ? I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly ; and I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. I made great works. I builded me houses. I planted me vineyards, gardens, orchards, groves. I made spacious ponds and canals. I got multitudes of men-servants and maid-servants, and vast possessions of great and small cattle. I gathered silver and gold, and the treasures of kings and princes ; I provided men-singers and women-singers, and all the delights of the sons of men. Whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them ; I withheld not mine heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do ; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit ! What can the man do that cometh after the king ? Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me ; and who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool ? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. For what hath man of all his labour ? All his days are sorrow, and his travail grief : Yea, his heart taketh no rest in the night. This also is vanity.’

To him who is ignorant of the world, or to him who loveth it, who is but one and the same man, these reflections must appear perfectly amazing.

Yet, surely, they are as true, as they may seem surprising, since Solomon hath made them. He, we know, was the wisest, the wealthiest, and most magnificent of kings. He out-built, out-planted, out-dressed, out-treated, all the world. He wanted nothing that could please his senses, his appetites, or his passions. He denied himself no enjoyment which his immense riches brought within his reach. He, if ever man did, knew how to taste the sweets of sensual pleasure, and leave the sour behind. Yet having tried all, having gone the rounds of every gratification, and run the gantlope of experience; he returns with this amazing expression in his mouth, an expression ever found true, and yet never believed, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

What, all! was there nothing but vanity in thy stately palaces; thy beautiful gardens, enriched with all the delicacies of nature; thy tables loaded with the most exquisite articles of luxury, and crowded with the choicest wits of the age; thy powerful and wealthy kingdom, thy throne of ivory, overlaid with gold and adorned with lions! It was indeed no wonder thou shouldst have found abundance of vanity among so many concubines, and infinite vexation in such a crowd of wives. But was there nothing in thy wisdom! no, for it suffered thee to kneel and pray to a log of wood. Nothing in being the most powerful and happy of kings, who reigned long in profound peace, and in the highest honour! Was there nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit in all this? Nothing, absolutely nothing, if we may believe a sentence pronounced, not only by all thy extensive wisdom and experience, but by the infallible Spirit of God.

And is it only to enjoy like poor Solomon, who called all his grandeur, all his pleasures and possessions, vanity and vexation of spirit; that the rest of mankind, nay, the readers of Solomon, and of a greater than Solomon, lay out all their thoughts and labours? Do they hope for more wealth, power, peace, and length of days, than he had? Or do they think they have more sense and taste to enjoy with, than fell to his lot? Is it not rather for one or two of these, or for a pitiful portion of them all, that most men struggle?

How few are there whose humble ambition proposes to itself a higher station than that of serving so great a prince? Or whose thirst of pleasure dare so much as wish for a place at the second table in his palace, or for a match with the meanest of his cast concubines? Yet, if Solomon could brand his own magnificence and pleasure, which were worldly magnificence and pleasure in perfection, with the names of vanity and vexation of spirit; what gratification can the low-pitched pride of others propose to itself in a second or third-rate degree of exaltation? What contentment can avarice hope for in a small share of his riches? Or what enjoyment can sensuality expect in meaner houses and gardens, and in a less voluptuous board and bed, than his? 'What can the man do, who cometh after the king?' so far after him?

But the men who place their desires on these things, will neither believe the report of Solomon, nor of God himself, in this case. Why do they not then examine them impartially themselves, and judge from their own experience.

What have you suffered in the pursuit (I speak to the sensualist, the covetous, and the ambitious), of temporal things? Compute your costs. How hath your body been fatigued, your mind racked, your conscience wounded, in this pursuit? Heaven only could reward such labours of body, and such anxieties of soul, if endured for God. And hell only can punish the guilt of those detestable arts, those iniquitous schemes, that fraud, that falsehood, perjury, oppression, pollution, wherewith you have hunted the objects of your desires.

Now on the other hand compute your gains. Have you arrived at happiness, or even contentment? No. Can you reasonably hope to attain to either hereafter? No. No man, not even Solomon, ever did. But I will suppose, you have gained the height you at first had in view. How are you amazed and confounded to find, that, although it seemed, when you was below, to touch those heavens of pleasure you was climbing to, yet now you are raised to the pinnacle of all your former wishes, you are still as far beneath what you aspired to as ever. Are you able to rise yet higher, or even always to preserve the station you are in? Let it be granted, against all experience, that there is no fear of a fall;

yet how ridiculously, how miserably are you disappointed, to find yourself stinted by your own nature, and the insurmountable necessity of things, to as much cloth as will cover one back, and as much food as will fill one stomach? As to the finery of the garb, it is nothing, after the first wearing; and the deliciousness of the food, nothing, after the first tasting. If your reason does not do it, your very pride and your palate will convince you, there is nothing but emptiness and vanity in both. You have just finished a house, which you think beautiful and stately; and although it is not good enough to be a flanker to the meanest of Solomon's palaces, we will allow you to be as vain of it as you please, and will also ensure it against fire. Yet behold! after all the money, labour, and vexation it cost you, it hath scarcely entertained you two months, till it sinks on your imagination into a cottage, and serves only to defend you from the weather. All the flattery of your visitors cannot rebuild it. You go round it, you view it, and wonder where its height, extent, and ornaments are gone to. But when the agonies of death seize you in it, then it vanishes from about you like a castle in the air, and all your buildings are reduced to one, which costs you all you have, though it is but six feet in length.

The great fortune you have scraped together is not a whit more substantial. You are no sooner used to riches, than they dwindle into poverty, and you want ten times as much to fill your desires, perhaps to preserve you from distress. It would be well for you however, if your riches would be neuter, and only disappoint you with their vanity. But, unhappily! you can neither gather nor hold them without an infinite deal of trouble. You had all the world, the violent and artful world, to scramble with, when you was picking them up; and how many rugged scuffles, how many shameful tumbles in the dirt, you have had during that time, your memory, and, it is to be feared, your conscience, can too well recollect. And, now you are in possession, is the pleasure of laying out, or keeping, your riches, at all answerable to the high expectations that put you on gathering them? No, you are as severely plagued in the decline of life with the spending, as you was in its vigour, with the acquiring, your fortune. Your horses devour



you, your dogs hunt you, and your servants drive you almost to distraction. Your worthless visitors and trencher friends soothe you with their tongues, and tear you with their teeth. Besides, your wealth, thus managed, will infallibly bring with it, pride, wrath, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, sickness, pain, and death. Is not this one of the sorest evils under the sun, that 'your riches,' after costing you so much, 'should be kept,' or say, enjoyed, by you their owner, 'only to your hurt?'

But you say, you have too much sense to lavish away a fortune, so painfully acquired, in so foolish a manner, and know very well how to keep it to yourself. Do you? Are you not afraid of the thief, the robber, the cut-throat, the sharper, and the man of law, worse than them all? Or pray, what do you mean by keeping your wealth to yourself? Will you hoard it in a chest, or never send it out, but to bring in more? Do you compliment a conduct, so infinitely absurd, with the name of wisdom? You did not then gather to enjoy? Or you gathered only for the pleasure of calling so many thousands your own, while you dare not make free with them for the comforts, it may be, for the very necessities of life, no more than if they legally belonged to another. After a man hath laboured like a slave, for many years, to provide for the enjoyment of his pleasures, and the gratification of his pride; is it not a whimsical sight to observe him almost totally stripped of those passions he hath been all along providing for, just when his circumstances enable him to indulge them? Or though he should retain those passions, to see some other passion, such as avarice, turn spy upon his pleasure, and make it harder for him to wrest a little of his wealth from himself, than ever it was to squeeze it out of others? With wealth enough to be envied by a lord, he is poor enough to be pitied by a beggar. Give him a penny you that go from door to door. Is not this exactly your case? Is not your wealth become your task-master and tyrant? But how long think you, will you be able to keep this idol, to which you are so miserably enslaved? 'Thou fool! This night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all these things be?'

Why, you say, they will be the property of your heir, and that it was for his sake, and to raise a family, you so

anxiously gathered, and so miserably kept them. This might carry with it some shew of benevolence, had you a son or brother, or did you allow them, in case you have them, any enjoyment of your wealth, while you live. But how know you, odious miser, with certainty, that he whom you call your son, is really such, and not foisted on you by the infidelity of your wife? How know you, whether he does not wish for the death of so hard a father? How know you whether 'he that shall come after you will not be a fool,' that sort of fool, which you esteem the worst of fools, a spendthrift? 'Yet shall he have rule over all your labour wherein you laboured, and shewed yourself wise under the sun. Is not this,' think you, 'vanity? Yea, is it not a sore travail?'

But still you comfort yourself with this reflection, that, you have so tied him up, as not to leave him a power to squander your fortune, and consequently, that your name and family will be distinguished among posterity. Wretched, senseless, comfort! What will your family be to you, when you are dead? Will they not do all they can to extinguish your memory as an upstart, a man sprung from no other original but the dunghill; who heaped up riches by low, sordid, or viler arts, and who is only a disgrace to all his descendants? Do you not see the vanity of all your penury, in their pride? And are not both a sore vexation of spirit to you? Few things give you keener disgust, than to be treated, notwithstanding all your wealth, with disdain by every insignificant or profligate mortal, on the pride of his blood, which was originally no better than your own. And are all your labours of body and anxieties of mind laid out to enrich a family, only that the haughty coxcombs, or proud dames of your posterity may hold such men as you, and even the memory of you yourself, in contempt, if wealth, gotten as yours was, can stick long enough to your descendants? You hear, with the greatest indignation, a little despicable sort of people, sunk in poverty, and drenched in vice, talking highly of their ancestors, and by a kind of popery in heraldry imputing to themselves the honours due to men who are long since dead. This you cannot bear, especially if those who do it, are now poor, and have no other blood to boast of, but that which the sins of their

profligate forefathers have poured like a puddle into their veins. Yet such are they, whom, in all probability, you will set up by the entail of your wealth. How would it shock you to foresee, after all the provision you have made for your posterity, that one of them, having spent his inheritance, and being through pride and sloth incapable of earning honest bread, shall become the dastardly slave of some fool, the despicable fool of some villain, for no other wages than vexation of spirit? Or that another, reduced to the same circumstances, shall betake himself to theft or robbery, and carry your dignified name to the gallows? It would not perhaps give you much less concern, could you foresee, that the fortune you are now ransacking sea and land for, with infinite toil and danger of your life, probably of your very soul, is in the next generation to be lavished away among fools and knaves, and to pass, by death, or extravagance into the hands of those who have not a drop of your blood in their veins; who, it may be, are descended from your servants, or enemies; and who shall 'call your house and estate by their own names,' while they blot out the memory of yours from among mankind. Will you not therefore, as these are no uncommon cases, consider what you are doing, as 'vanity,' and what may follow, as 'vexation of spirit?'

Perhaps your riches have brought with them an honorary title, or your heart is set on that, or on some high place in the state. In this desire, there is gross vanity; and both in the pursuit and accomplishment of it, you must lay your account for great vexation of spirit. Your ambition is but a low thing, if it does not wish for a crown; it is also a wrong thing, if it looks not so high, in case a probability of success should offer itself; for why ambition at all, if it is to be checked, before it hath attained to its highest object, and in that its highest gratification? But consider, whether it is really great to be a slave. Yet are there in the galleys or mines such slaves, as on thrones? Do not princes depend on whole nations and armies? And surely a dependence on so many self-interested, fickle, and false people, hath neither real grandeur nor happiness in it. Besides, the life of a prince is that of a hare, harassed with continual apprehensions and fears. The dog that turns a

wheel, or the hackney-horse, the flesh of whose shoulder is laid bare to the draft, have more rest and ease than he. And what is there to make him patient under all this? It is ridiculous to be told. A little pageantry and finery; a little state and attendance. You have seen a horse in a waggon, dressed out with ribands and fringes, and at every step jingling two or three little bells. In this you have seen the emblem of a king. Here is the very pinnacle of vanity; and vexation of spirit, in perfection. Every wise king will, at least when he comes to die; make you the same report of royalty that Solomon hath made.

But you say, you aim not so high, and would be satisfied with some inferior degree of power and grandeur, wherein more ease and safety are to be found; and I answer, you know neither your own passion, nor the object that passion aspires to. It is impossible, your ambition should ever rest in any thing short of independent power, nay it is well, if it can sit down contented with even that, and not wish for power without limits or control. Besides, you know not, it seems, that the higher you go in this progress, the vanity and vexation will increase, at least in proportion to your ascent.

There are other things perhaps which expose you to vanity and vexation, whereof you ought to be well aware, such as your strength and beauty.

As to the first, it will be sufficient, I hope, to remind you, that it is only the strength of dust and ashes; that there are other men, and numbers of brutes, much stronger than you; and that, not only a thousand unhappy accidents, but the simplest thing in nature, a draught of water, or a blast of wind, is able to throw up your heels, and lay you either on a sick bed, or in your grave, so that the puniest man of your acquaintance shall say, with a kind of triumph, 'how vain is strength! how easily is it overthrown!'

If you are vain of your comely countenance or fine person, you are, of all mortals, the most likely to be a fool. What is beauty at best, but the bloom of a very perishable flower, over which the wind passeth, and it is gone? Do you value yourself for a regular face, a straight bone, or a white skin? Poor conceit indeed! and never found but in a low and little soul. All your excellence sits on the sur-

face ; and, unhappily for you, from thence only serves to keep up a dangerous communication between your inward weaknesses and outward temptations, perpetually introducing them to each other, and acting the part of a traitor and procurer, till your mind is ten times more distinguishable for its deformity, than your body for its beauty. And then, what are you, but a pretty cabinet, full of trifles and trash, or of dung and poison ? The vanity in this case is visible, and the vexation of spirit is keenly felt in the miserable effects of that pride, or wantonness, to which your beauty hath betrayed you.

Of all things, you are most apt to be vain of your understanding and knowledge, as appears by your resenting nothing so warmly, as an imputation of defect in this particular. Now, among all the kinds of vanity, this is unquestionably the most absurd, because your knowledge is nothing, if it does not make you sensible, you are a very ignorant creature. This is so plain a truth, that you must be perfectly stupid, not to have found it out. How often have you been stiffly peremptory, and haughtily confident of that, which, in a few minutes afterward, you found to be a gross and shameful mistake ? Blush for this by yourself, grow modest, and you will be wise. Vanity and emptiness, in this instance, are but different names for the same thing. We seldom see a mind swell so much, as that which hath little or nothing within. You must be wiser in your own conceit, than Solomon, or you would confess your wisdom to be vanity, as he did, when he pronounced vanity and vexation on all the pursuits of this life. If ‘ your eyes are opened,’ what do they see, but ‘ your own nakedness ?’ what are all your critical refinements, but impertinence ? and what do your disputations, wherewith you distract yourself, and tease your acquaintances, discover, but a smattering mind, that bewilders itself, and seeks to mislead or triumph over those of other men ? Do you not embrace opinions just as you do your estate, merely because you had them from your father, or as you do your mistress, merely because you love them ? Or do you not reject opinions, and turn infidel, because you think, you know too much to believe any thing, and are too wise to learn ?

There is no one thing under the sun, wherein there is

more vanity, and which gives occasion to more vexation, than custom. It is even grown to a proverb, that a man had better be out of the world, than out of the fashion. But if right reason were to govern us, we should think, it was the devil's Solomon that made this proverb; for what does it prescribe, but that 'an evil custom, grown old, should be kept as a law,' though never so much folly should be authorized, or wickedness countenanced by it? You that live at the fountain of this evil, I mean in the fashionable world, are you so enslaved, as not sometimes to think it inconsistent with that liberty you value yourself so much upon, to have your method of eating, drinking, dressing, conversing, and doing the most natural and necessary actions of life, prescribed to you by the will of others, perhaps of the vainest and wickedest of mankind? It were a thing much to be wished, that the dominion of this tyrant extended only to such as can afford to be fools, and not, as it actually does, to the lower ranks of people. Folly and vice run down in the channel of example, from the king even to the scullion and beggar, in a full tide, so that an awkward mimicry of that which is deemed genteel is often seen among the meanest of mankind, on whom rags and fashion find a way to unite. Expense follows. Distress pursues that, and so vanity and vexation, intermixed, come to be established by a kind of law.

Another vanity, which you may have observed, if not promoted, is, as Solomon hath expressed it, that 'there be just men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous;' that is, wicked men who prosper in oppression, and all manner of iniquity; and good men who are persecuted, merely for being good. Thus sin is honoured, and virtue disgraced, in the sight of mankind, and therefore the best natures retire and hide themselves in obscurity, while the worst, push for fortunes, rise to places, and grow as able, as they are willing, to do mischief. If you have ever seen a man of each character on the stage of life together, it is odds, you have seen the bad man splendidly attended, assisted, caressed, and almost adored by the spaniels of power, who know how to fawn on the fowler, to set the prey, and share it; while, in the mean time, the

good man, you may have observed, is either neglected, or treated with the utmost cruelty by the greater dogs of faction, who worry him in his fortune, and by the smaller curs of private spleen, who stand at a distance, yelping at his character.

The service you pay to God, if you are not one of a thousand, is as liable to the censure in my text, as the enormities I have already mentioned. How seldom do you go to his house or table, if you have a call of any consequence elsewhere? And, when you do go, how rarely do you give him more than your lips? Do you not find more warmth in your heart to a thousand other things, which you ought to despise or hate, than to him whom you ought to adore and love, with all your soul? There is no work under the sun, done so ill, done so carelessly and stupidly, as the work of religion. God is the worst served of all masters, the worst paid of all creditors or benefactors. Others get thoughts, actions, things; he little more than words and empty professions. This is the 'vanity of vanities.' This is a 'vexation of spirit,' even of the Holy Spirit.

But that which makes emptiness and vanity, with a witness, of all that is done under the sun, is death, the consequence, the punishment, the ridicule of all other vanities. One climbs the hill of ambition, another amasses wealth; one pursues pleasure, another deals in party, and state plots; one makes long voyages, another fights dangerous battles; this oppresses, that is oppressed; this labours his body, that racks his mind. See how their passions and drifts interfere! what a face of bustle and importance! Death, as the poet says, grins horribly a ghastly smile at all this. The moment he lifts his hand, they perish, and are swept away like a bed of ants. All they thought, did, desired, possessed, vanishes into nothing. 'The king and the beggar lie down together,' and the worm makes his supper on that body, which was attended by dukes at dinner. O the despicable figure that is made by worldly grandeur, under the hand of death! man lays out all his thoughts, and his very soul on a scheme, and death removes him in the midst of it, and then all his thoughts perish, and his very soul with them. He himself passes away like a shadow, and his designs, like dreams. His body rots, his memory stinks, or



is extinguished, and you can no more trace his passage through the world, unless by the remembrance of his crimes, than you can 'the pathway of a keel in the waves.'

One philosopher, observing the insignificance and folly of all we do, laughed at every thing, as vanity. Another observing the miseries that attend the follies and vices of mankind, wept at every thing, as vexation of spirit. Solomon, taking both together, saith, 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold! all is both vanity and vexation of spirit.'

What then shall we do in such a world? 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,' as it is drawn by the Wise Man himself. 'Let us fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty,' and we may add, it is therefore the whole wisdom and interest, 'of man.' Let us lift up our eyes from the empty shadows of this life, important only in their power to deceive and grieve us; and let us fix them and our affections on the great and solid things above. This world was made for man, and therefore man was not made for this world. It was made, however, only for his temporary subsistence, and as a nursery to breed up children to God, and heirs of a better world. Here therefore every thing is fitted for children, and not for men, who cannot possibly rest in such things as are uncertain, and by no means of equal extent with their desires. Since every thing here is uncertain and unsatisfactory, let us consult our faith, and let us seek for a better and more permanent inheritance hereafter, such as may fill our utmost desires, and gratify to the full, without fear of change or disappointments, of disgust or remorse. Since every thing here is vexation, let us seek for happiness in true religion, in a clear conscience, and in hopes of peace at the last. We must look above the sun for a place, where there is no vanity, no vexation of spirit. To lay the foundation of our happiness in this world, is to build on the sand and the waves. Let us therefore endeavour to raise 'a building, eternal in the heavens,' that when we fail here, and become bankrupts of earthly possessions, 'we may be received into everlasting habitations.'

God give us a gracious admittance there, and let his holy and glorious name be magnified and praised for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXX.

ROB HIM NOT OF THE SEVENTH, WHO GAVE YOU SIX.

EXOD. XX. 8.

*Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.*

LEST in the extreme eagerness and hurry of our six days pursuit after worldly things, we should forget that the seventh was reserved from the beginning and consecrated to God and religion; this commandment sets out with a divine admonition, to recollect the approach of that solemnity, and to cease entirely from that pursuit, at the commencement of a day, so equally appropriated to the honour of God, and the happiness of mankind.

We should therefore hear the call of God, expressed in this word, ‘remember,’ just in the same manner as we should do, did he on the evening of every sixth day, cry out in a voice, audible to all mankind; ‘Give ear, O my people, to the notification of my sabbath, on which you are to enter in a few hours, and so dispose yourselves, as to cease, the moment it begins, from all those labours, to which you were doomed for original transgression; your labours, even for the necessities of life, but more especially those, wherein you are occupied by your vanity, your voluptuousness, your avarice, your ambition, labours fit only to desecrate my day, which cannot be kept holy, if it is not offered up to me by the very contrary dispositions of mind, by an entire cessation from worldly business, and by a truly religious service.’

Thus Almighty God addresses us in the first words of this commandment; wherein it is farther to be observed, that, whereas, in every other commandment he only enjoins, or prohibits, somewhat to be done; in this, as of more general consequence, than any of the rest, he both commands, ‘remember my sabbath-day, to keep it holy,’ and forbids, ‘in it thou shalt do no manner of work;’ and that we may consider it as wholly appropriated to himself, and not be invaded by this world without impiety and sacrilege, he far-

ther tells us, 'that it is the sabbath of the Lord our God,' his peculiar enclosure of time, whereon he ceased even from his own work, as if not sufficiently sacred for so high a solemnity. He ceased, and so should we, to give time for the contemplation of his works. When the all-operating mind thinks fit to make vacation, we his rational creatures, ought to be no otherwise employed, than in the review of ourselves, and all he hath created for us, that together with his other works, we may again be, what he, at first, pronounced us, and gratefully declare with him, 'behold all is very good.'

So many out-works, placed round the duty here inculcated, may possibly be regarded by the unthinking as disproportionate to the importance of that duty, compared with the duties enjoined, at least in some of the other commandments. What, (may such a one say) is more care taken to prevent sabbath-breaking, than idolatry and murder? By no means. This hasty querist should know, that every guard against the violation of this commandment, is as much a guard against the transgression of the rest. This is the only positive commandment of the decalogue, the observation whereof is made subservient and necessary to that of the other nine, wherein no other duties are enjoined, than such as result from the relation we are placed in to God, and our brethren. Well as that relation is generally deemed to be known, and clearly as those duties may seem to spring from it; were no particular time set apart for an inquiry after either, nor for the practical enforcement of them on our affections, no time at all would be given to those purposes by the generality of mankind; the stream of business or pleasure would perpetually carry our thoughts downward to this world; God, and our relation to him, would be unknown, or forgotten; and men, becoming ignorant, that he is the guarantee of social duties, would be little better than wild beasts to one another. All history, sacred and profane, is a verification chiefly of this assertion. He knows little of the world, as little indeed of himself, who hath not observed an almost universal disinclination in human nature to religious inquiries and duties; to those inquiries, as they lead to these duties; and to these duties again, as they lead to compunction and dread of future retribution.

Without a sabbath, that is, without a proper proportion

of our time, appointed by divine authority, for the instruction of the common people in religious knowledge, and for the habitual exercise of devotion in those of higher rank, no knowledge of that sort is rationally to be expected among the former; but little of it among the latter; no spirit of piety and devotion among either. But in proportion as we give God his day, so, proportionably shall the knowledge, the fear, the love of God prevail; and with them the practice of every virtue; for the religion, to be acquired by a due observance of that day, is the only efficacious principle of real virtue, as that is, of real happiness.

Taking it for granted, that all who hear me are Christians, I must farther take it for granted, that they agree with me in this account of Christianity, as in a fundamental truth, and therefore consider the sabbath as an institution of divine authority, and of infinite utility.

Since then this solemnity furnishes an opportunity for all other religious inquiries, let us now lay hold of it to inquire,

In the first place, into the nature and end of the institution itself; that,

In the second, understanding clearly what it is, and why it was appointed, we may be the better prepared to make a right application of it, I mean to ‘remember and keep it holy.’

In the first place, as to the nature of this institution, it consists in an exemption, by divine appointment, of one day in seven from all unnecessary labour and business, relating to our worldly callings and affairs. This appears from the meaning of the word *sabbath*, which signifies, rest; from the express terms of the commandment; which forbid us to do any manner of ‘work thereon;’ and from so many other passages of the law and the prophets, as leave no room for a doubt on this head, either among Jews or Christians. The Jews, particularly in latter times, so overstrained the prohibition of works on the sabbath, as to abstain from works of necessity, and even of charity, deeming it unlawful on that day to defend themselves and their capital against the public enemy, and to heal the sick. Christ and all his followers, throughout every age of the church, understood the prohibition as levelled against all worldly work on this day, and kept the day accordingly.

As little doubt can be made, I conceive, among the rational and pious part of mankind, whether infinite wisdom and goodness could have intended the sabbath for a day of mere rest to the body, whereon absolutely nothing was to be done, either by that or the mind, which would reduce it to a day of idleness, that is, of vice; for that idleness is a vice, productive of innumerable other vices, cannot be soberly questioned. If however a cessation from bodily labour is admitted, which it must be, as the matter of the institution, and the recovery of strength and spirits, as its immediate end; we must at least expect to find another, more useful still, and better fitted to justify the wisdom of its author, for men may rest at any time, when they find themselves fatigued, without the solemnity of a law.

The nature of the institution will best appear from the consideration of its ends, which were, first, the refreshment of the body, exhausted and enfeebled by the labours of the preceding work days, which makes the bare resting on this day in some measure useful, and distinguishes it from mere idleness; and secondly, the commemoration of God's resting on the seventh day from his work of creation, which, we shall presently perceive, is an end of infinite use and dignity.

Such, with an eye to all mankind, and throughout all ages, were the purposes of Almighty God in appointing this solemnity from the beginning. But in regard to the church of Christ, a greater still was added at the change of the day from the last to the first of the Jewish week, namely, the commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection on our present sabbath, when he rested from the work of his new creation.

The sabbath, we ought now to observe, considered in these ends of its institution, is a most instructive memorial, a festival greatly exceeding all others, in the joy and gratitude it calls us to, for the being we have received from the hands of God; for the dignity of that being, which is ranked but 'a little lower than that of angels;' for a whole world, created in order to our comfortable accommodation; for the conquest of sin by the sufferings, and of death, by the resurrection, of our blessed Saviour, 'who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,' who

hath redeemed, renewed, and brought us into the family of God.

Fixing our eyes attentively on these ends, and clearly understanding what the sabbath is, and why it was appointed, we shall, so far, be prepared, in the second place, to make a right application of it, that is 'to remember and keep it holy.'

During a total cessation from bodily labours and worldly cares, the vacancy of the mind, together with the recovering spring of the spirits, afford us a most incomparable opportunity of meditating, with more than common feelings, on the goodness of God, who, ere he introduced us to this scene of things, prepared and stored it, not only with necessities, but with every comfort, every ornament of life. In what abundance hath he poured out the materials of food, raiment, houses! What a spacious, what a verdant, what a beautiful carpet hath he spread under our feet! tissue with an inexhaustible variety of flowers, that charm the eye and ravish the smell! refreshed with innumerable springs, rivers, lakes! diversified with hills, dales, groves! and those peopled by a choir of musical performers, that leave all the efforts of art far behind! What a carpet! exceeded rather in magnificence, than beauty, by that blue canopy, which he hath stretched over our heads, the aqueduct, below, of all our dews and rains, and enriched above with a profusion of celestial luminaries! What a verdure under us! What an azure over us! How is the eye, at once, fed and entertained by both! How is life refreshed and maintained by the air! how all its actions and motions directed by the light!

No sooner were all these, and ten thousand other accommodations, prepared in an exact conformity to the wants, the senses, the affections, the wishes, of their intended possessor, and to the faculties and powers of his understanding, than he was himself raised out of the earth (from which, but for this act of almighty goodness, he had never differed) and vested, as the favourite of heaven, with the lordship of all. The unthinking hearer will startle, when I tell him, all this is nothing in comparison of the power dispensed to us, by the rational faculty, of knowing our benefactor; of knowing, and by that knowledge, of enjoying God himself; of knowing and enjoying, by a grateful celebration of this

festival, that God, to whom all his works, howsoever beautiful, magnificent, glorious, in themselves, are but a blank, a nothing.

Is it possible this day should call us to yet higher knowledge, to the exemplification of divine goodness, in more astonishing, more affecting instances, than these? Yes, hitherto we have touched only on the bounty of God; his mercy will carry us farther. After we had trampled on his bounty, and ungratefully abused it in all its kindest effects; after we had done every thing to provoke his displeasure, and pulled on our own guilty heads the sentence of everlasting shame and misery; from the throne of heaven (hear it with unutterable wonder and love, O ye sons of the dust) from the throne of heaven, from the hymns and hallelujahs of all its hosts, he flew, on the wings of inconceivable mercy; took our now wretched nature, and, with it, laid on his own guiltless head the load of all our crimes; suffered the punishment due to them; and as the most hated of all criminals, was scourged, buffeted, spit on, crucified, by our own hands, that he might obtain for us ‘the glorious liberty of the sons of God;’ and that we may be justified in our hopes of rising, after death, to eternal life, he rose again from the grave, and, to the end of the world, is present with us, guiding our ignorance by his gospel, and aiding our weakness by his grace. To acquire a competent knowledge, and to impress on our hearts a lively and lasting sense, of these delightful truths; in the performance, the proof, the propagation whereof, as real facts, and as articles of saving faith, unbounded wisdom, and power, and mercy, were all employed, if not exerted; is the proper business of this day; and to adore in transports of joy and love, the exemplification of these attributes in our Father, Saviour, Comforter, is the right method of keeping it holy. What heart of ice can be cool to it? What mind of block or stone can forget it? To forget this solemnity is to forget the creation of a world, formed solely for ourselves, at the very instant that this world employs all our thoughts, and engages all our desires; is to forget our own being, to forget the author of that being, and of every thing that can ensure the happiness of that being, of every thing that can support the body, or save the soul; and not only to forget, but to forfeit all.



What leisure is there for him who is busied all the week about his worldly affairs, to learn these truths ; or for him whose heart is hurried off at all other times, to the pleasures, profits, or vanities of this life, to recall it into the presence of God ; but on his day ? The sabbath, a time of rest for the body, and of application of the soul to God and his holy religion, should be understood as a remainder of original righteousness and happiness, enjoyed ere the curse of labour and sorrow fell on transgressing mankind, and as a type of the eternal rest promised to our souls in the restitution of all things. It should be considered as a day of grace, whereon the king of heaven and earth lays open the gates of his palace, and invites his subjects to come and apply for his favours, and rejoice before him as on a festival, celebrated alike by himself and his whole kingdom.

Is there then a time when the whole race of mankind are called to hear the voice of God, and to send up theirs in united prayers and praises for all his mercies, wished, or received ? And is there a soul, so lost to gratitude, and itself, so daring a rebel to God, as to be absent from an assembly, where God is present, and where a world is on its knees ?

Were we only ordered to rest and rejoice on this festival, the reason and gratitude of a sensible man would point it out to him as a time of rejoicing before God, as a proper season of drawing nigh to him in every act of thankful recollection, as he hath done to us in numberless instances of goodness and mercy. The very nature of the solemnity, as instituted by God for a memorial of his gracious dispensations towards us, sufficiently intimates this application of the day to a thinking and grateful mind. If he hath not told us all he expects of us on this occasion, it is probably because there is no prescribing the degree of gratitude, proper to be shewn by the obliged, in any case ; the benefactor is always the last to do it, our own thoughts being here the only decent monitors. What an affront should we suppose, other benefactors had offered to our sensibility, did they demand our returns in plainer terms, than God hath used in those of his institution ?

These are intelligible enough in my text, where we are

ordered to keep this day holy. Now absolute inaction, both of mind and body, can sanctify nothing. Industry, which in itself is a virtue, and preservative, besides, of all other virtues, had never been suspended, during a seventh part of our time, by a divine law, had it not been the intention of the lawgiver to appropriate that time to the higher virtues of piety and devotion, and to the necessary acquisition of religious knowledge. It follows therefore, that, while the body is at rest, the mind is to be employed in its own proper work of religious cultivation. And by what means can this be better accomplished, than by reflecting, that ‘the sabbath is set for a sign’ between God and his people, to remind them of his infinite goodness to them, and of the services they therefore owe him? But why do I talk of services, as if Christ had not, long since, told us, that ‘the sabbath was made for man?’ It was surely appointed more for our improvement, than for any benefit the all-perfect Being could have expected from the very best we can do. He who keeps it holy, will find in the end, that it hath kept him holy, and made him for ever happy. If this is a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving for all the mercies of God, more especially of creation and redemption, how can it be sanctified by those acts of devotion, if these mercies are not feelingly remembered? and how can they be thus remembered, if they are not first well understood? And how can they be at all understood, I mean by the bulk of mankind, if this only opportunity for the purpose, at least in regard to the poorer sort; is not laid out on inquiries after God and his religion? Or how shall the poorer sort be won to this, if the richer and higher part of the world appear to pay little or no respect to the sabbath? Will mere sensual and riotous rejoicings sanctify the festival? No, they are fitted only to celebrate a day to the devil.

It was for this reason, that God by Isaiah so sharply re-proved the sabbaths, as kept by the Israelites in the time of that prophet. ‘Your sabbaths, and calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. When you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.’ You join iniquity, concupiscence, and oppression to my institution, and think to make it a cloak for your crimes. Wherefore as you apply it to purposes,

directly contrary to my intention, mine as it is, you have made it 'an abomination to me.' But if you would celebrate my sabbaths and other ordinances, in a manner acceptable to me, 'wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Blessed is the man that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and his hand from doing any evil.'

That the sabbath-day was the proper and usual time, both for public prayer, and for religious instruction, is plain from the practice of the Jews, whose form of prayer for the service of the synagogue, and whose custom of repeating that, and of reading and expounding the Scriptures, on this day, to the people are known to every one; as it is, that Christ himself conformed both to that service, and that custom.

And that the inspired apostles, together with the whole Christian church in their time, followed the same method of praying and preaching, to which they added the eucharist, and alms-giving, is equally plain from Acts xvi. 13, where public prayer; from Acts xx. 7, where preaching and breaking of bread; and from 1 Cor. xvi. 2, where contributions for distressed brethren, are all mentioned, as regularly practised on the first day of the week, or the Christian sabbath.

Having now seen, what the sabbath is, to what necessary ends, and sacred purposes, it is dedicated by the express appointment of God himself, and how, in consequence of his commandment, it was kept holy by those who lived and acted under the immediate direction of his Spirit; what can reason think of such as profane it by worldly business, settling accounts, transacting bargains, taking journeys? Or by idleness, strolling, visiting, sleeping? Or by an affected and supercilious contempt, both public and private, of that instruction, that devotion, that gratitude towards God for all the blessings, which the solemnity of the day so naturally and loudly calls us to? Or what is left for charity, the most tender, to think of those who, restrained by the laws from labour and business on this day, greedily lay hold of it as an opportunity to indulge themselves in amusements (so they call them), which no rules of virtue, or even decency, can tolerate on any other day? What an additional blackness do the crimes of lewd and libertine discourse, of

scandalous assignations, of rioting and drunkenness, assume by being perpetrated on the sacred day of God! and more frequently too, than on other days! what an insult on the majesty of heaven! what a sacrifice, rudely snatched from the altar of God, and even ostentatiously hurried by some to that of his enemy! Profanation is infinitely too soft a word for such practices as consist in an impious perversion of that which is most sacred, to purposes enormously flagitious.

But as if these execrable encroachments on piety and common decency were not sufficient proofs of contempt for infinite Majesty, and attachment to the author of sin; I am told, it is, of late, become usual, among the more dignified slaves of fashion, to celebrate the day of God with cards and dice. How blasphemous a sound is made by the conjunction of that awful name with those implements of wickedness, even in a discourse intended to lash that wickedness!

Play, in its most favourable sense, that is, when trifles only are staked, is of all amusements, the most senseless; and never called to the relief of any, but such as are heartily tired of one another, and of themselves. Whosoever therefore says to his company, let us have cards, says in plain English, let something, any thing, be done, to parry the extreme stupidity of our conversation. What mean they who complain, that life is short, and yet have recourse to a pastime that wastes and cuts off so great a share of it; nay, that, by an almost total inaction, exceedingly impairs the little health, on which life subsists, and, for the time, degrades the rational being, the Lord of this world, into a mere machine for shuffling and flinging paper? They call this, killing time. Shocking expression! Is it possible, they can be so grossly ignorant, as not to know, that he who kills his time, murders himself? At what a stand is the economy of our families, and the infinitely more important economy of our minds; at how dead a stop, the improvement of our intellectual powers; or rather, how rapidly backward does it run, while we are at play! But as this piddling tends strongly to lead us into a habit and taste for gaming, properly so called, it is but the school of wickedness, and the bye path of fools to vice; for,

Gaming, that is, playing for considerable sums, is wickedness, if there is any such thing as wickedness, on earth, or in hell. Avarice, iniquity, and atheism, are the very principles, on which it is built; avarice, because the gamester covets the property of another, and plays on that motive alone; iniquity because he covets the property of another without the least intention to give him value for it; and atheism, because he puts chance, if not villany, in the place of Providence and honest industry; for, as an opinion, that the world was made by chance, is the atheism of the head, so gaming, which is a wish that it were governed by chance, is the atheism of the heart. It may be naturally expected, that a mind, thus principled, should pursue its schemes at the gaming-table by sharpening and the basest arts, and should lie perpetually exposed to the most outrageous passions, to oaths, blasphemies, quarrels, and murders. These things, surely make, gaming a vice on any day of the week.

What then must it be on the Lord's day? Is the practice of a vice, so monstrous in itself, and attended with such shocking effects, a proper method of commemorating the goodness of God in giving us being, and every means of making that being happy? Is he in a way to improve his mind, and so to ensure the favour of God, who, in the eager pursuit of ill-gotten money, purposely keeps God, religion, his soul, eternity, out of sight, at the very time appointed for a close attention to them all, purposely, I repeat it, that his impious amusement may help him to fence against the intrusions of the day upon his ulcerated conscience?

I know nothing so fitted to give us a dreadful idea of the times we live in, as the elaborate apologies we hear every where made for gaming on the Lord's day. One or two I beg leave to take notice of.

'Other nations, as good as we, they tell us, think it neither sin nor shame, to game on Sundays.' As good as we! If they are not a great deal better, their customs have no right to become precedents. Other nations worship false gods, even the devil, and practise, every day, all manner of wickedness. Is this a reason why we may do the same? Is every custom right, and fit for our imitation, that obtains in foreign countries? All our vanity and luxury, imported by an equally foolish, flagitious, and ruinous imitation of

foreigners, are here justified by these apologists for gaming, on the same footing with their own favourite vice; and well indeed they may, if that can be defended, from which alone the exorbitant expense of those fashionable vices can hope to be supplied with speed, proportionable to their impatience. But is fashion to found itself only on borrowed customs? How mean, to be wicked merely at second-hand! Or is fashion, howsoever founded, absolutely to govern those who are forbidden, by the first rule of action, to 'be conformed to this world.' But, too much of this.

Another plea for gaming on Sundays is couched under a pretended regard for the day. 'Sunday, say some, is a time intended for relaxation and rejoicing, which are impracticable, without some amusements; and cards and dice are as innocent amusements, as any that can be had, especially if we entertain ourselves with them in so private a manner, as neither to tempt nor offend the weaker part of mankind by the notoriety of the practice. Besides, gaming, add they, is, in an evening, the only preservative, we know of, against hard drinking.'

The sabbath, it is true, is a day of relaxation for the body, but not of looseness and licentiousness for the mind, which is authorized to rejoice on this day indeed, but not profanely, not wickedly, we may be bold to say. This amusement is both wicked in itself and horribly profane, when practised on the Lord's day. Fine amusement, no doubt, which tends, by a wild waste of time and thought, to an utter dissipation of conscience and fortune! Fine amusement, enjoyed by one part of the company in plunder, no less iniquitous, than that of robbery (behold the innocence!), and suffered by the other in the midst of distraction and torture, too dreadful for the malice of an enemy, who curses in the bitterness of his soul; behold the amusement!

But if gaming on the sabbath is really an innocent amusement, and so well fitted to the festival intention of the day, why is it not as suitable to the place of devotion too? why do you not carry the gaming table into the church, where there is likely to be room enough in a little time? You start, as if I had talked of setting up an altar to the prince of darkness in the house of God. But why is the place of God's worship, which you only have appointed, held so much more

sacred, than the time, which he hath appointed by an express commandment? A veneration for the one is not more superstitious, than for the other; at least you have no colour of right to think it is, and your posterity, refining still farther on your own plan, or rather example, will, with as much reason, game in church, as you now do on Sunday. As to the privacy, wherewith you purpose to cover this practice, it is but a flimsy pretence. You know very well, that nothing done by persons of your eminence, can be concealed. Your servants know and publish every thing you do, your very crimes, as precedents for vulgar imitation. Nay, you yourselves are apt to vaunt on other occasions, what, on this you so poorly excuse. The last part of your apology for gaming on this or any other day, to wit, that it diverts you from hard drinking, must, no doubt, be admitted as solid and satisfactory from men who can be amused, it seems, with nothing but wickedness, and know not how to parry one vice, which they do not like, but with another, which they love.

Should the common people, and the poorer sort, fall generally into this practice of gaming, especially on Sundays, which give them leisure, what opportunity will be left them for inquiry after religion? Will not universal ignorance be the consequence? And will not universal wickedness be the effect of that ignorance; if the great ones (I ask, because two or three such, both in eminence and wickedness, there possibly may be here), if the great ones, I say, set the profane example, will not the little ones follow? It is always their reigning ambition to ape the great as far as they can; and they can more easily ape those above them in this, than in their vices of higher gout. And what care we, you will say, whether they imitate us, or not? Stupid! stupid in perfection! You have not, it seems, considered, what sort of tenants or servants a race of Sunday gamblers will make; nor how little is to be got by lording it over a footman, as genteel, or fleecing a tenant, as necessitous as yourselves, with minds as ill-principled, as desperate, as your own, and ten times bolder.

It is with a shudder, but mixed with a sort of indignant pleasure, that I foresee the chastisement you are preparing for yourselves, by this enormous vice, in the shoals of high-



waymen, footpads, and cut-throats, which it will infallibly produce among your dependants. Considering the prodigious propensity in the lower ranks of mankind to imitate the upper (and all are upper who are richer), it were really much to be wished, that the great, when resolved to be wicked, would be greatly wicked, I mean, would find out some new extraordinary species of sin, wherein the sink of mankind could not so easily participate with them. People of distinction, who cannot otherwise be sufficiently singular, might surely distinguish themselves by their vices, and not leave it to every inferior fellow, to be as bold with heaven for farthings, as they for guineas; to sharp, swear, and profane the Lord's day, as fast as their betters. Pity! that there is but one real distinction among mankind, that is between the good and the bad. Pity! that vice is become a leveller, as well as virtue. Had the meanest of the people been in power, just nine and fifty sessions ago, and trained to gaming, particularly on Sundays, they could, with as good a grace, as the best among us, have bought and sold one another, and played away the nation. To the orator on the ladder, who, with more pathos, than a Tillotson or a Secker, holds forth on the vices of sabbath-breaking and gaming, should this whole group of beings, whether in silk or druggot, whether in coaches or behind them, be remitted both for precept and example.

These tart reflections on those who openly, atheistically profane the day of God by a vice which no words can scourge with sufficient sharpness, are not mainly intended for their reformation, who seldom come hither, and when they do, come only to condemn what they hear; but for your use, who begin to act, though not yet to think, as they do; who have some respect for religion, but more for fashion; who fear God over your prayer-book in the morning, and insult him over your cards in the evening of this day, who run upward or downward, with the tide on which you see the dignified mob afloat. It is as uncomfortable, as it is awkward, to halt between two opinions; but infinitely more so to attempt a journey in two contrary directions at once. 'You cannot serve God and Mammon.' You cannot serve the Master who presides in this place, and him who governs at the card-table, especially in one day, and that appropri-

ated solely to the former. 'If the Lord is God,' is your God, 'serve him.' Give him not one half of a heart, which he made wholly for reason, religion, and himself. 'Follow not after a multitude to do evil,' when you see, how much beyond the present stretch of your consciences, they carry that evil; and consider, how probable it is, that you yourselves, abandoned by the grace of God for nibbling at an offence so provoking, may soon have as wide a swallow for it, as they. The discountenance given to this enormity by his majesty's example and proclamation, hath, for your encouragement, made it now as unfashionable, as it was always wicked. You are not of that class yet, who condemn the fashion, only when God and the king are at the head of it. If you do not resolve and vow against this enormity, now that in the house of God you are called upon so to do, how shall you 'dare' again 'to tread in his courts,' and enter into his presence? Know you not, that he who keeps the fourth commandment, as it ought to be kept, sets himself in the fairest way to keep all the other nine; and that the transgressor of this 'is guilty of the whole law,' inasmuch as he offends against the authority of the Lawgiver who imposed the whole?

Remember, I beseech you, that the providence of God hath not raised you to riches and distinction, but for the gracious purposes of doing honour to him and his religion; of leading his lower and poorer people, by good examples, in the path of piety and virtue; and of relieving their necessities, as often as sickness and disasters put it out of their power to support themselves and their unhappy families. Remember, that you are kept up in affluence by their labour, and the bounty of Almighty God; and that to riot over their heads, and affront him with the fruits of their labour and of his bounty, at the gaming-table, and on his day, is a conduct, that must be severely accounted for before the common Benefactor and Judge of you both. Remember, that your faces never sweat for one morsel of bread; that God in respect to rest, ease, and pleasure, hath given you every day of your lives for a sabbath, and exempted you alone from the original curse of labour, that every day of your lives ought therefore to be gratefully consecrated to him as a day of thanksgiving and good works; and that in-

stead of this, to desecrate your days of business by making folly and sin almost your only business, and to encroach with the vices of your other days, on that which God hath reserved to himself, is directly to insult him with a total disappointment of all his gracious purposes, and an utter perversion of all the goodness he intended you, and the rest of mankind, through you. Is it possible, that piety, which brought you this day to the house of God, should suffer you to continue in practices, so wholly repugnant to your principles, to your good sense, and to all the important ends of the solemnity? No; surely it is not, cannot be possible.

Keeping the sabbath, agreeably to the ends of its institution, is, I think, to a good mind, or one that wishes to be good, attended with such comfort and satisfaction, as no other exercise of its powers in this life can possibly bring along with it.

The acquisition of knowledge is, in itself, exceedingly pleasant to an inquisitive nature. But the knowledge of things, so surprising, so affecting, so exalted; knowledge, so perfective of our nature and happiness, without which we can neither be good nor happy; without which we must be despicable and miserable beings for ever, is an attainment, infinitely exceeding all others, in the benefit, the honour, the joy, it is capable, on this day, if kept holy, of communicating. Hath God appointed a day, whereon he purposes to assemble us, in order himself to teach us, by his own words, how to live for ever, for ever happy? How should we long for that day! How entirely, how strictly sabbatical, without a command, should we ourselves make it, that our whole attention might be riveted to his instructions! Were God, on this his day, and at this his house, to present us with a charter of inestimable privileges, and honorary titles, together with the grant of an immense estate in fee, conveyed to us in the same deed, how should we hasten to receive it! How listen to its contents! How labour to understand and remember, on what terms of suit and service we are to hold it! Behold! this is the day, this is the house, and there is the charter! wherein the glorious privileges of 'the sons of God,' the titles of 'king and priest,' with an empire, wider than the world, and endless as eternity, are contained and

offered! Who then can stay away? or, being present in person, can be absent in thought?

Did we conceive ourselves to be invited at this time not only to knowledge so necessary and delightful, and to a grant so inestimable, but also to exercises, infinitely exceeding all our sensual pleasures, in a flow of joy, pure, transporting, lasting; were we invited to the contemplation of ourselves, and of this our own proper world, as the works of a Being infinitely beneficent to us; were we invited to a close consideration of this Being, labouring, suffering, dying, to save us from miseries, too horrible, and to bring us to joys, too ravishing, too glorious for human imagination to conceive; were we invited, at those times to a near and intimate enjoyment of that Being in accumulated blessings from him, and reiterated acts of gratitude and love from us; were we desired to bring our children and dependants with us into his presence, in order to hear him speaking, and to speak our wants and praises to him; and were his company at our own dwellings engaged to us for the remainder of the day, to be lengthened out in communications, so infinitely honorary, so full of joy; how should we pass that day! Could we give it to a worldly business? Could we yawn it away in sleep and drowsiness? Could we prostitute it to despicable amusements, to silly conversation, to cards, or dice? Whence, then, in the name of wonder! the unnatural, but general disrelish to a party of pleasure with God and the whole court of heaven! Is it because we are commanded to enjoy! that we cannot enjoy, that we even loath!

But, if through the miserable weakness of our nature, not long able to keep up its taste for the most refined and delightful kind of pleasures, our minds should begin to lose their spring, and to flag into devotional dulness; there are a variety of amusements, so equally well suited to the solemnity of the day, and the refreshment of our piety, that I cannot do better, than just to hint a few of them to you.

Warm and affecting conversations on the goodness of God, heightened by others, expressing a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and ending in mutual exhortations to greater love, and better services, for the future, like fruit after a plentiful meal, would add considerably, both to our digestion and pleasure.

Close researches after religious truth, coolly, and candidly managed in dispassionate conferences on the important, but controverted points of religion, afford at once a high degree of entertainment, and a prodigious accession of strength to the rational powers, exercised thereby, as wrestling does to those of a body, nourished with wholesome food. As the prejudices of the proud are riveted by their disputes, which differ but little from scuffles, and end in nothing, but defeats or triumphs; so, on the contrary, the errors of the humble are dispersed, and truth, with a very sensible perception of pleasure, are the issue of those mental embraces, wherewith the candid engage in all their argumentations.

The perusal of books on all sorts of religious subjects, particularly such as have been written by men of true piety and genius, wherewith our language abounds, above all others, and wherein a force of reasoning, a fund of learning, and of sacred wit, together with samples of oratory, not exceeded, scarcely indeed equalled, by the writers of other countries, will amuse as fast, and as plentifully, as they instruct.

From these, the transition will be easy, with men of education, to such as contain intelligible systems of astronomy, and natural history, or point out the method of making experiments. To dive, by the assistance of the microscope, into the minute, but exquisite works of God, to sift the light by the help of a prism, and to expatiate, after the hand of creating wisdom and power, through its immense performances in the starry heavens, is an employment, inconceivably delightful, and surely much better fitted for the day of God, than making experiments with dice, and studying the effects of chance, that god of Atheists.

With thoughts, enlarged, and raised above this world, by such contemplations, and with hearts melting in a lively sense of God's infinite bounty to you, look out for your fellow-creature, who shivers for want of clothing, who languishes on a sick bed, who hears the cries of his starving children, in the midst of a total inability to relieve them, or who pines in a loathsome dungeon, shut in from that sun, that light, that air, those innumerable blessings and beauties of nature, which court you, on all sides to a variety of pleasures; and bring the necessary supply, that a coarse coat,

and a morsel of wholesome bread, may enable him too to make this a festival, that is, to rejoice, and bless God ; and that your charity rebounding to your own breast, may turn the sabbath into a jubilee there.

If, after exercises of this sort, each family should devoutly join in prayer, and where proper voices and instruments are not wanting, should conclude the festival with a hymn to the glory of the great Benefactor ; how can we imagine a day more happily spent ? Can small or trifling amusements fill up the vacuity in minds and hearts, where God and all his works, and all his mercies, and all our gratitude, might have found room ?

Consider (I speak to you who are raised above others in this world), consider the dignity of your own nature, and the grandeur of those pleasures you are rendered capable of, and this day invited to ; and disdain the very thoughts of such, as sink you into littleness and baseness of soul. Consider that crowd of your poor fellow-creatures, who are governed more by your example than by all the laws of God and man. Consider your own souls, which cannot be happy, if you lead theirs through wickedness to misery ; and for the sake of both ; for the sake of God the Father, who gave you being ; of God the Son, who died to save you ; of God the Holy Ghost, who, I trust, is now assisting you with his grace ; consider carefully what hath been said to you on this subject.

Consider it, you also, whose narrow circumstances allow you hardly any other leisure, but on the Lord's day, to learn that religion, without which you cannot possibly be saved from vice, infamy, and misery, in both worlds. Obey not an earthly master in an act of rebellion against the Master and King of all. Follow not an earthly master, whom you see plunging headlong into destruction, both of soul and body, by practices, on the Lord's day, too full of guilt to need the additional provocation of profaneness. Obey God rather, in remembering the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Follow after Christ, who, although Lord of the sabbath, submitted to the commandment, and kept the day holy in acts of piety, devotion, and charity. The sabbath was made for you, that you might know the true religion, and enjoy God. Insist on your privilege ; and may that God give you un-

derstanding in all things, particularly in this, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, to whom in the unity of the ever holy and glorious Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXXI.

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST CAN HAVE BUT ONE MIND.

[A FREE AND OPEN EXPOSTULATION WITH THE DISSENTERS.]

#### 1 CORINTH. 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 in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

THE Apostle takes occasion thus earnestly to press the Corinthians to uniformity both of sentiment and speech, because 'he had been told, there were contentions among them,' the converts of Paul, of Apollos, and of Cephas, having split into so many sects, as they had teachers, and distinguished themselves, in an invidious manner from one another, by the names of those teachers, as if each had professed a separate religion; whereas they had 'but one faith, and one baptism,' which could be no more divided, than Christ, the 'author and finisher of that faith.' He conjures them, 'by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' to lay aside these schismatical distinctions, these foolish divisions, that 'being joined perfectly together in the same mind and judgment, they might all speak the same thing.'

A modern libertine would arraign the purport of this exhortation as unreasonable, and insist, that so many men could not be of one mind, and therefore ought not to speak the same thing.

Nay, some of our present sectaries, although they differ in many plain points with one another, and in this of uniformity, with the church and the Scriptures; yet find the way to agree with the libertines in their principle, that unifor-



imity of sentiment, as to religious matters, is impossible. But common sense and experience vouch for the Scriptures in the point before us, and shew that multitudes of men, not only may, and do, agree about things that are plain, but that they can hardly differ in relation to such. No church nor society of Christians could ever be formed, were it not possible for men to agree in some religious principles; nor could such societies be governed, if their respective members did not think it their duty peaceably to yield obedience to their governors whom they take to be properly authorized, even in cases where the governors, and governed, differ in judgment, provided the latter do not understand the matters, about which they differ in opinion with their rulers, to be essentially or unalterably ruled by Scripture against the mind of those rulers.

As on the one hand, all Christian liberty, all ingenuous inquiry, and all edification and improvement, in religious knowledge, must be given up, if the rulers of the church may arbitrarily prescribe the principles and practices of their subjects, though ever so repugnant to Scripture and reason; so on the other, all order, all communion, all peace, all ecclesiastical society and government, must cease at once, if the opinions of private men are not submitted to the judgments, and their obedience paid to the authority, of church governors duly empowered, in all things not unalterably prescribed by Holy Scripture and reason; because there can be no administration even of the things so prescribed, unless the circumstances and manner of administering them, which the Scriptures usually leave unlimited, be submitted to the governors of the church. The Scriptures, for instance, nowhere prescribe the posture in which the sacrament of the Lord's supper is to be received. In one national church therefore the governors may order it to be taken standing; and in another sitting. But if in a third they shall judge a more devout and humble posture fitter, why shall they not be obeyed? Whose liberty does this abridge? Or how can any man of sense and temper say, the governors of the church 'take too much upon them,' in ordering one posture for the sake of uniformity; and that the humblest posture, for the sake of devotion? To quarrel with authority, when so modestly, so devoutly, so

rationally, exercised, as in instances like this, is, in effect, to disclaim all authority, and to act the part of a child, equally foolish and froward. If ecclesiastical rulers may be disobeyed in things of this nature, and the peace of national churches disturbed on difference of opinion about matters wherein the salvation of mankind is so remotely or so minutely concerned, farewell to religious order and government; farewell to Christian charity. Suppose in this instance, which may serve for all others of the like kind, the governors of the church had gone too far in making this circumstance necessary to communion, although the Scriptures have not made it necessary, who is most to blame? The governors for imposing a posture in itself indifferent, or rather by custom consecrated to acts of devotion? Or the dissenting members, who break communion and oppose the national church under which they live, for a matter of no consequence at all to the conscience of any man? Let reason, let love and charity speak. Is a Christian to lay a greater stress on such trifles, than on the peace of the church, and that uniformity so pressingly recommended in my text, while he owns he is acted, rather by an aversion to the injunction, than to the thing enjoined, as if the prerogative of our spiritual governors, could only serve to desecrate what it endeavours to recommend, and by authorizing, turn those things into sinful which it found indifferent. This is to pervert the very nature of things, inasmuch as it is the property of power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to give a sanction to whatsoever it enjoins, provided no law of God forbids it. If this is a spirit of liberty, and is to be recommended to the nation, as well as the church, sure I am it can no where subsist, at least no where have free operation, but in a state of absolute anarchy; and of course, liberty and society must be incompatible.

If in any church the governors have appointed no usages that are superstitious or wicked, and but a very moderate number even of such, as the time, the place, and other circumstances have recommended as fit and expedient; if they have likewise provided, that every member of the church wherein they are intrusted, may easily have all things, made necessary to his salvation by the word of God, and be tied to nothing forbidden by that word; he can never

excuse his separation from it, because whatsoever else he may dislike cannot be of consequence enough to justify a division; nor can he have in this any more right, than in respect to the laws of the land, to prefer his own private judgment to that of his rulers. Now whosoever coolly and candidly examines the established church of this kingdom by these rules, will find it so conformable to them in all respects, as to leave little or no shadow of an apology for separation.

How comes it then to pass, that so many even of our Protestant brethren have thought fit to dissent from it almost ever since the Reformation? Why do they shun its service and its communion, as if they regarded conformity with it, in the light of a dangerous or damnable sin? I say dangerous or damnable, because they can never justify their separation from it, unless they have reason to think, that conformity deserves either the one or the other epithet.

One half of our dissenters seem to pay little regard to what we say concerning the sinfulness of schism, as well when we argue from Scripture, which they interpret in another sense, as when we reason from the ill effects of the thing, to which they are ready to answer, that although heresies and schisms are attended with some inconveniencies, yet in the main, they do more good than harm. Besides, they sometimes stick not to maintain, that God is better pleased with variety than uniformity, in the religious sentiments of mankind. So say the Deists, but surely if revelation says any thing, it says the very reverse. Nay there is not a man who talks at this rate, who does not either labour, or wish, to have all men think as he does. How are these two things to be reconciled? Is God such a lover of variety, as to be pleased with contradiction and contrariety, like this, in the same man?

But the rest are as ready, as we, to expatiate on the sin of schism, and to give it all its aggravations, whether arising from the malignity of its own nature, or from the shocking effects it produces. And here they enforce what they say, just as we do, by the same passages of Scripture, understood exactly in the same sense. They agree with us, that brotherly love is the essential sign of Christian discipleship; that it is in vain to expect Christian love and charity, without uniformity; that Christian 'charity is greater than faith and

hope;' and that therefore it is the indispensable duty of every Christian, as far as in him lies, to think and speak the same thing with the church of Christ. Nay, they agree, that on all these accounts, and many others, too tedious to mention, the sin of separation, wherever it lies, is a gross, a crying, an unchristian sin. They farther own, that there is a palpable schism between them, and the established church of this kingdom. But then they insist that the sin of that schism lies at the door of that church, which hath imposed, say they, unlawful and unscriptural terms of communion.

Now among all the transactions of the church from the apostolic age down to this, I know of none managed with more temper, more tenderness, more regard to Scripture, or primitive practice, as delivered to us by written, not pretended oral tradition, than the reformation of the church of England. The English divines who engaged in that work, were men of great abilities, of great piety and candour. But not caring to trust altogether to themselves, they called to their assistance Peter Martyr, Martin Bucer, Paul Fagius, and others, the most judicious and moderate of the foreign divines. These good men, who either lived confessors, or died martyrs, for what they did, having a just and prudent regard to the Papists on the one side, and the Protestants on the other, made the Scriptures the rule of their reformation, that they might comprehend the Protestants; and retained a small number of ancient usages, such as they judged most decent and useful, though practised by the church of Rome, that they might leave a door open, for the yet unconverted Papists. Their perseverance and sufferings are, I think, a full proof, that they had not the smallest hankering after Popery. And their culling from the church of Rome, or rather from antiquity, such ceremonies and portions of the liturgy, as neither reason nor Scripture condemned, shew us, that they did not proceed merely on a bigotted and narrow-hearted spleen to that church. Had they retained any thing superstitious or wicked, practised in the church of Rome, they had shut the door against their Protestant brethren. Or had they retained nothing, they had shut it against the Papists, who were at least one half of the nation; and had given occasion to all men of reason to look on them, not as the candid and conscientious re-

formers of a church, already in being, but as the partial and arbitrary institutors of a new church, unauthorized by the practice either of the apostles or fathers. They did not slavishly follow either the Lutherans or Calvinists who had quarrelled about the Eucharist, and other things, but took from both what they thought best. They gave us a liturgy in the vulgar tongue equally devout and rational, that we may know beforehand what we are to offer in our addresses to the Almighty God, and not depend on prayers uttered only in our name, and perhaps mixed with matter unworthy of the object. They gave us a system of articles, together with a book of homilies, to be subscribed by the clergy, that we may not have Papists, Arians, Jews, or Turks, but real Christians, for teachers. And lastly, they left the church to be governed, as it had been in every former age, by bishops, not by nominal bishops, subject to the control of the pope; but by bishops so constituted and empowered, as Timothy, Titus, and all other bishops were, before spiritual usurpation had sunk the dignity and sanctity of their office, and rendered it suspected to some, and odious to others.

A work, conducted on such principles, and with so much prudence, might have expected universal approbation from all the rational and candid; nor was it disappointed. Every one at home, who had any right to that character, closed with it, and rejoiced in it; while the most eminent foreign reformers, of the like temper and turn of mind, paid it their hearty congratulations, and lamented their own misfortune in not being able to bring their honest attempts to so happy a bearing.

However even this could not satisfy all. The greater number of the Romanists still stood out; and many Protestants, too warm to be always governed by reason, dissented, to the reproach of the Reformation, and the infinite disquiet both of this church and nation. Whence then arose the separation of these latter, so well affected to the Reformation, and furnished with an establishment, to which no reasonable objection of any weight could be made? The Protestants, who had fled abroad from the persecution under Queen Mary, returned too strongly prejudiced against Episcopacy and a form of prayer, and too deeply tinctured with Calvinism, to approve of what had been done here, although

the English reformers, had leaned more to Calvin, than to any other foreign divine. But because they did not adopt his discipline, nor admit and reject, just as he had done in every thing, as loud a cry was set up against our church, as against that of Rome itself, by these men of more zeal than judgment, who from thenceforward could see nothing but faults in the English establishment, and laboured with too much success to make others see as they did.

First they were displeased with the ceremonies retained, both because they had conceived an utter aversion to all ceremonies, and more especially because those ceremonies had been used, although in a different manner, and with quite another view in the church of Rome. Besides, they could not bear to see any thing in the public service, although ever so good and proper in itself, that had ever made a part, in that of a church they hated with something more than Christian animosity. They suspected this ingenuous proceeding, of somewhat too like an inclination to relapse into Popery. They more particularly disliked our kneeling at the sacrament of the Lord's supper, because that posture was used by the Papists in adoration of the Host. All that was said in the public acts of the church, and the discourses of our divines, against that use of the posture, as idolatrous, was not sufficient to dissipate their suspicions. In short, the spirit of opposition to every thing used by the church of Rome, ran so high in them, as to affect their respect for the ancient creeds, and for the Eucharist, which because it had been so grossly adulterated and perverted, both in the opinion and practice of the Papists, was therefore held in a sort of contempt, and but seldom celebrated by these mistaken zealots. The Quakers afterward went a little farther, and threw out both that and the sacrament of baptism, calling them rags of Popery, and beggarly elements. This of all things gave the greatest check to the Reformation, for on this account the unconverted Papists held it in the utmost contempt, and looked with infinite abhorrence on men, whom they saw on the point of discarding the very essentials of religion, purely out of hatred to them. Hence it was that numbers of them, who were sufficiently dissatisfied with their own profession, were still less pleased with the Reformation, because they could neither see, in such a wood of parties, which was best

entitled to a preference, nor foresee where the extravagance of reformation was likely to end. They saw our church established indeed on a footing, not altogether disagreeable to them; but they had reason to apprehend, it would not long maintain its ground, in the midst of an opposition, maintained with all possible art and virulence. They thought it therefore better to settle on the lees of their old errors, than after a long and painful fermentation, to find the little religion they had, either soured into fanaticism, or evaporated into downright infidelity. Neither did they care to entail on their posterity an endless train of oppositions, disputes, uncertainties, wherein prejudices, as senseless as those they were to quit, were likely to predominate and involve their adherents in numberless mischiefs, temporal as well as spiritual. 'What,' said they, 'have we to do among men, who had rather tear the body of Christ to pieces, than pray by a form of words, the most pious and rational, because sometimes uttered by a Papist, and who cut the throats of one another about surplices, organs, and rings! Is there no difference between reformation, and destruction? Or have these spiritual physicians no other way to cure, than to kill? Less than this is usually sufficient to make men rest in an adherence, sucked in with their mothers' milk, and rooted in their hearts by a prepossession of many years.

The next thing the Puritans took offence at, was the hierarchy of the church. They looked on the bishops, as the instruments of papal tyranny, and the corrupters of true religion. They were therefore of Machiavel's mind, who said, if that monk, meaning Luther, who is now endeavouring at a reformation in Germany, does not cut the very core out of this boil, namely episcopacy, it will grow again, and render vain all he hath done. They, as if taught by this master, were, it seems, so ignorant, as not to know, that the bishops, of all men, had most reason to oppose the usurpation of the bishop of Rome, who had made himself the only bishop, and reduced all the rest to cyphers. Nor did they consider, whether it was in the power of man, to abolish at his discretion, an order of the church, instituted by God himself, merely because the men who filled this order, had degenerated, together with all the rest of the church, into superstition and luxury. Here again the scheme of our op-



posers was not to reform, but to destroy; and what was equally bold, to begin a new ministry, with hardly any other mission, than such as a number of men, and sometimes one man only, wholly unauthorized, for aught that others could perceive, should assume. From men thus sending themselves, or sent by we know not whom, we are to receive the sacraments. And, what is marvellous beyond all conception, this new species of ordination, though apparently of human institution, is now become too sacred to be interrupted, while that which seems at least to be of Christ, is laid aside. But why, in the name of wonder, may we not as well have a new mission every day? Hath the church, or rather the multitude, lost its faculty, so prolific two hundred years ago in the equivocal generation of missions? We must not forget however, that these new orders lay claim to Scriptural institution, and primitive example. What, all of them? And without succession? Do we hear of any man in Scripture who ordained himself, or who presumed to take the ministry of God's word and sacraments upon him, without being sent either immediately or successively by Christ? Or can an instance of this nature be assigned during the first fourteen centuries of the church? Or will even those Protestants, who adopted a new mission at the Reformation, now suffer any one to administer the sacraments among them, without ordination, obtained in succession from that adoption? Do they not by this strictness, practically confess at least the expediency of such a succession? But if a succession of this nature may be warrantably founded on their invention, why not on Christ's institution?

Perhaps however they who gave rise to a new current of ordination, were immediately authorized so to do, by divine inspiration. This, I believe, will hardly be now insisted on. But if it is, and supernatural inspiration proved, even that will not serve the turn. So sacred a thing is the succession of ordination, that the Holy Ghost, who had already enabled Barnabas and Saul to preach the word, ordered 'them to be separated for the work whereunto he had called them, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands,' that is, to be ordained; the Spirit of God hereby plainly shewing, that he himself would not break the successive order of mission, established in the church. Without in the least regarding

this, or other passages of Scripture, that plainly point out the three orders, the reformers I am speaking of, though strenuously insisting on Scripture, as the only rule of reformation, threw out the episcopal order, and began a new method of authorizing orders, until that time, unheard of in the church. And this they did, first, because they were determined to receive nothing that must come to them, through the church of Rome; and secondly, because episcopacy was too like monarchy, and therefore opposite to the political maxims they had every where adopted. Their attachment to a republican form of government in the state, they carried with them into the church, and wherever they could, established it in both. The unhappy entail of this foreign principle on their religious system was as imprudent, as it was unscriptural, and proved the ruin of their cause in France, Spain, and other monarchies. The kings and bishops, equally jealous of their designs, which they saw, tended to the extirpation of both, opposed them with all their power. But as neither were at the time averse to a reformation, had the reformers wholly abstained from politics, pursuant to the express command of Scripture, and left the three Scriptural orders of the church, as they found them, all Europe might long ago have been reformed. Here indeed in Great Britain, where the civil constitution was mixed, they had a fairer prospect of success. But whether it was that God approved and blessed the wisdom of our reformation, or that he blasted the schemes of men, who had preferred their own prejudices to his institution, they were in part disappointed as to Scotland, and entirely, both as to England and Ireland. However, though the monarchy remains in all the three, they have established the ecclesiastical republic in the first, and continue a separate church in the two last; which we ought in justice to ascribe to the superior industry of their ministers in lecturing, examining, and teaching the people. Herein it must be owned, we too often fall as far short of them, as they do of us, in point of institutional authority. But on the other hand, it ought to be considered, that this is in no sort owing to the ecclesiastical government of either. Ours gives no peculiar encouragement to remissness, nor theirs to diligence. How much is it to be wished, that we could honestly resolve on

a reciprocal participation of these advantages, on which the happiness of the church so evidently depends.

Another, and indeed the chief thing that excited the disgust of our dissenters at the established church, was the use of premeditated prayers and sermons. The reformers of our church laying no claim to inspiration, thought it their duty to provide, as far as in them lay, that good sense should be uttered, both to God and the people. Hence a set form of prayer: hence our printed homilies and written discourses. But the Puritans too frequently mistaking their warmth of heart, for a divine infusion, and therefore regarding all premeditation as an affront to the Holy Spirit, cared not to hear any man, either pray or preach, if they had any reason to believe, he had ever once considered beforehand, what he was to say. As they paid no respect to any original successive mission in the ministry, they expected every minister should prove his extemporaneous mission by the readiness and plenty of his effusions. As they were sometimes but very slender judges of good sense, they took that volubility and ardour, which was owing after all, to the genius of the speaker, and to premeditation and habit, for a sufficient proof of inspiration, without duly examining the justness and propriety of what was uttered. If a sanctified look and tone of voice were added, they gave a demonstrative force to this proof, which, in some instances, no defects as to the matter were allowed to refute. To this, more than every thing else, was owing the inveterate prejudice of the common people to our liturgy and sermons. It is true, that time and experience have almost wholly removed the opinion of inspiration; but unhappily the prejudice still remains, though that which gave it birth is banished. The dissenting ministers now frankly own, they con their prayers, and write their sermons; and provided they leave their paper behind them, the people ask no other inspiration, than a tenacious memory. Necessity also obliges them to have recourse to a form in their prayers, because as the matter of public prayer is always nearly the same, it is impossible for any man, to vary on that matter, every Sunday, for thirty or forty years. Inverting the order of confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, is an expedient that soon runs out. Taking an exordium from the sermon can do no more, than

give a mere initial newness to the prayer. And planning the whole prayer on the subject matter of the sermon, which must often be particular; is confining the prayer to one single point, although it ought at each time to run through all the necessary constituent parts of public worship. How can that man avoid falling into a form, who on all occasions of public prayer, confesses, petitions, intercedes, and gives thanks, in words sufficiently general to comprehend the devotions of a whole congregation? If then a form cannot be avoided; and if we 'ought not to be rash with our mouths, nor let our hearts be hasty to utter any thing before God,' we cannot take too much care in preparing that form, nor have too many, too wise, or too pious assistants, in so great a work. There is no kind of composition more difficult, than that of prayer. It is not therefore every raw, every unfurnished understanding, that is qualified for such a performance, even if he were allowed ever so much time to prepare it. How greatly then must he fail, if he attempts it, without proper assistance, in the midst of that confusion, wherewith modesty is apt to be embarrassed before a multitude of people?

These were the chief obstacles to communion with the established church, whereat my dissenting brethren, your predecessors, formerly stumbled. But is it not now high time you should see through their mistakes? Have our ceremonies led us a single step nearer to the church of Rome? Have our bishops turned popes, or even once attempted to lord it over your faith? Is our Common Prayer converted into a Mass-book? Or are either our devotions or discourses the worse for being well digested and prepared? If you now see these things with other eyes, than you did formerly, as I am convinced you do; or if you look on the causes of dissension as far less significant, than once you did, as I pray God you may; why do you still continue to keep open a breach, made by surmises, now found to be groundless; and to shut your hearts against the established profession of your country, which hath so long gloriously maintained the cause of liberty and reformation against infinite attempts made by the invaders of both? We shall neither think of censuring you, nor of holding you at the smallest distance from our hearts, on account of their aversion to us, if you

will but shew us, you are disposed to think of us, and act by us, with somewhat more of Christian charity and brotherly love, than they did. But you sometimes give us such testimonies of contrary dispositions towards us, that we are often at a loss to know, whether your arms are stretched out to strike, or to embrace us.

From the time that the arbitrary proceedings of the late king James made it necessary to oppose him, to this day, you have faithfully fought the common cause of liberty, civil and religious, as often as either was struck at. The times of mutual danger, or united triumph, helped to warm our hearts to each other. You declare yourselves on all occasions less averse to our ecclesiastical constitution, and go oftener into our churches than formerly. These are pleasing symptoms of good sense and candour, that seem to promise peace and good agreement at no great distance. I hope we shall never give you reason to complain, that we are wanting on our part to such friendly advances, as may tend to promote a thorough coalition. It revives our hopes, and warms our hearts to reflect on these promising parts of your conduct.

But the delightful prospect of peace is no sooner contemplated from this point of view, than we are hurried into another, from whence we can see nothing but the ill-covered embers of former animosities, glowing, in all appearance, with as high a degree of heat as ever. Attribute it not to spleen and resentment, but to brotherly freedom, and a truly pacific intention, when I tell you what I mean, by two or three instances, wherein you shew, if I mistake you not, an earnest desire to revive, and even aggravate the distaste between us. How shall we arrive at peace, if we do not on both sides amend such faults as give offence? You take the liberty frequently to remonstrate on ours. Allow us the same privilege, and hear us as calmly as we do you, that such incidents in your behaviour, as we take unkindly, may be either explained or justified, if possible, to the satisfaction of us your brethren. You cannot otherwise so well know what are those parts of your conduct that make us uneasy, as by a frank declaration from ourselves, who have too much feeling, or frailty, call it which you will, to pass them by wholly unnoticed. I solemnly protest, that, in what I am

going to say, I am prompted by grief rather than resentment, and have no other end in view, than to remove, if possible, all obstructions to a happy union, and to promote, to the utmost of my little power, that openness and candour on which alone a lasting friendship can be built. Bear therefore patiently, with me for a few minutes, for freely as I may speak, God is my witness, I seek your honour and happiness as well as our own.

In the first place, I must observe to you, that while we make no distinctions between you and ourselves in matters of trade, but give our money alike to either, you generally make it a rule to throw all advantages this way, you possibly can, into the hands of Dissenters only; and seldom or never do otherwise, but when you expect a much greater benefit, than you give, in dealing with us. What hath religion and trade to do with each other? If we differ in church, is this a reason you should excommunicate us on the Exchange? Why are the controversies about church-government and forms of prayer to interfere with our business in a coffee-house or a shop? Is this brotherly, or even neighbourly? But I detest this topic, so narrow-hearted on the one side, that it cannot be touched on the other, without an appearance of selfishness; and therefore I quit it.

In the next place, it frequently happens, that when one of you intermarries with a woman of our persuasion, you often labour as zealously in her conversion, as you could do, did you think her in a state of damnation, while she continues in our communion. In like manner, if one of your people chances to conform, you seldom shew him any share of that indulgence wherewith you are treated by us and the laws, and of which, great though it is, you are ever complaining, as if you were under a severe and relentless persecution. Is this consistent with your notions of liberty? Is this doing as you would be done by?

Again, it is usual with many of you to conform occasionally on worldly views, often of no great importance; and yet to dissent again, or promote dissensions with as much zeal as ever. How! my brethren, is communion with us both consistent, and inconsistent, with the word of God, and a sound conscience? How can the causes of dissension appear to the same man, both so considerable as to outweigh,

in his estimation, all the arguments for Christian peace and union; and yet so minute as to be outweighed by every inconsiderable view of worldly interest?

Again, although we have, for a long time, been almost wholly silent on the unhappy controversy between you and us, not because we are in the least afraid of being foiled, as you very well know, but that the difference which lies more in heat of blood, than force of argument, may have time to die away; you are notwithstanding, ever and anon fomenting the spleen of your people with pamphlets, wherein you endeavour to shew (God knows with what truth) that our conduct towards you hath always been, and still is, made up of little else than oppression and persecution. In these performances you usually set out with very fair and plausible professions of candour in matters of religion, and of friendship towards the established church, while nothing else is aimed at in the body of the work, but to rekindle the animosity of a declining party, and to point it directly against that church. Your famous sermon on the 30th of January, Chandler's Case of Subscription, the Candid Disquisitions, Bourn's Catechism, drawn up on purpose to teach your very children the principles of dissension and hatred to our church, the Letters to Mr. White, and many others, are flagrant instances of this. Observe, I mention, the Candid Disquisitions among the rest, because till the yet concealed authors are known to be conformists, as was in vain pretended, you will always have the honour of that performance. Never did any set of men draw up such a book against the principles and practices of a society whereof they were members; much less were they capable, after an unsuccessful attempt, to have it constitutionally considered, of appealing by a work of that nature to the world, which they knew, could not possibly have any other effect, than that of rendering its readers dissatisfied with an establishment, which it could not change, and proving to men of discernment, the deep dissimulation of the writers, who could be conformists in the teeth of such infinite objections. No professions, though ever so often and earnestly repeated, can persuade a man in his senses that this could possibly be the work of persons who were friends either to truth or peace, to say nothing of the establishment. It will be also as hard to persuade us



that God will prosper attempts, especially in matters of religion, so disingenuously conducted? No, before we can rationally hope to unite in any system, we must honestly labour to beat down the prejudices on both sides, not by indelicately attempting to cool each other, but by every one of us, according to his sphere of influence, endeavouring to assuage the spirit of opposition in his own party, and to teach those who will lend him an ear, to look on the points in dispute, as matters of too little consequence to embroil the peace of the church. Till this is done, and hath succeeded, we all know, it is in vain to think of offering schemes of accommodation to synods or convocations; so that men of sense who publish books, avowedly with the view of exposing the errors of the establishment, in order to their amendment, while the minds of men are not sufficiently disposed to a coalition, must excuse us, if we fear, they are aiming at the quite contrary ends.

If you here object, that it would be altogether unreasonable to complain of the Dissenters at large for the performances of particular men, who, in the present liberty allowed every man of publishing what he pleases, may say such things to the public as the body or party to which he belongs do not approve of, and therefore ought not to answer for; we shall readily grant it. But you will give us leave at the same time to observe, that the body of your people (a small number only of a more peaceable and ingenuous turn excepted) do make the writings, complained of, their own, by printing, reprinting, reading, approving, applauding them, on all occasions; while the leading men among you are known to be the authors of these incendiary writings, and the body of the dissenting clergy are very far from publicly disapproving or censuring them, your people every where greedily imbibe their contents, and therewith imbitter their hearts against us and our persuasion. You see this; you use no endeavours to amend it; too many of you rejoice in it. Is it thus, my friends, that you prepare for uniformity and coalition? Is it thus you 'seek peace and ensue it?' Were we but half as much inflamed on the other side, could the most sanguine promoter of peace, think you, entertain even a distant hope of agreement in any new model that could possibly be proposed?

But farther, that which still more strongly shews the too great alienation of heart wherewith you generally regard us, is the unaccountable use you make of arguments drawn from Popish, and invectives from Deistical writers, to run down our church and clergy. How often have you been prompted by Rome herself, to ridicule our church for having a king and sometimes a queen for its head, though you know this headship is only in temporals; though you know our kings and queens have been, as God promised they should be, 'the nursing fathers, and nursing mothers' of Christ's church, both here and on the continent? Did you ever, or would you now, refuse the assistance of temporal power, were it offered, to strengthen and establish your church? And have our princes done any thing else by us? Have they ever prescribed what we should believe, or impeded the exercise of purely spiritual powers among us? Why then is his majesty's ecclesiastical supremacy in temporals, which was introduced only to protect us against a Papal supremacy, both in temporals and spirituals, so frequently struck at by Protestants, in the very words of our Popish adversaries? Is this brotherly? Or is it either brotherly or Christian to gather all the filth of Shaftsbury, of Tindal, and of Collins, Trenchard, Gordon in the *Independant Whig*, and to fling it in the faces of our clergy? Were not these men professed Deists, and enemies to Christianity? How come they then to be your friends and prompters? It is surely worse than calling in the Turk, to ask assistance from allies like these. Had they any other view in their invectives than to wound our religion through the sides of its preachers? And would they not have served your ministry in the same manner, had it been rendered an object of their envy, by legal establishment, by honorary and lucrative provisions? Were you to be high church tomorrow (and surely you are not so unambitious as to decline it) all the raileries of these books would be just as applicable to you as they are now to us. The libertine writers, with whom too many of you now associate to serve a turn, would then be your adversaries, and it is to be questioned whether you would as patiently bear the gross treatment you encourage them to give us, if once offered to yourselves, as we do. Yes, I say encourage, for is there any kind of

writings, in our language, which you so greedily buy, which you read with so much pleasure, which you retail with so much keenness on all occasions? And have not many of you, while they only aimed at gleaning the satirical reproaches, at the same time unhappily sucked in the poisonous principles of these admired writers? Are the distinctions of Protestant and Papist, and even of Christian and Deist, to be lost in that of churchman and dissenter, as of more consequence to truth, to piety, and to virtue?

No, my brethren, even if we are to quarrel, let us quarrel like brothers, ever ready to postpone our private animosities to the general interest and honour of that cause in which we are both equally embarked. Let us not discharge against each other those arrows doubly dipped in poison, which a mistaken zeal would prompt us to draw from the quiver of a common enemy. But why should we quarrel at all? In the name of Christ, 'the prince of peace,' what is it we are contending about? Is it about things necessary to our eternal salvation? No, it is (how am I pained to speak it! how are our Popish and Deistical enemies pleased to hear it), it is about—but I will be silent, lest our children despise us for contending about matters, which we on both sides confess to be indifferent. O shameful! O senseless contention! But who is to blame for it? Tell me, my dissenting brethren, whether of the two is more difficult, for you to comply with the present establishment, or for us so to new model the church as to please all parties? Or if the latter, though the more difficult, is the better expedient of the two, tell us, as men who speak before the searcher of hearts, are your minds disposed to meet us half way? Are you ready to give up every thing but the fundamentals of religion, for peace and charity, which is itself a great fundamental? Are you so well agreed among yourselves, as to know what you would be at, and to have but one catalogue of demands?

As for us, if our candour and moderation hitherto are not a sufficient defence for us before the impartial world, nor encouragement enough to you to hope for every reasonable compliance, on our part, we can do no more, either to justify ourselves or satisfy you. But this I will be bold to say, that for one step you make towards peace, you will always find us ready to make two, provided no sacrifice is

to be made to that peace, either of Scriptural truths or of what Christ and his apostles have established. In all things else you may be gratified, as soon as ever you are agreed among yourselves, and have given such proofs as reason and Christianity require, of the good temper and candour of your own hearts.

But till this can be done, or rather to promote this as much as in you lies, let brotherly love and tenderness towards us, take place of jealousy and distaste in your hearts. Let indifferent things be thought of with due indifferency. 'Let the peace of God which passeth all understanding,' both of divines and statesmen, teach you the infinite sweets and beauty of peace among men. In imitation of the meek and merciful Jesus, 'who loved us, and gave himself for us,' let us love and give ourselves for one another. And 'if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye' both your own joy and ours, 'that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Do all things without murmurings and disputings.'

But that we may all of us be the better disposed to follow this excellent advice of the apostle, let us reflect a little on the circumstances we are in. Our religion itself is struck at by the Deists, and the fundamentals of it by the Arians and Socinians. Our liberties, both religious and civil, are attacked by the pope, and a popish pretender. These adversaries are none of them destitute of zeal, art, or power to hurt us. Is this a time my brethren to fall out with one another, about things indifferent? Be assured there is a tincture of irreligion in our contentions, or we could not so impiously put truth and charity to the hazard, for prejudices so very childish as ours; and if temporal things may be mentioned with spiritual, we shall prove ourselves as bad sons to our country as to the church, unless we quickly unite, if not in religious sentiments, at least in religious affections towards one another. We ought seriously to consider what infinite mischiefs often arise from

trifling causes, magnified by groundless prejudices, and an untoward temper of mind. The last independent duke of Burgundy owed the ruin of himself and his family, and France her grandeur, to a quarrel between that prince and the Swiss, which began about a load of sheep-skins. Not more important to the eye of a manly and unprejudiced understanding do those things appear, I mean those religious differences, for which we fell out in the reign of Charles the first. Had France then been in a condition to take advantage of our distractions, this kingdom might long since have been a province of that. And is it not possible our dissensions may again embroil us, at a time when that ambitious monarchy shall be more at leisure to strike in? We want nothing but good agreement to make us a match for her or the most powerful of our other neighbours, and to render us the most happy people in the world. But our divisions which once tore us all to pieces, and sheathed our swords in one another's bowels, may possibly do the same again; at least we have reason to fear, and our enemies to hope, they may. Hence distrust and dread, hence weakness and cowardice on our side; and hence a continual invitation to bold encroachments on theirs. We have no one power on the continent to attack us, either in church or state, who hath not a party among us, from whom he may hope for assistance. Besides, there is this unhappy peculiarity in every one of our parties, that it is double, and forms both a sect, in regard to religion, and a faction, in regard to the state. This multiplies the handles by which our enemies may lay hold of us, and consequently our fears. Is he a Christian, is he a patriot, is he a wise or an honest man, who will not do his utmost to bring us out of a situation so every way dangerous and shocking? No, were he a Christian, he would feel more warmth for the general interest of his religion than for the detached advantage of his persuasion, should they at any time happen to come in competition. Were he a patriot, he would consult the happiness of his country, not the advancement of a faction. Were he a wise or an honest man, he would labour to the uttermost of his power to unite and strengthen that community which hath protected, and still protects him, in the enjoyment of every thing he holds either sacred or dear to him. Were he all.

or any of these, unanimity, in the balance either of his understanding or heart, would outweigh ten thousand non-essentials.

To draw towards an end, give me leave, my dissenting brethren, to observe to you, that as to the subject of conformity, you are reducible to two classes; the first, of those who think the differences between you and the established church sufficiently material to justify a separation; the other, of such as lay no great stress on those differences, either through ignorance of their merits, or because they esteem them matters of no great consequence, and therefore do not continue to dissent so much on account of those differences, as merely because they are unwilling or ashamed to quit the way of worship they were brought up in. Indulge me with a short application to each.

And first, let me humbly and earnestly beseech you, who look on the difference between us as material, fairly and calmly to weigh those differences against the sin of schism, and the infinite mischiefs, both spiritual and temporal, that do or may arise from it. When this is done, consider with the like candour, whether we differ about any thing of real moment (I speak to you only who agree with us in fundamentals), excepting the single point of church government; whether Christ himself did not govern the church episcopally; whether he gave us any reason to think he intended this method of government should be altered on his leaving the world; whether he did not rather entail it on the church by 'sending his apostles, as his Father had sent him;' whether they did not actually pursue the same plan; whether Timothy and Titus were not constituted real bishops, with authority over presbyters and deacons by St. Paul; whether it does not clearly appear from the first epistle of this apostle to Timothy, that he, Timothy, was to see that proper persons were appointed both for presbyters and deacons, and to govern the presbyters, though there called bishops; whether this does not demonstrate three orders in the church, first of Timothy, secondly of the presbyters, and thirdly of the deacons; whether that holy martyr St. Ignatius, who was the immediate disciple of St. John, and whose writings were a long time read in many churches, as next in authority to Scrip-

ture, does not, in his epistle to the Magnesians, and elsewhere, plainly distinguish the same three orders, assign the subordination of the two last to the first, and technically fix their titular appellations; whether what he so delineates in this behalf, is not evidently traced in the practice of all churches down to the Reformation; whether at that period many reformers ignorantly blaming episcopacy for that which Popery the oppressor of episcopacy, had done, did not proceed rather by pique and prejudice than by reason or authority, Scriptural or traditional, in rejecting the episcopal order; whether reformers, already as much heated against former abuses and usurpations, as the Papists were bigotted to them, may not be as reasonably suspected of prejudice in throwing out, as we in retaining this order; whether the merits, as to this, can ever be decided by our preconceptions of either side; or by invidiously ripping up old sores, or by bitter invectives against particular bishops, or in short by any other method than that of a cool dispassionate appeal to Scriptural authority, explained by the practice of antiquity. After having maturely weighed these things, we beg of you then seriously to consider in the last place, whether any set of Christians can warrantably lay aside the succession of orders, so plainly founded by Christ himself, and so long religiously kept up by all his churches; and begin a new succession, without even the colour of necessity.

As to you, who regard this and the other differences between yourselves and us, as nothing, surely you must look on peace and unity on one side, and schism on the other, as less than nothing, if you continue to dissent. Nay, if you have a sufficient reason (and certainly the far greater number of you have) to think yourselves incompetent judges of the merits, your safest way must be to join with the establishment, because by that means you avoid the sin of schism at least, which must be a great and real sin in you, while you dissent, let the merits lie on which side they will, since you are conscions of your own inability to see where they lie.

I could say a great deal more on this affecting subject; but having perhaps already trespassed too far on your patience, I shall here conclude, with earnestly beseeching the



God of peace and love, to lead us, in the unity of the Spirit, to a right understanding, and a meek and brotherly disposition in all things, to the glory of our holy religion, and its blessed author, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE LXXII.

### THE CASE OF PROTESTANT REFUGEES FROM FRANCE, CONSIDERED.

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#### ADVERTISEMENT.

Some years ago, when the French Protestants fled from persecution in their own country, to liberty and protection in Great Britain and Ireland, and fled in such numbers, and most of them so indigent, that immediate subsistence became doubtful; the author drew up this discourse with an intention to preach it circularly at the assizes throughout the province of Ulster. This intention he submitted to a society, then formed in Dublin, on the same principle of charity. Some, however, of that society having objected, that the bishops would not consent to a proceeding so uncommon, the design was overruled, and the Discourse therefore never preached. The author nevertheless believes, his readers will judge the matter and tendency of the Discourse not wholly useless, as long as refuge shall still be sought here by our Protestant brethren on the like occasion.

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#### HEB. XIII. 2.

*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.*

BEFORE I enter on the subject of this Discourse, wherein I propose to recommend our Protestant brethren, who fly hither from France to avoid the cruelties of a Popish persecution, to your farther benevolence and assistance; give me leave to observe, that, singular as I may seem to some in what I am doing, no sensible or religious hearer, I believe, will think my attempt itself needs an apology, unless it is from this consideration, that piety and goodness in distress can want no advocate with the pious and the good. Although it is certain, this undertaking speaks sufficiently for itself, it may nevertheless appear somewhat uncouth in one so inconsiderable and so little known.

But when, in justification of myself, I shall have told you, that I was born and bred in the vicinity of that French colony, which gave us the linen trade; that for some years past, I have had a better opportunity of knowing the people I speak for, than any man perhaps who hears me hath had; and that I have not only known them to be a people of great probity and worth, but have been more indebted to the friendships wherewith some of them have honoured me, than I am able to express; when these things, I say, are told you, your own sentiments of gratitude will justify and approve of mine; and you will be well pleased, pursuant to the generous intentions that drew you hither on this occasion, to hear me on a subject every way affecting, with that indulgence which your humanity is prepared to dictate, and my defects may require.

You are here assembled, it is to be presumed, rather previously resolved to obey the amiable precept in my text, than to hear reasons for so doing. Yet such is ever the property of a good heart, that, well as it is disposed in itself, it wishes for new inducements to still greater degrees of beneficence, than its present ardors prescribe; and therefore readily turns its compassionate attention to the object where these may be found; nay, searches for them in that object with as much care as the hard heart (I speak boldly) does, for selfish pretences to arm itself with against the claim of him who gave us all, and the moving cries of human nature in distress.

If then your charity only looks for an object to kindle at, and an opportunity to dilate itself, behold them both presented full in view, with every circumstance that usually works the strongest on a soul like yours! They are human creatures, tied to you by one common, one tender band of nature, so that you cannot but be hungry, till they are supplied with food; you must be filled with apprehensions, till their fears of perishing for want of sustenance are removed. They are your fellow-Christians, united to you in the same body of Christ: your heart feels for them, as they are men; and your conscience, as they are Christians: you feel their distress through Christ your Saviour, who suffers in their afflictions. How movingly do they work, at once, on your pity, your love, your piety! Is it possible to raise

this affection higher? Yes, when I put you in mind that they are Protestants, you cannot but feel, as the object is brought nearer to you, and is considered as the next adjoining member of Christ, a more interesting warmth for it. This proceeds, not so much from your preferring the name of a Protestant to that of a Christian, as from a full conviction, that these men have proved themselves to be true Christians, by their inviolable adherence to the Reformation, in spite of every calamity, every terror.

From the horrible effects of a cruel persecution (which, God be praised, you can only imagine), from confiscations, from dungeons, from racks, from fire, these your brethren fly for refuge to your arms; and it is justly a matter of doubt, whether the all-seeing eyes of God behold any thing in this world more pleasing to him than those arms, extended to embrace them, to feed, to clothe, to protect them, at once, from the fury of their unnatural countrymen, from the inclemency of this untoward climate, and from all the miseries of poverty and banishment together. In this lovely attitude you share the merits, without the pain, of their fidelity to Christ; insomuch that it is not easy to say, whether we should more esteem their suffering, or your protecting virtues! How honourable are the former! how beautiful the latter! Go on, dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, and let these your brethren see, that charity, divine charity, is stronger in you, than diabolical malice in their bigotted persecutors. Let it not be said, that a false religion in any set of men can faster oppress, than the true one in you, can relieve.

Did these refugees run from a bad country, to a better; or from poverty at home, to riches abroad; we might have some reason to suspect, either the principles for which they are harrassed, or the sincerity of their attachment to them.

But when we not only know their principles to be the same with our own, but that of all men, they are the most national, probably because born and bred up in one of the finest countries on the globe; and that they are forced to leave all, or a great part of what they possessed, behind them; to what can we ascribe their removal hither, and into other parts of the world, where they are to struggle with a still harsher air, and a less relenting soil, excepting to an

honest zeal for the truth, and a conscience that cannot bend to the world? A people, less fond of their native country, could not have made so great a sacrifice to their religion. In this light, they have a right to be considered as confessors, and to be both trusted and treated, by us at least, as such. It is for Christ they suffer; and if we are Christians, we must love, we must pity, we must relieve them. You will be as well pleased, I believe, as I was, with the behaviour of a French gentlewoman, brought from Bourdeaux to Portsmouth, by a sea captain of my acquaintance, her spirit and turn of mind will so aptly serve to characterise those of her countrymen, that, to save a greater expense of words for that purpose, I shall take the liberty to set her before you, as the representative of the rest.

This excellent woman, having found means to turn her fortune, which was considerable, into jewels, was in the night time conveyed on board the ship of my friend, with all she was worth in a little casket. Never was the mind of a human creature so racked with fears and anxieties, till the ship was under sail. But she no sooner saw herself fairly disengaged from the country which she loved best, and where she had left all her relations, than her spirits began to rise, and discover that kind of joy, which others, after a long absence, testify on their approach to the place of their nativity and education. This pleasing sensation gave signs of gradual increase, as she drew nearer and nearer to the situation she had chosen for her banishment. The moment she was landed, she threw herself on her face among the mud; and while, without the least regard either to the foulness of the spot, or the remarks of those who saw her, she kissed the dirty ground, and grappled it with her fingers, blessed land of liberty! she cried, have I at last attained my wishes? Yes, gracious God (raising herself to her knees, and spreading her hands to heaven) I thank thee for this deliverance from a tyranny exercised on my conscience, and for placing me where thou alone art to reign over it by thy word, till I shall lay down my head in this beloved earth.

How lovely a sight was this, especially to the eyes of an Englishman! Now, although every French refugee does not give signs of equal transport on landing among us, and for a melancholy reason, because he comes stripped perhaps of

all his worldly possessions, and uncertain where he shall look for the necessaries of life ; yet does he not come with the same sentiments of religion ? And as it is to be presumed, since he is destitute of all support, and appears by his person, understanding, and behaviour, to have formerly lived in some condition, that he hath made a greater sacrifice to conscience, than the lady mentioned was obliged to do, ought we not to look upon him with at least equal esteem and affection ? ‘ Ought not our abundance, now at this time, to be a supply for his want, that by the experiment of this ministration he may glorify God for our professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for our liberal distribution unto him, and unto all men,’ circumstanced as he is ?

It is objected, I know, by some, that these men, having been bred presbyterians, ought not to be too much encouraged, because they increase the number of our dissenters, in proportion as they settle among us ; and consequently, in the same proportion endanger the establishment, by that accession of strength, which they give to those who do not love it.

Too many, it is to be feared, of these objectors, have little Christianity themselves, or they could not think of thus shutting their hearts against such men as have proved themselves true Christians. It is, and I hope ever will be, the glory of our church, that, although no other, since the purity of the first ages, hath afforded less pretence to dissenters, she hath, notwithstanding, always allowed more freedom and indulgence to those who differed from her, than other churches have done. Her only aim hath ever been to make real Christians, both in faith and practice, of all her members. Such she gladly receives to communion ; and when, through their infirmities and prejudices, she cannot receive, she shelters and protects them. So just, and so truly Christian hath her conduct always been, and I trust, will ever be, towards the French refugees ; who, in their turn, have in all respects shewn themselves worthy of her indulgence. In the present scarcity of true believers, she is still farther than ever, from preferring herself to the church of Christ at large, or hardening her heart against his tried, his faithful servants, merely on account of their scruples, howsoever trifling or groundless they may appear to be. He

is therefore no true son of this church, whatsoever he may pretend, or even in good earnest think, who is for shutting the doors of charity against the oppressed, against such as have given up their country, and all that was dear to them in this world, to preserve their consciences. Nor can he be a member of Christ's church, who is not ready, as Christ was, to help every human creature in distress, whether agreeing, or differing with him in principles. What right can he have to talk of churches, who wants the characteristic charity of a Christian, and consequently is of no church?

But to the honour of the refugees, and for the satisfaction of such, as, through an honest love to our church, regard them with some coldness, because they do not immediately conform; it ought to be observed, that they dissent not out of stubbornness or perversity, but merely in consequence of the education they had received; that indeed they cannot immediately conform, inasmuch as they come hither wholly unacquainted with our language; and that, after they have attained to some knowledge of that language, they seldom or never communicate with our native dissenters; but either keep up their own congregations, that they may afford their new countrymen an opportunity of serving God in the only language they understand; or come over to the established church by hundreds every year, and by their unfeigned piety and virtue, rank themselves with the very best members she can boast of. But even during their state of separation from our communion, are they not religious and honest men? And if they are, shall we not be vile dissenters ourselves, from real religion and honesty, in case we hold them at a distance from our hearts?

We must have but a mean opinion of Christianity, if from an attachment, so ardent as theirs, to its fundamental principles, we do not expect the exemplification of every virtue. Accordingly, the lives of these men have neither done any dishonour to their principles, nor disappointed our expectations. Hence it is, that I can boldly appeal to the experience of every one who knows them, whether, in point of private, and civil or social virtue, they have not, all along, so behaved themselves, as to deserve our love, our esteem and confidence. As to their private virtues, are they not

sober, modest, industrious, and honest? Let us candidly recollect, how few instances, ever since the late revolution, of vile or profligate persons have been found among them, throughout the nation. They do not profane God's name or his sabbath; they do not drink, debauch, or game; they do not quarrel or break the peace, like other men. They never meddle with other people's affairs, but when they are called; and then they shew themselves to be men of integrity and humanity. They do not overbear, nor affect parade, like their Popish countrymen; but confine themselves to their own business, which, in the midst of a truly Christian simplicity of manners, they pursue with admirable address and skill, to the great advantage, not only of themselves, but of the nation in general. The management of their gardens, houses and tables, afford us an useful example of neatness and good economy; and teaches us to live better than we otherwise could have done, and at less expense. Their natural complaisance may help to polish our too great plainness; and that perpetual vivacity, for which they are remarkable, may serve to temper the gloomy and melancholy turn of mind we complain so much of in ourselves. It is perhaps for these, as well as other less obvious reasons, that he who governs the world, and often, with a wise and gracious intention, mixes the nations of the earth together, hath sent them into these countries, wherein, it is manifest to every common observer, they have already done, at least, as much good as they have received.

This, I say, is manifest to any one who reflects on their civil or social virtues, and considers them as members of the community. They are, all of them, fast friends to the constitution, and remarkably amenable to the laws. We have never had reason to be sorry for the confidence reposed in such of them as have been advanced to places of trust. They have shewn themselves brave and faithful in the army; just and impartial in the magistracy. For the truth of the former assertion, the noble carriage of Sir John Ligonier, is a sufficient voucher; and for that of the latter, the mayoralty of Alderman Porter. Did any of them ever sell or betray us, as some among ourselves have done? It is much to their honour, that, out of so many of them employed in the lower stations of the church, the army, &c. scarcely any have been



wanting to their duty; and that of so few advanced to posts of high dignity and trust, the majority have carried off the general applause of a people naturally averse to the French.

And here it is worth observing, that the coldness shewn to them by too many among us, is chiefly owing to the national quarrel, and a most groundless suspicion, that these refugees still love the country they have left, better than this which they live in. It is true, they love the country that gave them birth, education, and all their former attachments. This however is but natural. Yet ought we not to regard them the more on this account? Is he likely to love that place he never saw, till he was advanced in years, and began perhaps to disrelish the whole world, through the hope of a more abiding country, who in all the warmth of a youthful heart, could contract no affection for that of his nativity? They love France; but they love these nations better, because here they can enjoy that liberty and that religion, which they gave up France for. For the truth of this, I will appeal to a trial that cannot deceive us, I mean, their behaviour in all our wars with the French. Brave as the English have always shewn themselves to be, are the French Protestants a single inch behind them in any battle with the French Papists? Do they not bear up to those oppressors of civil and religious liberty with an animosity truly English? In cases of another nature, 'we ought not to judge by the appearance, but ought to judge righteous judgment.' In this we may safely trust to the appearance, because the very appearance is a fact, too well known, and too demonstrative of the principle we wish for in these men, to be questioned by suspicion itself. Let them therefore love France in their hearts; we see, they love these nations in their consciences; and the whole world knows, their consciences have the entire ascendant over their hearts.

Whether they love us, and are entitled to a mutual return of affection, may be best decided by their actions. Whom do they injure? Whom do they not oblige and serve to the uttermost of their power? I could illustrate what I here insinuate, with a thousand endearing instances. But I am hurried from the agreeable recollection by the sight of every person and thing about me; which, as it were, with one voice remind me of a benefit derived to us from God, through

these our best earthly friends, too great, and (pardon a selfishness that flows from gratitude) too interesting, to content itself with a share only of my attention. Whence came those genteel and ornamental dresses, in which you, the wealthy; and those decent and comfortable habits, wherein you the lower ranks of men, appear on this occasion? Who covered your tables with that plenty, whereunto you are going to sit down? Who doubled the value of all your lands, and trebled that of their produce? What is it that gives employment and bread to the poor, formerly abandoned to idleness, to want, and rags? What builds the stately houses, lays out the spacious gardens, and maintains the splendid equipages, of the rich? Is it not the linen trade, which yearly brings into this nation near a million in well-paid money? And who gave you that trade? Was it not God, who gave you a peace of sixty-four years, and the French refugees? They, they are the men who planted this trade among us, which, in the space of half a century, hath turned our wilderness into a garden, and spread industry where sloth, plenty where poverty, and general culture of minds, as well as other things, where stupidity and barbarism, tyrannised before. Ever sacred to the memory of those princes, and of our wise and worthy fathers, to whose judicious charities, laid out as it were with a prophetic forecast, on these religious strangers, we owe it, that we are not at this day, in such a state—as I tremble even to suppose, and am ashamed to describe. That condition therefore, compared with this, which we now enjoy, I leave to the candid reflections of every sensible hearer.

Was it God then, and his faithful servants, the French Protestants, that poured the present blessings on us? The happy fact is too notorious to need a proof. And now I will speak to the innermost heart of every one who hears me; it is God, our bounteous and gracious God, who sends a new crowd of these very men, from under the heel of a double tyranny, stripped, destitute, and helpless, to the doors of those houses which their countrymen have helped to rear, for relief. Methinks I hear him saying, these are my creatures; feed them. These are your fellow-Christians, and fellow-Protestants; embrace them with all that love which you profess for truth, for liberty, and for my only-be-

gotten Son. For these men, through whose hands I have sent you so much, I now redemand a part; and charge you by all the ties of humanity, of religion, and of gratitude, both to me, and them, to supply their necessities; and so to supply them, that your kindness to them, may imitate mine to you, and that I may find no occasion to repent of my bounty, as thrown away on a people, so void of charity and piety, that even a confessor in want of bread, cannot find the way to their hearts. Behold! it is more than a mere imagination, that God thus addresses himself to us, and even represents himself as pining for want in these his suffering servants. 'I am an hungered; give me meat. I am thirsty; give me drink. I am naked; clothe me. I am a stranger; take me in. I am an not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, which you have shewed towards my name, in that ye have ministered unto the saints, and do minister. He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto me; and that which he hath given, will I pay him again.'

No other call to charity can be so strong as this, which taught the primitive church not to wait for personal solicitations, but to send their alms into distant countries. In those days, 'if one member of Christ's body suffered, all the members suffered with it.' So exquisite was the sensation of this blessed body in its youth, that a Christian could feel infinitely farther than he could see, insomuch, that while he was in Macedonia or Achaia he was in pain, till he had relieved the distresses of another in Judea. O lovely and glorious spirit! Is it possible, that we, on whom the light of the same gospel hath shone, can be insensible to the miseries of our fellow-Christians, when the fury of persecution hath driven them from their own country, and laid them naked and helpless at our very feet? If there is any man, whom the nearness of so great calamity is not able to melt, we may conclude, he hath not that heart of flesh, which was promised to the Christian; no, but a heart of stone, a heart, cut out, and shaped for him, by the enemy of all good, from the nether millstone. It is that cold, that unfeeling heart, which perpetually furnishes him with excuses, as often as his concurrence in any charitable design is applied for. Charity, he says, begins at home, and insists, like one who seriously intended to give something to some-

body, that we ought first to relieve our own poor, before we think of helping strangers. But in the mean time, this narrow-hearted wretch helps nobody, and only urges his churlish proverb, to parry the present application, for with him charity really neither begins, nor ends at home. So far is it from doing either, that you see no one near him, whose face does not look pale and bloodless, for want of bread. But you cannot blame him, since he hath no charity for himself, which is all he truly means by, home, but half starves his own miserable carcase.

God be praised, if our hearts are as good as our circumstances, we shall find the way to relieve these strangers, without neglecting the wants of our own countrymen. But which of them ought to be first supplied, let common civility, which bids us help the stranger, before ourselves, determine. If, however, civility is not to have its vote on this occasion, necessity surely must be heard. What can the poor unknown, who is destitute, disconsolate, and filled with melancholy apprehensions, do in a country, where he knows not which way to turn him, nor even how to tell his distress, as much through a want of beggarly impudence, as English? Must he not presently perish, if there is no one to take him by the hand, as soon as he comes on shore? But to waive both the foregoing arguments for this preference, we will bring the doubt, if there can be any, to be decided by the widely different merits of the parties in distress. Our poor are, generally speaking, reduced to want by nothing, but their own laziness, extravagance, and dishonesty. Whereas they whom I am pleading for, are reduced solely by their adherence to that holy religion, which we ourselves profess, and wish we could, with the help of every encouragement, as steadily reduce to practice, as they do, under a load of oppression and persecution. What we give to our own poor, is thrown into a vessel without bottom, and turns to no other account, at least in this world, than to protract a life, for which the community cannot reasonably hope to be the better. But if, after supplying the necessities of the refugees, we give them never so small a beginning to trade on, these poor men will soon make us rich, and convince us, that our money was not bestowed, but lent at a prodigious interest, on no less security than that of God himself, who hath blessed,

and no doubt will continue to bless, those men, and all that assist them.

It is not only from a motive of Christian compassion, but on account also of the great advantages which a people, so skilful and industrious, bring with them, wherever they settle, that all the Protestant nations in Europe are just now contending for them, and outbidding one another in the encouragements they offer them. I need not say, that we who have gained so much by them, have more reason, than any other nation, to invite and cherish them. This we all know so well, that we cannot help looking on whatsoever they receive at our hands, rather as the payment of a debt, or a fund wisely appropriated to the public profit, than as a bounty. It is not indeed easy to determine, whether they, or we, have been the benefactors. We relieved their poverty, and they have given us wealth. The sums they had from us, were not carried out of the country, but so employed among us, as to yield us more than the remainder did, which we kept to ourselves.

Besides, have they not greatly increased the number of our inhabitants? Have they not brought us a treasure of men? And is there any species of wealth equal to that of people? Of people, industrious in time of peace, and brave in war? No wise nation ever thought any purchase too great for such an accession of strength. But what was the amount, think you, of all we expended on them? I will not pretend to say exactly what it was. This however is most certain, that it bears no proportion to the sums they brought with them. They know little of the matter, who imagine, all the refugees came empty-handed. This is so far from being the case, that I will be bold to say, we have not yet paid their poor the interest of that wealth, which the richer sort among them originally added to the national stock.

But away with these self-interested and worldly considerations, excusable from the pulpit only on a principle of gratitude, in regard to what is past; but unworthy the attention of such an audience, when urged with views of future gain. We have, it is hoped, too much humanity, too much piety, and too much greatness of soul, to suffer so many worthy men to perish, had they brought us, or were they to bring us, nothing but their principles and their

poverty. Let no man despise them for the one who knows, it was voluntarily embraced by them, for the sake of the other. Whosoever does, we may take it for granted, would not sacrifice a shilling for God, and every thing that is sacred. O glorious poverty! which merits more honour in receiving, than the most generous benefactors can possibly acquire by giving.

I should but wrong your goodness, did I press this matter any farther. It was a high opinion of your charity, that imboldened me thus to remind it of such objects as it seeks for and wishes to relieve. An undistinguished charity is but an amiable weakness, which by lavishing, without regard to merit or necessity, reduces itself to an incapacity of helping the good man in real distress. The poor strangers, who at present offer themselves to your consideration, do not desire to touch your hearts, but through your understandings, so that you can never have reason, as in many other cases, to regret the utmost compassion you shall be pleased to shew them. They are not distressed by their vices but for their virtues. They are willing to earn a support for themselves. Till they can be put in a way to do this, stretch out a friendly hand to sustain them.

So may that hand that poured so many good things on you, be ever ready to sustain you in all your trials, to deliver you in the time of trouble, to make all your bed in your sickness, and to ensure your present peace and plenty to you, and your latest posterity. Now to the ever holy and glorious source of love, be all love and duty, all praise and honour, from henceforward for ever. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXXIII.

## THE PASTORAL DUTY.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

This Sermon, at the request of the Right Reverend Frederick, Lord Bishop of Cloyne, was to have been preached at his Consecration, but the Author's illness prevented it.

## TITUS II. 15.

*These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority.  
Let no man despise thee.*

IN the former part of this epistle, St. Paul reminds Titus, that he had left him in Crete, to set in order the things that were wanting, particularly in every city, to ordain elders, qualified as the apostle directs, and careful, not only to discharge the duties by him inculcated, but also to avoid the errors in conduct, to which they might be tempted among a people of such a temper and character, as are there ascribed to the Cretans, by one of their own writers, and confirmed by the apostle.

From hence he proceeds to instruct Titus, as a bishop, in the particulars of his own duty; how, for instance, he should cause the elderly, and young people, of both sexes, to behave themselves; and how the servants, under his spiritual government, ought to carry towards their masters. In order to the right discharge of his episcopal duty, as to these and the like effects, Titus, in the same place, is charged 'to speak the things which become sound doctrine, in all things to shew himself a pattern of good works, in teaching to shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of him.'

By way of general, but powerful enforcement of these matters on the conscience of Titus, and the conduct of his flock, the apostle urges, that 'the grace of God which



bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.'

The grace of God, the redemption of mankind, and a final judgment, the summary and leading lines of the gospel, are all employed, we perceive, as so many divine engines, to work first on Titus, and then, through his ministry, on the inferior clergy, nay, and on every soul committed to his and their charge, a lively faith in sound doctrine, a perfect purity of manners, and a vigorous zeal in the performance of good works. Here the gospel of Christ is applied with force irresistible, at least on a rational and well-disposed mind, to its own true and genuine purpose. And whereas the duty of Titus, and all other bishops, consists, not only in faithfully teaching the doctrines of the gospel, but also in warmly pressing them on the heart of every hearer, and in case of stubbornness and contumacy, in sharply reproving the heretic or sinner, with a majesty becoming the messenger of Almighty God; our blessed apostle, in the words of my text, charges the bishop of Crete to 'speak these things, to exhort, and to rebuke with all authority,' adding, in the close, 'let no man despise thee.'

First, speak these things, these which are peculiarly applicable to the church of Crete. Now had St. Paul been to give directions to the bishop of some other church, differently circumstanced, he would probably have given the like general, but a different set of particular instructions, though under the sanction of the same 'grace,' the same 'redemption,' and the same 'judgment to come.' He would have said, speak these, or these things, as occasion shall require.

Were he, for instance, at this day, to instruct an Irish bishop, he would say indeed, as then, 'shew thyself a pattern of good works,' for the more degenerate and dissolute mankind become, the less disposed they will be to wink at imperfection in a bishop. 'Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine, in uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,'

for these are every where and always applicable; surely nowhere more applicable than here, at no time more necessary than now. The more apt mankind are through arrogance and self-sufficiency to corrupt the faith, and warp the Scriptures to their vices, the more necessary, no doubt it is, that a bishop should inculcate the sound and genuine doctrines of Christianity. The more impiously they run into levity and ridicule on sacred subjects, the greater call there is for a venerable solemnity in the episcopal chair. The more deceitfully they equivocate on fundamentals; the more impudently they declare for one thing, and argue for the contrary; the more artfully and disingenuously they undermine Christianity, while they pretend only to reduce it to its primitive purity, the greater danger there is of a general apostacy from both truth and virtue, if their bishop does not in all parts of his doctrine demonstrate an inviolable integrity and sincerity.

But over and above the doctrines, so generally requisite to be insisted on, were the apostle now here to lay down rules for a bishop to regulate his sermons or charges, it is hardly to be supposed, he would not direct every man, advanced to that order, to preach up the duty of a natural plainness in dress, in attendance, in diet, when the world is running mad after artificial refinements. Would he not, think ye, charge it home on every bishop to preach often, and warmly, on the institution of the sabbath, when the leaders of fashion are celebrating that solemnity to chance, the god of Atheists, and to avarice, the god of sharpers, at a gaming table? Would he not, can we imagine, command every bishop to insist, that all his clergy should perpetually urge the necessity of constantly, and the danger of unworthily, communicating in the Eucharist, at a time when by far the greater part of their hearers absent themselves from it, or come to it, twice a year only, in compliment to a great festival, or to qualify for a lucrative employment? Would he not, knowing that the bulk of the common people are as totally ignorant of the plainest principles in religion, as the Patagons or the Hottentots, make it the first duty of a bishop to send his clergy with the milk at least of God's word into the dwellings of these babes in knowledge, but adepts in all the dishonest arts? What would he order to be

said by the bishop to his clergy, when the spirit of piety is almost totally extinguished, and that of religious disputation flames out in all the fury of its old party rage, so that no religious warmth is felt in that polemic fire which consumes the church? when the hair of controversy is pulled from the head, only to be split and thrown away? When the bone of contention hath not a particle of flesh without, nor of marrow in it, even they being judges who fight about it? When it is become impossible so much as to guess at a man's faith, at a clergyman's faith, concerning the doctrine into which we were all baptized, by his every day repeating the creeds in church, or by his continually offering up his public devotions to two persons, whom he therein expressly calls God, though he believes them to be but creatures, and, as such, wholly unworthy of prayer and adoration? When it is cried out against universally, as a breach of Christian charity to give the name of dishonesty or insincerity to prevarication, so grossly impious? When the people through indifference suffer this to pass as a trifle, or through corruption court it as consonant to their own duplicity of heart? When 'they say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; prophecy deceits?' When the deceived, and the deceiver, so vaunt themselves to belong to God, as if they thought he abhorred sincerity?

It were easy to multiply such questions almost without end, and to shew, that corruption in principle leads directly to corruption of manners; that, on the other hand, bad practices make loose principles necessary; that they mutually generate each other; and that St. Paul, not only saw this source of error and infidelity in human nature, but foresaw it too in fact, when he predicted the 'falling away, and the revelation of the man of sin, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.' And 'for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'

It is true, a bishop can prescribe no new doctrine. Nor is there any occasion for new doctrines. 'The man of God

is thoroughly furnished' in the inspired Scripture 'unto all good works, whether of doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction.' In this arsenal he finds all the weapons of his warfare ready prepared to his hand. These he may use as the exigency of times shall require, and so point the artillery of his inferior clergy against the prevailing corruptions, whether in principle or practice, as to clear the field for a successful attack on an infamous band, who, conscious of their own treachery, fight the battle of infidelity and wickedness only in masquerade. In this kingdom the inferior clergy depend so very much on their bishop, that nothing can be easier for him, than to speak to his whole diocess through their mouths, and to prescribe even their degree of diligence in the work assigned, if diligence is followed by favour. Why then sleep we till noon, and give the enemy so long an opportunity to 'sow his tares,' not only 'in the night,' as at first, but now in the face of the day?

In the second place, it is the duty of a bishop, to exhort, which signifies something more than to advise, or even persuade; it signifies to encourage, to rouse, to stimulate. It is indeed shocking to a Christian eye, to see a pastor nodding over his flock, while the wolf is howling, and the lion roaring round it; while the old serpent winds himself through it, and hisses at the head; a flock of immortal souls, which 'God hath purchased with his blood,' and committed to the keeping of this slumberer, with a large salary in hand for his pains, and with eternal glory in reversion, if he is found vigilant and faithful.

All this, notwithstanding, a bishop, if he will but look about him, shall not unfrequently see one of his clergy loitering, or at least but slowing walking, in the race he ought to run. Nay, he shall see here one, and there another, fast asleep, while Christ is sold by a wakeful traitor to enemies 'who sleep not, except they have done mischief.' Whence this lethargy on the side of truth and goodness? whence that alertness on the part of error, heresy, schism, superstition, and wickedness? Why is God so miserably, and the infernal fiend, so zealously, so strenuously, served? what infatuation on both sides! with what impudence does he call himself a labourer in God's vineyard, who never labours! who never even works! who does nothing, but eat, drink,

sleep, shorn of all his spiritual strength, and fast bound, hand and foot, by luxury and indolence, on the lap of pleasure, while the gigantic Philistines of heresy and immorality are upon him! His faith and his conscience are so deeply on the snort, that neither heaven nor hell can rouse him. If you see him at all in motion, it is only to perform some mere legal duty, which not performed, might deprive him of his bread; but here however he goes so close by the statute, and so narrowly turns the corner of the canon, that Christ hath not the compliment of a hairbreadth more, though the sheep he died for, are perishing. But were the prospect of a better parish, in case of greater diligence, set before him by his bishop, on the music of such a promise, like one bit by a tarantula, we should probably soon see him in motion, and serving God (O shameful!) for the sake of mammon, as if his torpid body had been animated anew by a returning soul. Is it true then, that this world can do so much more than heaven? Yes, with him, who hath no sensation, but on the side next this world. It is true too, that all men have but too lively a feeling on the other side; so that it would infinitely advance the cause of religion and virtue, were worldly wealth and honour always inviolably attached to superior service. Could religion bring over this baptismal enemy to her standard, he would do the execution of an elephant, I mean, under the management of a steady and skilful hand. Did religion hold forth riches and honour in her left hand, what might she not do with her right!

If a bishop should find a man among his clergy, to whom what I have been saying is but too applicable, it would be well done to let him know, that he is ready to confer rewards on substantial merit, and is ready to inflict canonical disgrace and contempt on the want of it; and that Christ did not labour and die, only that his clergy might live in luxury and ease. A bishop may sometimes meet with one in his diocese who knows not this. I speak charitably, for surely, if he does know it, he deserves, not to be exhorted, but,

In the third place, to be rebuked with all authority. There are several degrees of reproof, whereof a rebuke is the sharpest. Beyond this again, the jurisdiction of a bishop extends, as occasion may require, to public admonitions, sus-

pensions, degradations, in regard to his clergy, and to excommunication, in regard to both them and the laity.

Although our clergy do generally and greatly stand in need of exhortation, yet, God be thanked, there are but few of them who deserve rebuke. In general their behaviour is regular. The stream of the ministry among us exceeds in purity the waters of that lay morass, from whence it runs (shameful praise !) as much as it did in the primitive times. We are culpable for doing too little good, rather than for criminal liberties. In this I speak the common sense of mankind ; but must at the same time confess, that, in the eye of God, and with due regard to the important nature of our office, to be only not wicked, is highly criminal in persons so stationed as we are.

In case however a bishop shall be so unhappy as to see a spot in the assembly of his clergy, it is, no doubt, his duty, either to wash off its blackness, or totally to expunge it. That clergyman who settles on the inveterate lees of his own indolence, or whose spirit of piety, and regard to duty, die down to vapidness, is to be pitied, and, if possible, re-fermented by his bishop to a life and warmth, more becoming the service of an infinite Benefactor and Master. But a profligate clergyman is a monster, which its own mother the church ought to fling out of sight. The laity will never willingly submit to excommunication, while they behold a clergyman giving the sacrament, who is known to be guilty of the same crimes, for which they are forbid to receive it.

Yet excommunication, the inherent discipline of the church, which it exercised under persecution, which it is still permitted to exercise under the present establishment, and to which its power is at present almost absolutely confined, ought to be more frequently applied, than it is, as well to the delinquent laity, as clergy. Communion with the body of Christ is thrown too open, and made too cheap, if a dissolute wretch may, after a long self-excommunication by wilful absence, and perseverance in wickedness, boldly approach the Lord's table, without the smallest tokens of amendment, or any satisfaction given to the church. The dying profligate, who, for whole years, could neither be persuaded nor compelled to come in, thinks he hath nothing to do, but to send for his minister, hear two or three prayers, receive

the sacrament, and so go off to regions of bliss, as secure of a good reception, as the veriest saint. His clergyman is too ready to encourage this fallacious hope by a most insnaring compliance with his desire, in the presence of ten or twenty parishioners, and to the knowledge frequently of a large vicinity. The poor ignorant people think, their clergyman knows perfectly well what ought to be done, and on this occasion does only his duty. Hence it is, that the most immoral and pernicious article of Popery is brought into common practice among us, under the mask of mistaken charity; and the misguided flock are taught by repeated acts to regard it as no great matter what sort of life a man shall lead, provided he can have this benefit of clergy at the close; and so the most sacred ordinances of religion are turned into so many engines of seduction.

There is a loud, but unreasonable cry set up against the spiritual courts, wherein, after all, as much right is done, and far lighter fees exacted, than in any other court whatsoever. But if my lords, the bishops, would oftener personally preside in their own courts, particularly with an eye to the castigation of wickedness, the jurisdiction would soon recover somewhat of its ancient reputation, and, greatly as it is cramped by law, might be turned to very good account, as well in regard to the state, as the church.

The apostle, in my text, expressly charges the bishop to rebuke with all prerogative of command, as *Επιταγή* imports. I need not stay here to prove, after Hooker, King, and Potter, have so fully done it, that the authority of the bishop in rebuking, as well as in his other purely episcopal offices, is the authority of God. ‘As my Father hath sent me,’ saith Christ to his apostles, ‘so send I you;’ and so sent they their successors; so sent Paul his Timothy to Ephesus, and his Titus to Crete, to ordain and govern the two lower orders of the church, and to preside over the whole laity, no less than clergy, as must evidently appear to every impartial reader of the three epistles to those bishops.

If then the authority of the bishop is the authority of the Almighty God, what hath a bishop to fear in the faithful discharge of a purely spiritual duty, which, when discharged according to God’s word, is set above all human control? Thus thought the humble Ambrose, who had fled from the



episcopal chair as unworthy of it, when he obliged Theodosius the Great to do public penance at Milan for a horrid murder, ere he admitted him to the Lord's table; and thus thought that emperor too in the midst of his triumphs. Thus indeed should every real Christian have still thought, had every bishop, blessed with the knowledge and piety, not to say, courage of an Ambrose, taken care to support, by all parts of his episcopal conduct, the dignity of the place he fills. But unhappily while one bishop shamefully prostituted his spiritual powers, and usurped another set of powers in temporals, of still greater extent, the rest of the bishops in the west, harassed and terrified by continual appeals to this, shrunk themselves, and their sacred function, into a littleness, which hath proved fatal to discipline, and through a decay of discipline, to piety and virtue. So very low hath the opinion of a bishop's authority been brought by these and the like means, that, in our own times, the late bishop of Sodor and Man was thrown into a dungeon, where he was very nigh perishing, for refusing the sacrament to the strumpet of a sorry deputy. The applauses, wherewith that good man hath been loaded by the better sort of people for this act of discipline, as a singular instance of piety and resolution, are the keenest reproaches, ever uttered against the present state of religion, and carry with them a sting, far exceeding in sharpness all the satire and sneer of the Independent Whig, discharged on that bishop and his brethren. What! did he not act as he ought to have done? Did he do more than his duty strictly required? Had he not shewn himself one of the meanest of mankind, and wholly unfaithful to the trust reposed in him, if through fear he had cast the inestimable pearl in his hand before a swine? Who would not have acted as he did: Who would not have rejoiced with the apostles and him for having been thought worthy to suffer shame for his name and honour, who endured the cross for us all? Where then is the exalted singularity of an act which any other bishop, in his place, must, and, I hope, would have performed, as well as he? Why, truly, such actions are seldom seen, and many scandalous offenders are every day admitted to the sacrament. True, but not to the knowledge of our bishops surely. The bishops therefore ought to look down with a sharper

eye on what is doing among us the inferior clergy, for God will call them to an account for those irregularities of ours, which they ought to know, or how otherwise can they apply a remedy in time to come? Besides, we are poor timid creatures, with perhaps a scanty provision of bread, and that often exposed to the ill temper of many, whom strictness in the discharge of our duty, particularly as to suspensions, might offend. We therefore want, or think we want, the countenance of a higher order to support us in matters of discipline. The bishop, vested with a plenitude of divine authority, and, no doubt, for such purposes as these relating to discipline, armed by the constitution of our country with wealth, power, and peerage, might enable us to stand our ground on the canons, and on a rubric backed by an express act of parliament, against all who might expect unreasonable and impious compliances at our hands, were he pleased, by a previous prohibition, to take to himself the honour of an authorized refusal. This, I own, might, now and then, occasion a ruffle; but is it not better to have a ruffle with men, than with God?

That however the authority of a bishop may be properly supported in the necessary, but offensive duty of rebuking, his dignity is superadded by the apostle, as a buttress, in those remarkable and comprehensive words, 'Let no man despise thee.' Let none of thy inferior clergy, nor of the laity, committed to your and their care (for this epistle was to be publicly read in all the churches of Crete) presume, whether exhorted or rebuked, to entertain a despicable idea of one advanced by the providence of God into the place of his Son. Although the abilities, and even behaviour of a man, thus stationed, should not be sufficient to exalt him very high in the esteem of those he is known to, yet when it is considered that he is the delegate and representative of Christ; that he is, under God, the head of many churches; that edification, order, and government, are put into his hands, that he may 'feed the flock of God, go in and out before them,' and separate from them such as are tainted with contagious disorders; and that he is the immediate reservoir, from whence all under him are to derive the word, the sacraments, the benefits of Christ's death, and the benedictions of an infinitely gracious Father; they cannot as-

surely be Christians, who do not reverence him for the sake of his Master and his work. 'He,' saith Christ, speaking to his apostles and their successors, 'who despiseth you, despiseth me, and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. As my Father sent me, so send I you,' to all ages and nations; 'and lo, I am with you to the end of the world.' It follows, that where our bishop is, there is Christ, and where Christ is, there is the Father. Can a bishop then, considered as such, be an object of contempt? Not possibly, unless he himself should forget, that he is a bishop.

'Let no man despise thee,' is therefore to be understood as a command given, not only to the inferior clergy and the laity, but also to the bishop himself. If the philosopher with good reason orders every man to reverence himself, a bishop, in the superior lustre of whose episcopal character the man, the private person, is lost, should much more reverence himself, as one in whom nothing mean or base can possibly harbour, without betraying the majesty of his constituent. To prevent this, a lively conscience, with a mind unbiassed, and a moderate degree of understanding, may be sufficient. The wisdom requisite to prevent the contempt of a bishop, is laid up ready in the holy Scriptures. A little address, or rather an unaffected simplicity, added to this, will more than compensate for a want of refinement. It is hardly to be imagined how far an impartial understanding, I mean of the moderate sort, will carry a bishop in the choice of fit persons to fill his vacant benefices, and in governing his diocese, beyond a vastly higher capacity, under the crooked guidance of an eye, squinting to family connexions, or views of higher promotion. A warm zeal for the glory of God in the salvation of souls is essential to conscience in the episcopal character. This zeal, and that impartiality, will carry up a bishop near to perfection.

But if to these are added, the powers of a strong understanding, enlarged by a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, of theology, of mankind, of the canon law, of the ecclesiastical statutes, and ballasted by discretion and firmness of soul, we have then a bishop, qualified to raise the dignity of his person and place to its very summit. If infidelity should assault him, guarded on all sides by the armour of God, and shining in the lustre of a holy example, he shall

so lay about him with the two-edged sword of his Master, as to overwhelm all opposition. If superstition or enthusiasm should hope to take advantage of his meek and dispassionate coolness, the sound reason, by which he acts and speaks, will easily puff out the ill-fuelled blaze of the one, and, like a solar light, extinguish the feeble fire of the other. If his church, through schisms, through contrariety of opinions, through discontents, at the legal maintenance of his clergy, shall, at any time, like a too fiery horse bound under him with a violence, dreadful to weaker riders, you shall see him strain or relax the reins with a skill, thoroughly well accommodated to occasions; you shall see him keep his seat firm, and his countenance serene.

This dignity, arising almost to majesty, is rather heightened, than lowered, by the humility of the man, as often as the meanest of his flock hath occasion to approach him; by his fatherly tenderness of heart, when misery cries to him for relief; by his plainness in doctrine; by his calmness in argument; by his candour and good-humour to gainsayers; by his affectionate hospitality, equally removed from pomp and sordidness; by his unaffected contentment with what he possesses; by his residing perhaps in the most remote and disagreeable part of the kingdom, so that no man hath room to say to him, 'with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?' Though qualified to adorn the most brilliant court, and to support distinction among princes, he is found among the sheep, and is better pleased to handle the crosier than to wear the mitre. How free, how affable, how engaging, and yet how guarded, is his conversation in mixed companies! How instructive, when he and his clergy enter together on the discussion of some important subject of religion, some Scriptural difficulty, or some point of ministerial prudence! How easily and naturally he slides into a knowledge of their abilities, principles, tempers! How sensibly they grow into wiser and better men under his culture! A good bishop seldom fails to make a good clergy; a good clergy as seldom fail to make a good people. The sun of the diocess diffuses his light and warmth in plenty over the primary, and they again over the secondary class of Christians, throughout the whole system of believers.

Of such pastors we have had many, have still some, and more we shall have, if our destruction is not decreed. The work increases in proportion as profligacy of principle and manners grows upon us. It grows apace, and is already indeed come to such a height, as to require, I fear, more than human power to bring it under. We are at present an ignorant and abandoned people. 'There is none that doth good, no not one. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in us.' We quarrel about religion, and have none. The recusant saps the foundation of establishment; and the establishment, vainly considering its foundation as too firm to be shaken, deigns not to look so low as the mine. The Deist, aided by the Arian, spreads his spirit of indifference first, and then of contempt for revelation universally. At best, we are but half Christians. Dissipation of time, fortune, thought, extirpates all religion and virtue at the upper end of life, and rushes downward on the lower ranks, as fast as villany can derive the materials. Ours are the only bishops in the world, who never meet synodically, to confer on the truths, or coalesce in the spirit of religion. Hence a crop of portentous opinions. Hence unnatural warmth in the defence and propagation of false religions. Hence coolness to real religion. Hence, as a necessary consequence, wickedness is become rampant, for we have now found the way to sin on principle. The barometer of the church hath sunk far below the Laodicean degree. We shiver to a death of piety and goodness on the brink of atheistical indifference. What specific is there for this ague of the soul? what thaw for hearts so frozen? Are we to expect the thunder of God's judgments, ere we can hope to feel again the warm weather of Christianity? They shudder at the thought of these, which become every day more dreadfully probable, ought to rouse us to an intense exertion of all the little strength still left us, in order to a speedy recovery of Christianity, ere it is gone beyond our reach, and to a speedy reformation of manners, ere virtue and common decency are wholly banished from among us. 'Is there none to guide the church among all the sons she hath brought forth? None that taketh her by the hand of all the sons she hath brought up?' If we really believe, as we continually preach, that the salvation of souls, of our own souls too,

bought by the blood of Christ, with heaven and hell, are all at stake, how can we be cool? A cold fire, and a cold Christian, are equal absurdities in language, equal impossibilities in nature. But if there are degrees of absurdity and impossibility, as of infinite, how infinitely absurd and impossible must coldness be in a preacher of the gospel! in a bishop, from whom the saving wisdom of Christianity should descend, as from the head, and its vital warmth circulate as from the heart, through all the orders and members of the church.

Wanting reformation myself, I set not up for a censor or reformer of others, in speaking as I have done. No, having been called to this office, not sought it, in uttering this my lamentation over the church of God, I have filled but a small pipe, where a loud trumpet ought to have been blown, have pushed the lancet of truth into the general sore, though I pierced my own heart at the same time. But the wise have been taught medicine by a dog, and Rome was saved by the vigilant warnings of an animal, deemed still lower in the scale of understanding.

Vain however is the attempt of such a wretch; vain, I fear, to put our trust in any son of man, or even in princes, for a remedy against evils, too inveterate to be removed or averted by any hand, but that which is almighty. Happy were we, after all, could we repose a rational hope in the Lord our God, from whom we have miserably departed. That this hope may nevertheless have some foundation (for infinite are the long-suffering patience and goodness of God) let us repent and pray.

O Lord God, the light and life of the soul, disperse our errors; revive our piety; turn thou us, and so shall we be turned, to thee, through Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, to whom, with thee, and the Holy Spirit, one eternal and glorious Trinity, be all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LXXIV.

## CHRIST'S CHARITY SERMON.

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MATT. XXII. 37—40.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

*This is the first and great commandment.*

*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

*On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

HEAR now the charity sermon of Christ himself, on this his own text.

‘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 his left.

‘Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :

‘For I was an hungred, 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 hungred, 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 hungred, 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 hungred, or athirst, 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 unto 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 would, I think, my dear fellow-Christians, give just cause of offence to you all, should I now make you an harangue on the subject of Christian charity in general, or on that of alms-giving in particular. Should I not in so doing too strongly say, you are not Christians ; you do not understand the plainest, nor feel the most pathetic words of Christ? Nay, should I not be guilty of arrogance intolerable, should I presume to add any thing to an address, made by infinite wisdom to the understandings and affections of a Christian audience, drawn together on this occasion, by the previous power of that very spirit, which dictated this address? Who shall come after God?

The eloquence of men, of angels, would be but futility to this. Christ hath spoken. You are Christians. Shall I not therefore quit the pulpit, and return into my own extreme insignificance?—

No, I perceive, by that profound silence, you expect even I should say somewhat. Be it so.

A little time may possibly be passed by us with some profit, and much pleasure, in a few reflections on this wonderful sermon of our God and Saviour. We cannot add ; but we may, we ought to meditate. Let us therefore cordially enter into the most beautiful of all discourses, on the most beautiful of all subjects.

The religion of Christ, which, in a thousand places of his gospel, is finely figured to us as light to the understanding, is here, with regard to the heart, summed up in love; love towards God, and love towards our neighbour. God himself is a sun, is love. The true religion beaming forth from him, all luminous and lovely, partakes his nature, and imparts it; partakes and imparts Christ Jesus, who comes to us as a great light, and the Holy Spirit, who descends upon us as fire, to warm us with charity. Our religion, like the second and third persons in the Holy Trinity, consists of light and love coessential with each other, and with its source. St. James speaks of them as one. 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' See how error and sin are treated as one; and are not their opposites, truth and charity, one? Most surely. To know God is to love him. To know our neighbour, as of the same nature with ourselves, and as the creature, if not child, of God, is to love him. To love God and our neighbour is to fulfil the whole law of Christ; for every man, warmed by this charity, must labour to honour God, and cherish his neighbour, in proportion to his degree of love. Truth and charity, or goodness, are, in the real Christian, so essentially united, like light and warmth, their scriptural emblems, in the natural world, as never to be separated. Every one knows how the sunbeams operate on the vegetable and animal creation. The good Christian knows, how, in like manner, true religion, the emanation of God, sheds daylight on the understanding, charity on the heart, penetrates, pervades, invigorates, the soul, and matures its virtues. He experimentally knows how it may, by meditation and devotion, be so socially collected, as to consume every thing in him that is earthly, and assimilate to itself the purer part of his composition, which, thus sublimed, rises, and mixes with its connatural element above. By this train of thinking you see how all good Christians are made partakers even of the divine nature.

And from this view of our religion, as consisting of light and love, the words of Christ, just now repeated, carry us to the consideration of this religion, as operat-

ing on the heart particularly, and there begetting love or charity.

Now, it is very observable, that in this love towards God and man, our divine Instructor places the sum and substance of all true religion and virtue. It is his own assertion, that on these two hang all the law and the prophets, for in his mouth the charitable are the righteous. St. Paul too maintains, that love is the fulfilling of the law. But lest you should take this for an account of the law, as contradistinguished from the gospel, you perceive our blessed Saviour, in that which I call his charity sermon, states the trial of the last day on the footing of charity alone, as extended, or refused, to him in his indigent members. This is the very gospel; and here its author lets all Christians, whether real, or only professed, know beforehand, in what manner he will deal with them at the final judgment. His two sentences are already pronounced and recorded, as the sanctions of his law; 'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' or ye charitable, 'inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' and, 'Go, ye accursed,' or ye uncharitable, 'into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' The execution immediately follows, 'these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.'

It is very observable, indeed, till we reflect a little, astonishing, that our Lord, after placing all religion and duty in charity, should, farther still, reduce all charity to almsgiving; whereas St. Paul plainly intimates the possibility of a man's giving all his goods to the poor, without having charity. It is certain, this he may do through vanity, superstition, or hatred towards his relations. But it is equally certain, that he who relieves the poor through compassion for the poor, and love towards Christ, is a very different sort of man. This man must be a true Christian, and can hardly be supposed to want, in any one respect, at least as much solicitude for the honour of God, and the safety of his own soul, as for the body of his neighbour. If however he hath sinned (and who hath not), his fervent, or rather, extensive, charity shall cover the multitude of his sins. Who is there among us who shall hear the poor man crying to the rich in the name of Jesus for help, and see the rich melting into

pity, and its beneficent effects, and will not take it for granted, that the latter is a Christian? Change the scene, let the poor man go away unrelieved, who is he that will call his rich neighbour a Christian? It will be evident, that this most honourable appellation is, on these occasions, neither given, nor refused, at random, if it is considered, that Christian faith, the mother of all the gospel graces and virtues, is, in a peculiar manner, the principle and spring of Christian charity. Faith in Christ is a firm belief of his doctrines, and of all he hath done and suffered for our salvation. Hence love for him, and for all that are one with him. Hence that exquisite feeling, which is immediately perceived in every member of Christ, when any other is touched. Hence that consent of parts in the spiritual body, which shews, that the whole is united to a common head, and animated by one common soul.

It is through this that the sensations of Christ are communicated upwards from every individual of his church, and that he feels in every Christian, I mean, particularly in the sufferings of every Christian, more keenly than he did in the hands and feet of his natural body, when the nails went through them into his cross. It is therefore on this he founds that idea of charity, which he would have all his followers imbibe, when he represents himself as hungry, as thirsty, as naked, as a stranger, as sick, as imprisoned, in every the most inconsiderable Christian, who is destitute of meat, drink, clothes, or lodging; or who languishes on a sick bed, or in a jail.

O blessed Jesus! what condescension, what compassion, what tenderness is here! Scarcely the cross itself can exhibit more. How can a Christian be hard-hearted? Oh! no. A son may tear the flesh from the bones of his aged father, a mother may roast her new-born infant alive; and the corruption of nature may palliate the horror; but a Christian must be tender, must have pity, cannot give up the Son of God, who died for his soul, to new and unnecessary distresses, that he may save a few shillings, to be wasted on those pomps and vanities, or on those sinful lusts of the flesh, which he renounced by the most solemn of all vows, when he called himself after Christ. This is too much indeed for the new nature to bear. A man born again

is like Christ, the author of regeneration ; is incorporated with, and lives in Christ ; is acted by the spirit or mind, which is in Christ Jesus. How then can that joy or sorrow, which are felt by Christ, be unfelt by a Christian ? It is true, the church is called the body of Christ, in a figure. Is Christ therefore to expect nothing more from us, than a mere figurative belief ? Is the union between Christ and a Christian only notional ? Is it not as much a reality, as the most literal truth could vouch it to be ? Nay, is it not a literal truth, that Christ gave up his natural body to a most painful and ignominious death, to save his church or spiritual body, as dearer to him ? And does not the Holy Ghost, in representing the sin of a Christian as a fresh crucifixion of Christ, give us plainly to understand, that our blessed head, mystically indeed, but really and truly, feels in us his members as keenly, as for us, on the first cross, to which we nailed him ?

If I should say to my neighbour, I am hungry, and he should deny it, every by-stander would charge him not only with a lie, but with brutish impudence. A man best knows his own distresses. Christ who knows all things, may surely be allowed to know, when he himself is hungry, thirsty, &c. To prevent all hard-hearted and selfish cavils on this subject, he hath stated the case, asserted his own distress, and put the doubt concerning it into the mouths both of the charitable and uncharitable, ' When saw we thee an hungred, or thirsty,' &c. To which, lest they should not perfectly believe him, he answers with an emphasis, ' Verily I say unto you, as you did, or did it not, unto one of the least of these, you did it, or did it not, unto me.'

A fact, thus cleared and asserted by our Lord himself, no Christian will dare to question in words. But let it be here observed, that whosoever, though able, does not relieve the distresses of his Saviour, gives the lie to that Saviour by refusing help, more strongly and inhumanly, than it is possible to do it in words ; or at least disowns all obligation from gratitude, all inducement from hope, and that connexion with him and his body, which ought to produce the relief he stands so much in need of, and here so loudly calls for.

Our blessed Redeemer, when persecuted to death by the

Jews and Romans, could have easily called a host of angels to his assistance; but then how should the prophecies have been fulfilled, or our redemption wrought? In like manner, when he earned his bread by a trade, or subsisted on the benevolence or a few poor Galileans, and was worse lodged than the birds and foxes, he could have supplied himself from the united treasures of heaven and earth; but then how had an example of infinite humility, self-denial, and contempt for worldly pomp and riches, been set us by him who best knew their insignificance? As he acted in his natural body, so does he in his spiritual. He is able, of himself, and without any aid from his creatures, or even in defiance of the whole world, to make comfortable provision for all his wants, and relieve himself from every species of distress, down to that which may affect him in his lowest or most deplorably afflicted member. But were he to do all himself, how then should our love towards him, or his members and our Christian brethren, be exercised? How should our gratitude for his infinite goodness to us, be ever either cultivated or exhibited? By this means the lovely band of Christian charity, adorned with ten thousand graces, being dissolved, the church must be separated from its head, must die, must crumble into a dust of individuals, ugly and unhappy.

No, my dear Christian audience, Christ, the express image of God, by whose death we are delivered from eternal infamy and misery, and entitled to infinite glory and happiness, is ever among us, and continually presents himself to us in his image, that is, in every Christian, but more eminently in every poor distressed and destitute Christian. Let us look on these with some share of that pity, wherewith the Son of God hath looked on us, in the filthy rags of our sins, not strangers only, but aliens and enemies, sick to death eternal, sold, enslaved, imprisoned; let us melt into pity for these little Christs, and in them hear the voice of the Son of God, who cries out, I am an hungred; O you, whom I have fed with my own flesh and blood, give me to eat. I am thirsty; O you, for whom I opened in my side a living fountain, give me to drink. I am naked; O you, whom I have clothed with my own proper righteousness, give me clothes. I am a stranger; O you, whom I brought by

adoption into my Father's house, take me in from the rain and snow. I am sick and in prison; O you, whose mortal disorders I have healed, whose souls I have redeemed with the price of my blood out of the hands of your enemy, who had taken you prisoners, and tyrannized over you at his will, come to me with medicines, come to me with the sum I owe, and set me at liberty. Help me, you who hold all your riches in trust from me, with a little of my own. I died for you; O my friends, my brethren, suffer me not to perish again through want, while you abound with every comfort, every luxury of life. You may relieve me, without sensibly curtailing the smallest of your innocent enjoyments. Live in affluence, but suffer me not to starve.

Take now the conclusion of this whole matter in the words of our Lord himself; these, the hard-hearted, the impious, who had no feeling, either of nature through their fellow-creature, or of religion and gratitude, through their suffering Saviour, shall go away into everlasting fire; but the righteous, that is, the tender-hearted, the lover of Christ and Christians, who melted at the miseries of his Saviour in all his members, as through the close connexion of one common nature, one soul, one body, shall go away into life eternal.

From the first kindlings of mere good will, through kindness, affection, friendship, up to the stronger glow of love or charity, which crowns the charming climax, and through all the outgoings and exercises of tenderness, in its various degrees of warmth, there is none that emits so beautiful or so ardent a flame, as that which hath brought us together this day. It is not merely to relieve the bodies of our fellow-Christians from temporary wants, from disorders, soon terminating however in health or death, nor even from a death, which all our wealth, expended in food, raiment, and medicine, cannot long procrastinate; no, this charity of charities, after doing every thing that can be done for the wretched body, goes forward, and carries food for the famished soul, clothing for the nakedness of the soul, a panacea for every disorder of the soul, and an infallible amulet against the eternal death of the soul.

Ye are come hither this day, ye friends of Christ, ye



favourites of heaven, to seek for the lost sheep on the avenue of hell, and to restore it to the flock of the true Shepherd. Ye are come to snatch the brand, already kindled, from an infernal fire, to quench it in the water of life, and give it a new root by the tree of life. Ye are come to perfect the work of Christ, to save a soul he died for, and thus thank him for the salvation of your own. O glorious thanks ! which in their success, give an additional joy to the triumphs, and loudness to the hymns, of heaven, for the conversion of a sinner. If the wounds of Christ bleed anew at the touch of those professors, who murder him afresh by their sins, how sweetly are they soothed and healed again by the balsam of your charity ! It is surely God that worketh in you, both to will and to do the business, on which you meet at this place, insomuch, that we may see his hand in yours, with a glory round it, as it is stretched out with your contribution. God, infinitely high above sin and misery, looks with pity on the sins and miseries of his creatures. With an eye like his, you the chaste weep for the lewdness, and you the wealthy, consider the wants of others. This indeed is godlike. What a noble, what an acceptable sacrifice of thanksgiving ! what an amiable acknowledgment is this, that, had it not been for the grace and bounty of Providence, you might have been as wicked and indigent, as those who now excite your compassionate attention !

Were there any here (but there is none) to whose seducing arts these, or the like objects, owe their unhappy fall, horror and compunction ought to furnish them with yet stronger motives to contribute on this occasion, than those of your charity, warm as it is. Corruptors, however, are not apt to be reformers. No, it is theirs to debauch and abandon ; yours to follow and reclaim, in which blessed work you do not only retrieve the poor soul, already fallen, but prevent the fall of many others, on whom the wretch in question might revenge the injury done her by our sex.

Your goodness in this double, this complicated work of charity, cannot be conceived, without first conceiving the complicated enormities attendant on the life of a common prostitute. Yet here is a mass of filth and stench, which forbids the approach of decency. What a vice is that which

cannot be lashed in the language of modest people, which must not be so much as mentioned but in terms, fit only to soften it down into a mere frailty, which, maggot-like, surrounds, conceals, and defends itself in that heap of ordure which gave it birth.

Suffice it to say, that this vice turns the most beautiful and modest part of our species, once a Christian too! into a monster of impudence, lewdness, foulness, hardly exceeded by those fiends, into whose horrible company and abode she is hastening; turns her into a factor for the infernal deceiver, for whom she trades on the way to hell, with a success more fatal to virtue, to fortune, to character, to health, to life, than that of his other instruments, and often leaves the print of blood and murder where she treads.

It is to bring this miserable creature back to Christ; it is to defeat the flagitious trade she at present drives, and provide for her when reclaimed to the service of Christ, that this house is crowded with the friends of Christ and virtue. Blessed sight indeed! O assembly, brilliant in the eyes of Heaven! let your hearts overflow with joy, and your voices loudly resound his praise, who hath given you the will and power, thus to serve your God, thus to save your fellow-creature, and thus to relieve your Saviour in your fellow-Christian.

To God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all praise and honour, all might, majesty, dignity, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.



A  
**FORM OF PRAYER**  
FOR THE  
**USE OF FAMILIES.**

IN WHICH ARE INCLUDED THE NECESSARY PRINCIPLES AND  
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*—JOSH. XXIV. 15.



## THE PREFACE.

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THE intention of the following form of prayer is to furnish families with a proper instrument for their devotions, and at the same time to convey a short and clear summary of all the necessary duties, whether of faith or practice, in which a Christian ought to be instructed; to the end that every master of a family, at the same time that he performs the duty of family prayer, may without much farther trouble, fully instruct his children and servants in the principles of our most holy religion.

Every person in a family where this form shall be constantly used, will of course soon commit the whole to memory: and in so doing will, with the help of a very little explanation, be made sufficiently acquainted with all that is required of a Christian either to believe or practise. This, it is hoped, will render the Christian duty of a parent or master so short and easy, that none who think at all of answering to God for the discharge of that duty, can reasonably desire to have it put on a more practicable footing. The two duties of prayer and instruction are here drawn into one, and that one made so brief, and so agreeable, that no excuse is left for the omission of it.

Nothing is more common than to hear parents complaining in the most affecting terms, of the undutifulness shewn to them by their children. Masters are still louder in the complaints they make of their servants. In this both are often unreasonable; for although it is but too true that the children in many families are very undutiful, and the servants extremely idle and dishonest, yet their parents and masters, generally speaking, can have no right to complain of them either to God or man; not to God, who knows that they have neglected to teach them the very first principles of religion, on which all duty and virtue necessarily depend; nor to man, since most of the bad members of all public societies have learned their vices in ill regulated families, under careless parents, and irreligious masters.

The minds of young people easily receive impressions, are inquisitive and fond of knowledge. Their hearts are tender and penetrable. Their memories are strong and retentive. The principles therefore of virtue or vice must soon take deep root in so kindly a soil. If timely care be not taken to seize their affections and passions in favour of God and a good life, by means of religious instructions, and the most engaging examples of piety and virtue, the busy enemy of mankind will not fail to intrude with his temptations; and finding all empty, and an open passage, will take such a possession of the heart as it will be almost impossible ever to drive him from afterward. How does any parent expect to answer before the face of a just God for those children, whom although he hath produced them out of his own bowels, he hath nevertheless by his neglect given over to ignorance, wickedness, and final destruction?

How shall an earthly master, who believes that he himself hath a master in heaven, account for his suffering those poor creatures, who come young into his service from parents, too ignorant or too careless to instruct them, to run on in ignorance and wickedness to eternal misery, while they are labouring to support him in ease and plenty? Surely parents and masters, who are capable of this, have no bowels of compassion, no fear of God, no right to good children or servants; and they will find at the last, that in this great crime of omission, they have as effectually neglected and undone their own souls, as those of their unhappy offspring and domestics.

And yet their duty in this respect, is most delightful in itself, and most happy when duly discharged, in its effects. Can any man be more agreeably employed, than in training up his child or his fellow-creature to the service of God and eternal happiness? Can he so effectually recommend himself to the Father and Master of the world by any other means? Or can he expect either comfort or satisfaction in those under him, if he suffers them to grow up, without any sense of duty to God or him, and harden, perhaps beyond all reclaiming, in habits of impiety and vice?

Nor is the duty of family prayer less necessary or agreeable. Families depend as absolutely on God as kingdoms



or single persons. That family, which does not worship God, is as properly speaking heathen or ungodly, as any particular man can be, who refuses to worship him. Besides, the performance of this important duty hath something so pleasing and so affecting in it, that the general disuse of it is hardly to be accounted for. A good man can never surely think himself in a more honourable or happy situation, than when he is on his knees, uttering the devotions of himself, his dear wife and children, and dutiful domestics. He has before him, at that delightful juncture, all the occasions of happiness that God hath blessed him with, and is then employed in adoring the giver, and praising his benefactor. There is a transport of joy in this most tender act of worship, which none but the basest minds can be insensible of. Farther, the neglect of this duty must argue as great a want of wisdom as of piety, if it is true that God does really govern the world, and that all we enjoy or suffer flows immediately from his disposing hand, which turns the course of all events with irresistible power in favour of those, who claim, by an humble and constant worship of him, the protection of his providence; and directly against all such as resist his will, and despise his service. That infinitely gracious Being must look with peculiar favour and love on a family, that is ever sending up its voice and eyes to him for protection, and ever blessing him for his mercies. But such as turn their eyes downward on the world, and put their trust in themselves and their possessions, which is the same as to renounce God, and league with his enemy, are no doubt perfectly odious and abominable in his sight, and must be guilty of strange presumption, if they expect his assistance and blessing, which as a family, they do not think it worth their while to apply for.

Were God more known, he would be better served. Whoever knows, for instance, that he is a Being of infinite power and justice, must fear him. Whoever considers him as present in every family, nay, and in every heart, must be always greatly on his guard, since he is continually in so awful a presence. Whoever regards him as a Father, a Saviour, a Comforter, a Friend, and a Protector, of infinite compassion and goodness, cannot but love him. Now he who is possessed with a due fear and love of God, who is

thankful for his mercies past, and who hopes for his future favour, will always be careful to put his family under the protection of God ; and in order to it, will see that his children and servants know how to worship him ; and will also cause them to join their prayers and addresses with his in the performance of that holy duty.

On the other hand, that parent or master, who despises and neglects the aforementioned duties, bids God depart from him, tells him he desires not the knowledge of his ways, and contrary to the resolution of good Joshua, declares by facts which are stronger than words, that he and his house will not serve the Lord.

It is here necessary to put every Christian in mind, that, merely to repeat a form of prayer in the church or in a family, is not to perform the duty of prayer, which is the work of the understanding and the heart.

A form is of no other use than to furnish us with proper thoughts for our devotions ; and the repeating it in the hearing of others, is only in order that all who are present may join in the same thoughts. He therefore, who in any congregation, either public or private, suffers his thoughts to wander from the service, is not at prayer, but is mocking God, while nothing but his knees or lips are employed in the outward formality of praying. Would any one thus address an earthly king ? If a man thinks it his duty to pray, let him consider whom he is going to pray to, and with all the love and reverence, all the warmth and affection of his heart let him kneel down in God's presence, and pour out the earnest devotions of a soul, deeply sorrowful for its sins, sincerely sensible of its dependance on God, heartily thankful for its great mercies, and full of awe and reverence for a Being so infinitely glorious and majestic.

A

## FORM OF PRAYER

FOR

### FAMILIES.

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O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us thy family, and, for Christ Jesus' sake, hear the prayers we are about to offer up to thee. Amen.

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us whom thou hast purchased with thy blood, and recommend these our prayers to thy Father: Amen.

O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, who can do no good work without thy assistance, and enable us to present on this occasion, a devout and reasonable service. Amen.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons, and one God, pity the many infirmities of thy servants, and have mercy upon us miserable sinners. Amen.

#### *A general confession.*

MOST just and merciful God, we with shame confess, and with grief and fear bewail, the provoking sins, which we have committed by thought, word, and deed, against thee, against our neighbour, and ourselves. Unmindful of the covenant which we made with thee in our baptism; we have often basely revolted to thy enemies, treated with indifference and neglect the articles of our faith, and broken thy commandments. Thus self-condemned, and miserable debtors to thy justice, we fly for refuge to thy fatherly bowels, and the merits of Christ Jesus. O Father of heaven, pity those whom thou hast made. O Saviour of the world, pity those whom thou hast died for, plead for us and save us, for in thee only do we trust. Amen.

*A general petition.*

BLESSED God, ever ready to give and to relieve, stir up in our souls a voluntary and sincere repentance; quicken it with shame and love, and secure it against all future trials with fear and watchfulness, proportionable to our danger. Arm us, O Lord, against those spiritual enemies, our deceitful passions and desires, and our sinful habits from within, and against the world and the devil from without. Aid us with thy Holy Spirit, that by the powerful assistance of his grace, we may both believe and do according to our baptismal covenant and vow, that we may diligently read the Scriptures, deeply reverence thy name, devoutly keep thy sabbaths, and attend thy table. Turn away from us those judgments, which, on account of our manifold sins, we justly deserve to suffer, and teach us to bear with patience and resignation those corrections which our amendment may require. Be pleased to feed us with food convenient for us, and so to direct even our worldly concerns, that they may contribute to the salvation of our souls, and the glory of thy name, through Christ Jesus the Redeemer and Advocate of mankind. Amen.

*A collect for the morning.*

O LORD, who hast shewn us the light of a new day, be graciously pleased to teach us the right use of it, that we may apply it to the great ends of life, thy service and the general good; and by thy Holy Spirit, so enable us to discharge every duty, to overcome every temptation, and to escape every danger, that we may redeem the time we have mispent, and endeavour, with more speed and vigour, to run the glorious and important race that is set before us, through Jesus Christ, thy Son and our Saviour. Amen.

*A collect for the night.*

O MERCIFUL Lord, who hast created the darkness for rest, as well as formed the light for labour, grant that we may go to rest this night in peace with thee, with mankind, and with our own consciences. And that no adversary may disturb this our happy repose, nor evil come nigh this dwelling, be pleased to watch over us, and place thy guard

round us this night. Let our sleep put us in mind of death, and our beds of the grave, that we may so lay ourselves down, as if we expected to rise before thy judgment-seat in another world. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

*The intercession.*

O GOD, who art now the witness, and wilt hereafter be the judge of all we think or do, teach this thy family to know and obey thy laws. Amen.

Grant that all parents may bring up their children in the fear and knowledge of thee. Amen.

Grant that all children may love, honour, and obey their parents. Amen.

Grant that all rulers may consider themselves as thy ministers, accountable to thee for the exercise of their authority. Amen.

Grant that all subjects, considering whose authority their governors bear, may cheerfully obey them, not only for wrath, but conscience sake. Amen.

Grant that all masters may give unto their servants that which is just and equal, and teach them to know thee and thy holy religion. Amen.

Grant that all servants may be faithful and obedient to their masters, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. Amen.

Grant that all husbands may love and cherish their wives, and even treat them as their own flesh. Amen.

Grant that all wives may be faithful, amiable, and obedient to their husbands. Amen.

Grant that the rich may be faithful stewards to thee, and tender-hearted providers for thy poor. Amen.

Grant to the poor honesty, industry, frugality, and contentment. Amen.

Grant that thy ministers and pastors, aided by thy Holy Spirit, may take heed unto themselves, and to thy flock, and with good examples, sound doctrines, and diligence in the ministry, feed the church of Christ, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Amen.

Grant that all the people may duly reverence thy minis-

ters, and in all respects treat them as thy messengers, and as those who watch for their souls. Amen.

Grant comfort to all who are in trouble, and to those who are in sickness (particularly to him (or her) in this family, on whom thou hast laid thine hand) thy saving health. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that charity, temperance, chastity, and justice, may reign among men; and banish from the world all pride, wrath, murder, intemperance, stealing, calumny, and covetousness; so that the troubled affairs of this life being reduced to perfect peace and order, thy all-seeing eyes may again be pleased to survey every thing thou hast made, and to pronounce them very good. Grant, O merciful God, to us and all men these blessed fruits of thy gospel, for the sake of Christ Jesus, the Saviour and Reformer of the world. Amen.

Here may follow the prayer in time of preparation for the holy sacrament, or the other, that is to be used for some time after the communion.

*A prayer for the whole church of Christ.*

Look down, gracious God, with compassion on that church, which thou hast planted among men with the blood and labours of thy Son, and all the prophets, apostles, and martyrs. Restore truth to those who are in error, and give knowledge to the ignorant. Kindle in the lukewarm a lively zeal, and in the contentious, moderate that zeal with charity and knowledge. So heal our wide breaches, and settle our unquiet spirits, that all uniting with one heart, as well as in one faith, may join to advance the glorious cause of truth and virtue, the cause of thy honour and our salvation, through Jesus Christ, the head of the church and our Redeemer. Amen.

*A prayer for our country.*

O most mighty God, ruler of heaven and earth, and King of kings, be graciously pleased to bless and direct his majesty king George, and grant him, and all who are put in authority under him, grace to rule with justice and prudence, and to set a shining example of piety and virtue to

thy people. Unite the divided minds and interests of our countrymen. Defend us from seditions at home, and from the designs of our enemies abroad. Defend us from pestilence and famine. Let not our crying sins provoke thee to punish us with public calamities. Be rather graciously pleased to reform than to destroy. Be thou our strength, and our protector. Be thou our God and king, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

*A general thanksgiving.*

O MOST compassionate God, how shall we sufficiently praise thee for thy great and continual mercies? Thou hast given us being, thou hast redeemed us with thy blood from eternal misery, and thou art ever present with us to strengthen us against the difficult, and to guide us through the dangerous trials of life. How wonderful are the instances of thy goodness, which we know! How infinite those which we can but imperfectly comprehend! Not all the accusations of our enemy, nor our manifold offences have yet turned away thy compassion from us. Let this, O Lord, inspire us with gratitude, and fill us with such a love of thee, that for the future all our thoughts and actions, as well as words, may praise thee.

In the meantime, we thy family render thee, O infinite Benefactor, such thanks as we are able. With all good men on earth, with saints, and angels, and all the hosts of heaven, we join our hearts to adore thee in thy wisdom and goodness, and raise our voices to magnify thy majesty and power. Blessed be thou, O Lord God, who hast done wondrous things for us, and blessed be the name of thy majesty for ever: let all the earth be filled with thy majesty. Amen, Amen.

Our Father, which art, &c.

*The benediction.*

UNTO thy gracious mercy and protection, O God, we commit ourselves. Be thou pleased to bless us, and keep us, make thy face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us, now and for evermore. Amen.



*A prayer to be used in time of preparation for the  
holy sacrament.*

BLESSED Father, who in compassion to our great infirmities and spiritual wants, hast provided food for our souls, even the body and blood of thy Son, grant when we approach thy holy table, we may by faith spiritually feed on that heavenly banquet. That we may appear there as thy children and servants, raise and confirm in us such dispositions, as become those who enter into fellowship with thee, and all that is good in heaven and in earth. Cause the remembrance of our Saviour's goodness in dying to atone for our sins, to fill us with an utter abhorrence of all sin, and a firm resolution to glorify him for the time to come, by a life agreeable to his holy will and word, and conformable to our baptismal vow. Cause the remembrance of his having laid down his life for us, and the consideration of his sitting at thy right hand to plead for us, to possess our souls with an humble, but cheerful faith and trust in thy mercy. Cause the love due to Christ, the head of the church, to extend to all our fellow Christians, the members of his mystical body. Send thy Holy Spirit powerfully into our hearts, that he may purify all our unclean affections, rectify all our evil habits, and so regenerate our whole nature, that we may be evermore admitted to feed effectually on the food of everlasting life, and enabled so to unite ourselves to Christ's blessed body, that being made lively members of him, we may hereafter be entirely governed by his will and Spirit, and not by our own carnal wills, which we renounce. Grant this, O blessed Father, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

*A prayer to be used for some time after the communion.*

O MOST gracious and bountiful Lord, who hast lately fed us thy servants with thy own precious flesh and blood, neither suffer the remembrance of that astonishing act of mercy to slip out of our minds, nor the saving effects of it to be destroyed by the return of our former temptations and sins. Set a strict guard upon our hearts, that in all our thoughts we may look back upon the awful vow we have renewed, and the infinite favour we have received, that we

may neither make any ungrateful returns for the one, nor any faithless breaches of the other ; but that being refreshed and nourished by the heavenly food, we may proceed from strength to strength, till after a life spent here in thy service, and to thy glory, we may rise and triumph with thee in the blessed habitations of eternal peace. Grant this, and ever powerfully intercede for us, O blessed Jesus, our Redeemer. Amen.

It may perhaps be useful to the reader to put him in mind, that the performance of both public and family prayer doth by no means take away the necessity of addressing himself to God in secret at least twice in the day. No form of prayer used in common with others, can possibly reach the peculiar and secret occasions of any particular man ; besides, every individual ought to serve God as an individual, as well as every kingdom or family, for he hath his own peculiar sins to confess, his own wants to petition for, and his own blessings, which no one shares with him, to return thanks for ; and is therefore under the most indispensable necessity (although he constantly applies to God in public, as a member of some community or family) of also serving God in secret, as a single man. Six times in the day did the primitive Christians address themselves to God by prayer, and although the piety and devotion of Christians is now at a low ebb, yet we have the same reasons they had for frequency and fervency in prayer ; nay, perhaps, we have even greater and stronger reasons than they, inasmuch as we live under the unhappy influence of worse examples and customs, and are surrounded with more dangerous temptations.

*A prayer for a young person.*

THE enemy of my soul, O my God, hath planted innumerable snares for me in my fortune, in my companions, in my person, and in my very heart. How shall I escape ! As I wade farther into life, I do but plunge deeper into trials. How shall I, so full of frailty and folly, support or direct myself ? Bear me up, O God my strength. Guide me, O infinite wisdom. O blessed Spirit, enter thou into my soul, before it becomes too vile, and too polluted for thy residence ; there enlighten my understanding ; there rule with

a strict hand over all my passions and desires, particularly those of pride and incontinence, and so powerfully subdue me to thy will, that the necessity of a woful, and the danger of an ineffectual repentance may be prevented, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. Amen.

*A prayer for an aged person.*

O KING of heaven, and judge of all the world, I who am now drawing towards the close of a long life, and must shortly appear before thee, am utterly unable to account for the time I have mispent, for the health and wealth I have abused, or the other trusts and talents I have neglected or misapplied. When I remember thy infinite compassion to my poor soul, and frail body, pouring in upon me through my affairs, my family, and every person or thing, that had any relation to me, by unnumbered blessings, and by seasonable and tender corrections; and when I compare it with my manifold and heinous offences; I know not which to be most astonished at, thy goodness, or my ingratitude. What gives me still farther cause of concern and apprehension, is, that I find myself under the unhappy slavery of many bad dispositions and habits, contracted during my long stay in this filthy body, and this seducing world. Although I have fully experienced the vanity and vexation of this life, I am nevertheless unwilling to part with it.

I am both unable to live, and afraid to die. O boundless goodness, look with mercy on me in this my distress. As it was with a kind intention to reclaim and save my soul, that thy long-suffering goodness prolonged my life to these years, so I trust thou wilt have mercy upon me, and shew thyself gracious to me at the last. To this blessed end be pleased, O thou lover of souls, by thy Holy Spirit, to pluck out of my heart every root of sin, to cleanse my impure and worldly affections, to knit them to thee by the eternal ties of love, to support me under the decays of nature, to fortify me against the approaches of death, to strengthen my faith, and comfort my soul when thy last awful summons shall arrive, that I thy poor servant, loathing this wretched life, with all its vanities, and eagerly turning all my desires and wishes towards thee, may meet thee with joy in the blessed regions of eternal peace. Grant this, O our tender

and indulgent Father, for the sake of Christ Jesus, my only advocate and Saviour. Amen.

*A prayer for one under apprehensions about his soul,  
or in religious melancholy.*

To thee, O heavenly King, the only comfort of souls, oppressed with troubles like mine, I fly for relief and succour. O let me find refuge under thy healing wings, from the guilt and fear that pursue my soul. All thy waves and storms have gone over me, and the fear of thee hath almost undone me. When I look back at my past life, I can see nothing but sin and folly. When I examine my own heart, I find all gloomy within. When I look forward at death and eternity, I behold a prospect unutterably shocking. Pity me, O my God; let my misery move thee to compassion; let my prayer enter into thy presence; let my cry come up before thee. Who can bear a wounded spirit? O despise not my broken spirit, nor my contrite heart. O forsake me not, lest I perish. O my God, go not far from me, lest the enemy of thy glory, and my poor afflicted soul, should tear me to pieces, when there is none to deliver me.

Suffer me not, thou inexhaustible fountain of all mercy, to fall into distraction or despair; but say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Give some light in the midst of this my darkness, and pour some hope into my bitter cup, for the multitude of my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. Sustain my soul, O my God, with the patience shewn by Job, when the adversary was let loose against him, with the repentance and piety of David when he bewailed his sins, and above all, with the resignation and meekness of thy beloved Son, when thy displeasure at the sins of the whole world lay upon him, and he sweated blood for our offences. Comfort, O my God, and refresh the soul of thy servant, tossed in a storm of guilt and terror, and sinking, if thou save not, in utter despair. So shall my soul magnify the mysteries of thy goodness with a transport of joy and love, as great as my present miseries. Grant this, O God, whose mercy endureth for ever, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

*A prayer for a rich man, or one who is prosperous in his worldly affairs.*

O BOUNTIFUL Lord, I thank and praise thee for the prosperity, with which thou art pleased to bless me. Cause me to know that the plenty which I am surrounded with, is not the effect of my prudence or care, but of thy fatherly goodness to me, and ought therefore to be received with a sincere sense of gratitude. As it is thy free gift, and not the reward of any desert in me, suffer me not to be lifted up; but preserve me still meek and humble in the midst of all my worldly abundance. Let not my riches become a snare to my soul, lest by pride or avarice, or intemperance, I should be rendered incapable of entering by the strait gate into eternal life. I know, blessed Lord, that I am but the steward of this wealth, improperly called mine. O cause me thankfully to consider how highly thou hast honoured me by so great a trust, and to have always before my eyes the important duty I am charged with, that in the great day of accounts thy church, my country, my family, and the poor may witness for me that I was no unfaithful steward. If thou send not thy grace along with these gifts, they will, contrary to thy fatherly intention, turn to so many curses and judgments on me. Have mercy upon me therefore, O my heavenly Master, and suffer me not either to wrap up in a napkin these talents, committed to my charge, nor to trade on them for thy enemy, and my own. Grant this, gracious Lord, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

*A prayer for a poor man, or one who by losses is declining in his circumstances.*

THOU hast given, and thou hast taken away, blessed be thy name, O my God. Suffer me not to repine at thy disposing of thy own, as seemeth best to thy unerring wisdom. What I had, thou gavest me, and I am sensible it is by my folly, or for my sins, that I am now deprived of it. Nay, when I consider, how ill I am qualified to be thy steward, and how inclinable to make a bad use of riches, I cannot but acknowledge thy justice, and admire thy mercy in confining me to narrow circumstances. I have even now more, than I shall be able to give a good account of to thee; and

greater wealth would be but a snare and burden to me. Yet I confess, O my God, that my foolish heart still hankers after the world, although I have renounced it, with all its pomps and vanities, in my baptism. Break this cord, O my God, that ties me down to vain and vexatious things here below, that my affections may rise, and fix themselves on thee, and the better things above. Make me every way moderate in my desires and expenses, and so bless my honest labours, that I may have wherewithal to supply the necessities of myself, and those who depend on me. Let it not displease thee, that I pray to thee for daily bread; and if for the amendment of thy poor servant, thou shalt deny me this, O teach me patience and resignation, and the grace to say with sincerity, Thy will be done. O sanctify my distresses to me, that I may share the portion of Lazarus hereafter, as well as here, for Christ Jesus' sake. Amen.

*For a blessing on the means, made use of for the recovery of health.*

O BLESSED Lord, who hath provided medicines for the cure of our disorders, as well as food for our ordinary sustenance; we know, nevertheless, that it is neither by natural nor human means alone that man liveth, but by thy word. We do therefore, humbly trusting in thy fatherly providence, most earnestly beseech thee to direct all those, who attend this thy afflicted servant, to such means and medicines as may contribute effectually to the recovery of his health. Grant this, O most compassionate God, if it be thy blessed will, for the sake of Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

*When there appears some hope of recovery.*

BLESSED be thy mercy, O thou preserver of men, who hast already somewhat lightened the disorder of this thy servant, and blessed be thy holy name for the comfortable hope of his recovery, which thou hast afforded to him and us all. O perfect this thy compassion, if it please thy infinite goodness, in the re-establishment of his former soundness, both of mind and body. So sanctify to him, as well thy deliverance, as correction, that he may fear to offend hereafter, lest a worse thing come unto him. Cause him gratefully to dedicate his life to thy service, if thou shalt be

pleased a second time to bestow it on him. Grant this, O Father of mercies, we beseech thee, for the sake of Christ Jesus, thy Son, and our Saviour. Amen.

*For a person whose sickness is tedious.*

BLESSED Lord, who knowest that we are but dust, pity, we beseech thee, this thy servant, who hath long groaned under the weight of thy chastising hand. Teach him patience and resignation to thy will by serious reflections on thy long-suffering goodness to him during his provoking perseverance in sin, and by a sincere acknowledgment, that this his affliction, though tedious and grievous, is but a small part of that punishment, which is justly due to his offences. But, that the united load, both of his vileness and thy displeasure, may not overwhelm and force him from the anchor of his salvation, O cause him to remember, in every moment of his trial, that thou art full of compassion, that thou afflictest only to save, and that, as once for thy well-beloved Son, so now for him, thou art preparing a way through tribulation to glory, infinite and endless, in thy presence, where there is fulness of joy for the true penitent, for the patient sufferer, and for the son who bears, as he ought to do, the rebukes of his heavenly Father. Comfort him, O Lord, in this his decay of strength and resolution. Cause the light of thy countenance to shine upon him through this long night of pain and fear. Sweeten, O gracious Jesus, sweeten, we beseech thee, by the consolations of thy Holy Spirit, to thy poor disciple, this cup, so exceedingly bitter, and so like thy own. Remember, O most compassionate Redeemer, him whom thou hast purchased with thine inestimable blood, and let nothing be wanting that thou seest necessary to the broken heart and wounded spirit of a servant, casting up his mournful eyes to thee, his only hope. Amen.

*A prayer for one who hath been a grievous sinner.*

O GOD of all mercy, this thy poor transgressing creature acknowledges himself to be a worm, a monster, and no man, and to have deserved nothing at thy hand, but to be abandoned henceforth to a reprobate mind, and to everlasting shame and misery, for the innumerable, the horrible crimes



of a life, spent almost wholly in the service of thy enemy; for his having obstinately sinned against the continual admonitions of thy Spirit, the sharpness of thy corrections, the dread of thy judgments, the sweetness of thy indulgences, the clear convictions and the loud clamours of his own conscience. In this deplorable condition, loaded with guilt, and hardened in sin, he flies to thee, against whom he hath committed all his offences, not only for mercy, but even for succour against himself. O Lord, remember of what he is made; remember the violence and subtlety of those temptations, wherewith he hath been assaulted; remember his great inability to resist them; remember thy long-suffering patience, already shewn to him, rather than his gross abuse of that patience; in thy infinite mercy remember rather his weakness, than the heinousness of his crimes. O Son of God, the Redeemer of sinners, give not up his cause, for whom thou hast died; but powerfully plead for him, that he may obtain assistance and mercy. O blessed Comforter, effectually succour him, whom thou hast so often succoured, lest all thy past assistances, and his poor soul, should perish together. O Father of mercies, whose mercy is over all thy works; O unbounded goodness and patience, for thy tender mercy's sake; for Christ Jesus' sake, have mercy even yet on this offspring of earth and ashes, this work of thy own gracious hands, this soul, for which thy Son hath died. Have mercy on him, O Lord, and create him anew. Give him that deep and sincere repentance for all his past offences, which thy covenant of peace requires. This fortify with every grace necessary to firmness in so weak a mind. But lest his soul should sink into despair through a just sense of crimes, so nearly approaching to unpardonable, O bear him up with a lively faith in thy mercy, through the all-sufficient merits of Christ Jesus, his advocate and Saviour. Amen.

*A form of thanksgiving which may be used by him who hath been restored to health after a grievous and dangerous disorder.*

O MOST gracious God, for thy corrections, which have roused me, I bless thee; for thy deliverances, which have eased my troubled heart, I bless thee. That thou still regardest me as thy child, I yet feel by thy late afflictions,

and comfortably hope, as I did not in the least despise thy chastisements, nor wholly faint when I was rebuked of thee, that I am thy child, though very unworthy. If I am not an outcast from thy providence, it is entirely owing to thy long-suffering patience, and the grace of thy Holy Spirit. And now, most compassionate Lord, trembling, lest I should again abuse thy goodness, in a sense of my own weakness almost equal to my dread of death under thy rod, I most earnestly beseech thee, never to leave me for a moment hereafter to my weak and unguarded self, nor to this seducing world. Afflict me again, O my Father, rather than suffer me to go astray from thee any more, O thou preserver of souls. Hold thy hand continually over me. Keep me ever mindful of thy terrors, and thy mercies, that I may fear to offend thee, and from the depths of my heart gratefully love thee. When I compare thy mercies with my sins, I am overwhelmed with wonder at thy goodness and my own ingratitude. O now, gracious God, give the victory to love, and cause it to mortify in me all that is unworthy of such unbounded mercy. O cleanse thou my heart, my God, and fill it with the love of thee. Crown all thy other mercies with this, for, without it, thou knowest, they will turn to judgments on my guilty head. Accept, O fountain of pity, the loud thanksgivings of my heart, as thou didst the cries of my late distress. Accept my vows, wherewith I now solemnly bind my soul to its utmost endeavours after a life more acceptable in thy sight. Plead for me, O blessed Jesus, that I may obtain strength. Succour me, O Comforter of souls, that I may not relapse into sin. O Father of mercies, shew thyself still a Father to me, for the sake of Christ Jesus, thy Son and my Saviour. Amen.

*Scriptural ejaculations, is to be used by persons in sickness, or other afflictions, wherein the troubled soul represents its frailties and miseries, and implores the divine pity and assistance.*

I ACKNOWLEDGE my faults, and my sin is ever before me.

Against thee only, O Lord, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

My wickednesses are gone over my head, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.

There is no health in my flesh, because of thy displeasure, neither is there any rest in my bones by reason of my sin.

I am feeble, and sore smitten. I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart.

My heart panteth, my strength hath failed me, and the sight of mine eyes is gone from me.

My spirit is vexed within me, and my heart within me is desolate.

My days are consumed away like smoke ; my heart is smitten down, and withered like grass.

Turn thee, O Lord, and deliver my soul ; O save me for thy mercy's sake.

Hide not thy face from me in the time of trouble. Incline thine ears to me when I call. O hear me, and that right soon.

O Lord rebuke me not in thine indignation ; neither chasten me in thy heavy displeasure.

Correct me, but with judgment, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak.

My soul also is sore troubled ; but, Lord, how long wilt thou punish me ?

Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness ; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Turn thy face from my sins, and put out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free spirit.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and consider my desire. Hearken unto me for thy truth and thy righteousness' sake.

Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Thy sacrifice is a troubled spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.

Lord, thou knowest all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from thee.

I stretch forth my hands unto thee. My soul panteth unto thee, as a thirsty land.

Hear me, O Lord, and that soon, for my spirit waxeth faint. Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

In death no man remembereth thee; and who will give thee thanks in the pit?

Haste thee to help me, O Lord God of my salvation.

In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust. Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.

For thou art a place to hide me in. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth.

*A general prayer to be used with and for the sick, particularly such as are not well instructed in the principles of our holy religion.*

O most just and merciful God, a God of vengeance only to such as continue in sin; but of infinite pity and tenderness to all those, who turn from their sins in a deep and sincere repentance to thee; look down with mercy, we beseech thee, on this thy afflicted servant, whose body is loaded with sickness, and his soul with trouble. Lay not, gracious Lord, the burden on him more heavily than he is able to bear. Whilst thou art pleased to chastise with thy rod, support him at the same time with the staff of thy consolations. Be not extreme to mark what is done amiss, for who may abide it? Enter not into judgment with thy servant, who is but earth and ashes; with the offspring of dust; with the work of thy own gracious hands. Suffer not the angels of darkness to triumph in his

destruction ; but rather give joy to those of light in the conversion and salvation of this sinner. As we trust, he repents him truly of all his former sins, and by a lively faith throws himself entirely on thy mercy and the merits of his Redeemer, so we hope, he shews himself to be even yet thy child ; O shew thyself to be his Father in mercifully accepting his repentance, and forgiving his sins. O blessed Jesus, the anchor of our hope, and the rock of our salvation, who came down from heaven, took our nature on thee, and suffered poverty, persecution, and at length the miserable death of a slave, for our redemption ; arise and maintain thy right to this soul, for which thou hast laid down the price of thy own precious blood ; wash it in that blood from guilt ; cause thy intercessions to be heard above the accusations of its enemy, and turn away the just displeasure of thy Father from it. O blessed Spirit, the light of those who are in darkness, and the strength of the weak, come speedily, we beseech thee, to the assistance of this soul in its great distress and weakness. Give him unfeigned repentance for all the sins and errors of his life. Confirm his faith ; and so sanctify this correction to him, that, joined with his tears, and the blood of Christ, it may help to purify his unclean affections, to rectify his sinful habits, and regenerate his whole nature. If, most gracious God, thou shalt be pleased to prolong his life (which, in compassion to the unprepared state of his soul, and to the fears of his family, we humbly beseech thee to grant) grant also, for thy tender mercy's sake, that he may dedicate it entirely to thy service, and glory ; or if it should be thy will to remove him hence by this disorder, be graciously pleased to wean his affections from all the persons and things of this vain world, to fix them wholly on thyself, and to comfort him, in his last conflict, with well-grounded hopes of peace at the last ; on which awful occasion, blessed Spirit, mightily comfort and support him under a deep sense of his own unworthiness ; blessed Jesus, powerfully urge the merits of thy sufferings for him. Blessed Father, pity thou the extreme anxieties and fears of thy creature, honour thou the merits and intercessions of thy Son, and for his sake, turn thy face with a gracious smile to him, and speak peace to him ; so shall his transported soul lift

up a glad voice, and with a song of infinite joy, of gratitude, and love, magnify thee among thy blessed angels, to all eternity. This, O most gracious God, we most humbly and earnestly beseech thee to grant, not for our sakes, who are utterly unworthy to be heard for ourselves, but for the sake of Christ Jesus, thy Son, and our Saviour. Amen.

SOME  
REFLECTIONS  
ON THE SUBJECT OF  
**P R E D E S T I N A T I O N .**





SOME  
REFLECTIONS  
ON THE  
SUBJECT OF PREDESTINATION.

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A READER of *Paradise Lost*, if versed in divinity, must perceive, that Milton was not less a divine, than a poet. This is every where apparent throughout that most exalted work of genius, and sacred erudition ; but I think, not more remarkably in any part of it, than where he introduces a group of speculative devils in the infernal regions, reasoning deep, and bewildering themselves on the subjects of fate, freewill, &c. They, saith the poet,

Sat apart, and reason'd high  
On Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Freewill, fix'd fate, foreknowledge, absolute,  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.

He then represents these evil spirits as proceeding, from these naturally mysterious subjects, to reason on the nature of good and evil, as if beings, so lately in heaven, and now in hell, could not sufficiently feel the distinction, but must make these also the subjects of refinement.

This is no panegyric on the labours of those too inquisitive divines, who have stirred up a number of endless, and even shocking disputes, on topics, fitter by far for the exercise of so many metaphysical fiends. For my own part, ever since I arrived at any tolerable knowledge of the Scriptures, and of human nature, I have wondered how it came to pass, that so great a number of men, many of them too seemingly of some abilities, should have so miserably lost their way, and indeed I think, their very understandings, on the topics of predestination and freewill. Surely these topics, so far as they lie open to the human capacity, are as

intelligible as any other whatsoever; and so far as they are incomprehensible, every mortal of common sense and modesty must perceive it. It is true one man can penetrate farther into an abstruse subject than another; but there are certain subjects, to the bottom of which, it is quickly perceived, no human penetration can dive. Predestination and freewill are evidently among these. That God, or man, should predetermine, and freely choose, in certain cases, we clearly conceive, and perfectly well know. But how, or by what internal powers, it is, that man does this, or God does that, no man, and I will venture to say, no finite being, can possibly conceive.

If from this impossibility of conception, another equally great should arise, namely, how to account for the consistency of the divine foreknowledge, whereon the predestination depends, and from whence it must, in the order of our ideas, necessarily result; with the human freedom of will, in regard to the same event, are we to be surprised? No. In other branches of knowledge, we soon find the shortness of our line, and stop contented, when we have once stretched it to its full length. How is it then, that, in relation to God, and divine things, that is, in relation to points, universally confessed to be incomprehensible, we never find the end of our line, as is evident by our never finding the end of our refinements? No man attempts to fathom the sea, nor touch the moon, with his finger. Infinitely shorter still is his understanding in regard to the attributes of wisdom and power in God, and of freedom and volition in himself, and to the exercise of the one, as well as the other, in particular acts, especially when God and the human will interfere. Who can tell, for instance, how God, with certainty foresees that action of a man, which that man is perfectly free to do, or abstain from, as he pleases? And again, who can tell, how a man acts freely under the influence of a pre-pollent motive? He deifies himself, who attempts either; for none but God can comprehend God; and none but God can make a man, or consequently, so understand the nature of a man, as to want nothing but the power, to make a man.

There is a difference (indeed it is but a small one) between the capacities of different men, not idiots, whereon vanity, content with narrow grounds to build on, rather than not

build at all, may erect its inch of superiority over a head more grovelling. These may go different lengths in small and easy articles of knowledge, but find a number of higher and more inaccessible truths, at which they are both obliged to stop short, and assent, or dissent without a possibility of saying, why, without a possibility, I mean, in either, to assign a reason from the real nature of the thing. One man too can leap a little farther or higher, than another; but if they come to a wall of forty feet in height, or to a river of a hundred feet in breadth, they are equally unable to pass beyond. There is no greater blockhead than he, who having arrived at the years of discretion, hath not found the extent, or rather shortness of his own understanding. Nor is there in the world so despicable a class of reptiles, as they, who, finding it extremely difficult to creep over a molehill, are for flying over a mountain. The acquisition of knowledge hath not been so unhappily retarded, nor so miserably pestered, with any kind of vermin, as with that race of literary prigs, who set up to dictate on subjects they do not understand, and even to dictate farther, than men of ten times their capacity, can possibly understand.

How impudent! How petulant! Yet how pitiful and ridiculous in the eye of sounder reason!

Of all subjects, the mysteries of religion (that petulance may swell itself into impiety) are the most apt to be singled out for the speculations of these goodly refiners. The dwarf must pull the fruit that hangs too high for the giant to reach. One silly mortal sits down to explain an account for a religious mystery. Another attempts to shew its absurdity. Vanity is equally the motive, and futility the success, of both. Other success had been impossible, supposing their talents of the first magnitude. The truth is, no man of great abilities could ever have busied himself on either side, because a man of great abilities must quickly have seen, that the subject was above him. It is from the little divines only, that we have the huge volumes on mystical theology, one setting up an absurdity, and another pulling it down, and a new bone of contention every now and then thrown in from heads, barren of every thing but trash, till the shelf bends with accumulated folios, wherein the real mystery under debate, is no way concerned, nor in-

deed the combatants, considered as either Christians or divines. They fight for a victory only, not an article of religion, though that is always the pretence.

To put an end to this impious trifling, if possible, and to satisfy the tender, but modest inquirer (many such there are) who is apt to lose himself on the subjects of foreknowledge and predestination in God, of moral freedom in man, and of the interfering between that foreknowledge and this freedom; give me leave, reader, to state the right ideas of that foreknowledge, predestination, and freedom; then to prove the reality of each; and lastly, so to touch on the interference, as to shew how far it may be reconciled to human conception, and how far it ought to be acquiesced in as a mystery, on the same footing with those natural mysteries, which we do, and must acquiesce in, every moment of our lives.

In the first place, the foreknowledge of God is absolute, perfect, certain. It is not, in any the smallest degree, precarious, which it must be, if it is at all conditional, or hypothetical. He foresees or foreknows, what we call accidents, and the free elections of all intelligent creatures, not because he knows the effects of all causes, and the natural dispositions of all rational beings, which undoubtedly he does, but because he hath in himself a faculty, power, or attribute, to which all things, past, present, or future, as they are called in the language of creatures, are ever open and apparent. As the eye of man perceives a large and visible object, placed directly before it, and in a strong and clear light, so, but with an infinitely higher perfection, does the eye of God perceive, the future, if I may so call it, as well as the past and present. To him nothing is, properly speaking, past, or future. All is present. But, to speak as men must speak, he knew every thing perfectly and certainly, from all eternity, and will know to all eternity. He knew for instance, from the beginning, not only, that if John will be good, he must be happy, but knew certainly, that John should exist, and whether he should be good and happy, or wicked and miserable. Thus ought we to think of the divine prescience.

And therefore, in the second place, we conclude, that he decreed or predestinated, from the beginning, the eternal

doom, whether to happiness or misery, of every moral agent. This conclusion may shock an ignorant person, who does not yet see the justice of such decrees ; but it is nevertheless unavoidable. So much I can promise the reader, that his reason, if open to conviction, shall soon be reconciled to it. Perhaps he sees the necessity of it already. Whether he does or not, let him grant it me for the present, as a point demonstrated, and so assume it, only as an axiom of mine, till I make it his too by a clear demonstration.

In the third place, man is a moral agent, that is, may freely choose to do a good action or omit it ; and to do an evil action or abstain from it, as he pleases. Men, it is true, in regard to good and evil actions, are more or less free, according to their natural or habitual dispositions ; but so far as they are moral, that is, accountable agents, just so far they are free ; and how far this is the case of any individual, his Judge does perfectly know. It may however, I think, be safely taken for granted, that no man is absolutely compelled to do, either a good or bad action, but acts in every thing by choice. Threaten two men with immediate death, if they do not offer incense to an idol. One of them complies, and the other dies. He that complies, chooses idolatry, rather than death. He who refuses, makes death, rather than idolatry, his choice. Neither is forced. This I take to be a plain and incontestable truth.

The foreknowledge of God, thus stated, will be easily proved. We destroy the idea of his Godhead the instant we deny his infinite perfection in any one respect. If therefore he is infinitely perfect, his knowledge must be infinitely perfect knowledge, which it cannot possibly be, if there is any one thing, past, present, or to come, whereof he is ignorant, or whereat he does but guess, on probable conjectures or calculations. His knowledge cannot be perfect, without absolute certainty. He must have made the universe, so far at random, as he is supposed to have made it under any uncertainty about any one event. Infinite as he is in every respect, his knowledge is adequate to his infinity, for it is infinite, so that he perfectly knows himself. He can sum the mathematical points of infinite space, though the plain of Saturn's orbit is not so large in comparison of the smallest pip made by a pen, as that pip is in comparison with one of

those points. He can sum the moments of *eternity*, though every one of them is far less to the twinkling of an eye, than the twinkling of an eye is to a century. He foresaw the place of every atom throughout the universe, with all its changes of position. He foresaw the lines that every ray of light was to move in, with all their angles of reflection and refraction. He foresaw the thoughts of all thinking beings, with every word and action, wherein they were, or shall be, brought forth. It is true, he knew the effect of every cause, and of every chain of causes, whether single, or concurring with, or counteracted by other causes. His knowledge, though of this sort, as of a machine, set in motion by himself, was perfect in its kind, but could not be absolutely perfect knowledge, because there were almost an infinity of things, even in the natural world, which could not be governed by any stated chain of causes, such I mean, as must necessarily result from the free choice of intelligent creatures. For instance, the German monk, who invented gunpowder, had it in his choice to make, or not make, his experiments on a mixture of nitre and sulphur. Yet how hath the stated course of natural causes been interrupted or changed by this one invention, the effect of one man's free volition? The contrivers of the gunpowder-plot were free to place that combustible under the parliament-house, or not to place it, as they thought fit, and deservedly lost their lives for choosing to do it, which had surely been an effect of cruelty and injustice, if the men had done it under the influence of compulsory causes. Now, the Divine Being foresaw all this, or he was ignorant of somewhat, till it was attempted. But he did not foresee it in the womb of a stated cause, for it had no such cause, and therefore must have foreseen it by that attribute in himself, which gives him an absolutely perfect knowledge of all things. But farther, had God no other sort of knowledge in regard to the actions of free agents, but what might be drawn from their capacities and dispositions, either his knowledge might here fail him, or such agents could not be free. They too must be but machines, if from their capacities and dispositions it could be foreseen with certainty, what every one of them would, or rather must do. But they cannot be both moral and necessary agents. They cannot, consistently with any idea of jus-



tice, be rewarded, or punished, for that which they did only in necessary consequence of a nature given them by their Maker and Judge. The better to establish this idea of the divine foreknowledge we have experimental proofs in abundance. Such are all the prophecies concerning future actions of men, sometimes of whole nations and empires of men, who must have been free in regard to those actions, or why advanced, or subdued, why preserved or exterminated, by Providence, in consequence of their actions, so foretold? Did God by nature, or how you will, necessitate Judas to be a traitor, and then punish him with despair and death, if nothing more, for his treachery? It is going farther than Atheism to suppose it. Yet he foretold it a thousand years before it happened, Psal. xli. 9. By what faculty or power he did this, we cannot comprehend. We know it sufficiently by its effect. A farther acquaintance with it, as it is an attribute of God, is neither necessary, nor possible, no more than an acquaintance with that power, if another, whereby he called the universe out of nothing.

The Socinians, who deny the absolute foreknowledge of God, allow him no more than a foreknowledge of cause and effect in the natural world, and a conditional or hypothetical foreknowledge in the moral. This is attempting to destroy, rather than to degrade, the nature of God. To be consistent with themselves on this subject, they maintain, that our knowledge is the same in kind with that of God, though less in degree. They go farther. Having thus bounded and diminished the knowledge of God, they as highly exalt their own, and so lessen the degree of difference, setting themselves out as of the same nature with God, as if they thought themselves somewhat better than demigods. But 'as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than their ways, and his thoughts than their thoughts.' The Divine Being did certainly foreknow from all eternity, the thoughts, words, and actions of all mankind.

And therefore, in the next place, 'whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,' some of better minds, 'to be conformed' in true holiness 'to the image of his Son;' and others, of a perverse and wicked disposition, to follow their own free attachment to sin, and to conform themselves to the image of the first transgressor. All men having, by ori-

ginal and actual transgression, forfeited the favour of God, he, on a perfect foresight of their voluntary good or evil dispositions, determined freely to aid and accept the reclaimable, and to reprobate the irreclaimable, so as that they should grow still harder and harder in wickedness, as in the case of Pharaoh, till they should be qualified to answer a second purpose of Providence by their obstinacy, who would not by obedience concur with his first design. If God foreknew all things, he foreknew the lives, and final fate, of the righteous, as well as of the wicked. St. Paul, accommodating his words to the apprehensions of men, states the predestination or decree of God, as the consequence of his foreknowledge, not that the one was, or could be posterior to the other, for both must have been coeval, and from eternity. They are delivered to us as distinct, because we cannot think but by steps, nor know we how to reconcile the predestination to our ideas of God's justice, but by representing it as the effect of his foreknowledge, and the effect is always set down, in the human mind, as following its cause. In the divine mind they are probably one and the same thing. Be this as it may, the foreknowledge and the decree were both eternal. Here now, it is a clear point, that the moral actions of all accountable agents were, with certainty, foreknown, and their doom unalterably fixed, long before any one of them existed. Their thoughts and actions were foreknown, and their happiness or misery therefore predestinated. Such must, of necessity, have been the case. The final judgment therefore will be nothing else, but an open publication, to the whole intelligent world, of God's eternal decrees. Nature, reason, necessity, all dictate this doctrine, and put the truth of it beyond all possibility of doubt. So far the word of God goes to, and no farther. If the knowledge and justice of God are infinite, he must have determined with himself the sentence to be pronounced on every individual in the moral world, before these individuals were brought into being; and why not, as well as after? He had all the knowledge beforehand, requisite for passing sentence; and why should he not have fixed it as well before the state of trial, as after? Nay, he did assuredly fix it, for he with absolute certainty foreknew it, as well as the merits or demerits, whereon it was grounded.

We are now, in the third place, to prove, that man is a morally free agent. Is there any necessity, reader, for proving this to you? Are you not already convinced, that you are somewhat better than a mere machine? If you neither have, nor possibly can have, any such attribute as liberty, why struggle you so hard for both religious and civil liberty? You will tell me perhaps, that you are always determined by the prepollent motive, and that the choice of that motive is never in yourself, but is thrown in your way by accident, the natural course of things, or the providence of God. Perhaps now you are not under any necessity of such determination. Perhaps, if you are, your liberty consists even in being so determined, when rational conviction coincides with the motive, and you choose to be so determined, because it is for your interest or pleasure. If it does not, you cannot call the motive a prepollent motive, without denying yourself to be a rational, as well as a free agent. But your liberty is a mystery of your own nature, unfathomable to your understanding, and is not to be denied because you cannot comprehend yourself, a thing impossible to every being, but the Maker. ‘Known unto himself alone are all his works from the beginning.’ Could you perfectly understand every thing in yourself, you would, so far possess the knowledge of God himself. I ask you however, whether you do not sometimes deliberate on moral actions, before you act? Whether you do not sometimes do a wrong action, and blame yourself for it, when done? Whether the pleasure of sin does not frequently prevail on you so to act, as to subject yourself to the displeasure of God, and in justice, to the sentence of everlasting misery, and the loss of everlasting happiness, which together, your reason inculcates as the infinitely prepollent motive? Do you, now and then, act directly against this motive, and yet call it compulsory? Or is every thing in you allowed to furnish your will with such motives, except your reason? But it is to be suspected, you plead yourself a slave, only that you may not be punished. You correct your child for doing amiss on no other principle, but a thorough conviction, that he can do otherwise. On a jury you sometimes find a man guilty of a crime, which you know the law punishes with death, or from the bench pronounce the sentence of death on a culprit, whom you cannot es-

teem guilty, if you do not think him morally free and accountable. Every age and country on earth have judged as you do in the sentence, and all law and society depend on that judgment. But when you are a culprit yourself, you are then for saying you could not possibly avoid the committal of that robbery or murder, which have on trial, been fully proved against you. How is this? Are you alone, of all mankind, the slave of wickedness? On other occasions you talk of yourself in a much higher strain, as a man governed by reason, as a free agent, as one perhaps, who considers the most lawful authority to be an infringement of your natural liberty. I believe all mankind would look on him as an arrant knave, who, if arraigned, should plead his predominant passion as a full apology for the unlawful action proved upon him, and would look on him as a hair-brain, who should come out with his prepollents on a jury in favour of the prisoner. If we are not free to do good or evil, all reward is a waste of bounty; all punishment, cruelty; and all society, tyranny. All mankind are mistaken about that as a reality, which the necessitudinarians have found out to be but an empty notion; but happily mistaken, for they subsist on the notion, that all men are morally free. We deem it a sort of freedom in a trainable brute, that he can abstain from that which his appetite leads him to, rather than suffer the lash. Here is certainly all the appearance of a choice, made by a dog or horse, though prepollency evidently determines that choice. In ourselves we perceive, not an apparent, but a real and actual choice of that which we prefer for the sake of a prepollent motive. Now, where there is a real choice, there is real freedom. A man who wishes to live, but is hungry, hath, we will suppose, a dish of very good victuals set before him, and at the same time, a dose of poison, with leave to swallow which he pleases. He laughs at the choice, but takes his dinner. Pray will any man in his senses say, this person does not choose life, rather than death, and wholesome food, rather than poison? Or in choosing is not free?

If mankind are not free, at least morally free, in their actions, instead of being placed, in the scale of being a little lower than angels, they are, I fear, set a little lower than brutes. We hold many of the brutes to some degree of ac-

count, and must stand to a much higher one ourselves, whether we think their sense and freedom greater or less, than our own. The judgment of our Maker, with regard to our moral freedom, is legible enough in the book of nature, and still more so in that of revelation. Good actions are generally attended with approbation and profit, and bad ones with disgrace and trouble, even in the present state of things. But why so, if men are necessary agents? If we can act no otherwise than we do; if there is neither virtue nor vice in the world; if to the agent all actions are indifferent; why is the happiness of mankind made, by the natural constitution of men and things, to result from one sort of actions, and their misery from another? Why should the temperate be healthy, and the drunkard sickly? Is it not because the former may drink to excess, and the latter be sober if he pleases? Who drenches the one, or sews up the mouth of the other? There is no man so enslaved by the most inveterate habits of sin, as to have entirely lost his moral freedom; none who cannot abstain from a bad action, if he pleases. This is evident, by his refraining wholly from the sins he is most addicted to, when under the observation of others, particularly of persons, whom he greatly respects. Yet one should think, a propensity awed by beings not much higher than himself, cannot be very strong. Did the same man, by faith, always feel himself in the presence, and under the inspection of God, he would not sin. It proceeds only from an abuse of his own freedom, that he will not consider himself as perpetually in that awful presence. This, it is certain, he might do, were it not that he finds himself uneasy under the sense of such a presence. He therefore chooses to hide from God, in other thoughts, or in want of thought, as his first parents in parallel circumstances did, from the same presence, ‘in the trees of the garden.’ If the force of habit and temptation acting unopposed and uncontrolled, could in any case deprive us of our moral liberty, at least we have an ally always at hand, more than able to counterbalance their power, as soon as called in by an easy meditation. If we will not call him in, it must be owned, this at least is an exercise of choice and liberty. But I utterly deny, that, excepting by total annihilation, or eternal damnation, a man can possibly be deprived of choice and

liberty. I will answer for the truth of this position, tried in every conceivable, every possible case or circumstance, that can be supposed. Liberty of choice is indeed essential to man. In the book of Revelation, the moral freedom of mankind is laid down at the very basis of every law, every precept, every dispensation. Good and evil, life and death, are there, on every occasion, set before us, and a free choice offered to us. If we embrace the former, 'well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' follows as the predetermined consequence of virtue; if we choose the latter, 'why will you die? Go ye accursed into everlasting fire,' is the voice of our judge, already sounded in our ears. What! endless happiness promised beforehand to virtue, and endless misery threatened beforehand to vice! and yet is there no difference between virtue and vice? No truly, one man is forced to do good, and another to do evil, and therefore this ought not to be punished, nor that rewarded. The wildest distraction cannot dictate any thing more remote from common sense, nor the most impious spirit of rebellion against God, any thing more enormously hostile.

In all, or any thing, I have said concerning moral liberty, I would not be understood to assert, that all men are placed in a state of indifference or suspension between inducements to good, and allurements to bad actions. Such state is never necessary to a freedom of choice. Neither do I hold an equal degree of freedom in all men. He who is least morally free in any instance, is nevertheless still morally free, and may, but, I confess, with difficulty, fix his choice against his particular bias. Natural disposition, and habit, have their weight in the mental scales. Good or bad principles have theirs too. But reason, if she pleases, may preponderate on the side of a right choice. Error, and the suggestions of an evil spirit, may strongly interfere on the side of slavery. But if a man hath not quenched the Holy Spirit in himself, that Spirit will 'guide him into all the truth' he wants, and 'the truth shall make him free.' Without the grace of God, we naturally lean to sin, and are never sufficiently free to such good works, and in such a manner, as may be acceptable in the sight of God. But the bias laid on us by natural corruption towards sin, is counter-

balanced by grace, and we are set upright again, and made free to do good or evil. Temptation cannot force us to sin. Nor will the Holy Spirit compel us to serve God, who disdains a service, not founded on choice, nor flowing from the good will, nor from the grateful and affectionate heart of his servant.

From what hath been said, it appears demonstrably, that God, from all eternity, perfectly foreknew every action of every intelligent being; that he therefore, from all eternity, predestinated and prefixed, the doom of every such agent; and that both angels and men are made morally free by their Creator, in respect of every action, whether good or bad.

Nothing farther remains to finish the purpose of this little treatise, than, in the last place, so to touch on the interference of the divine foreknowledge and human freedom, as to shew how far it may be reconciled to our conception, and how far it ought to be acquiesced in as a mystery. This I shall attempt by stating and clearing up the most considerable difficulties, wherewith it is attended in the minds of modest, but bewildered inquirers; and that I may not seem destitute of that humility and modesty, which I wish for in my reader, I mean to confess my ignorance, where I would have him made sensible of, and satisfied with his.

But with all this, is there not some presumption in proceeding farther on subjects of a nature so abstruse, than barely stating and proving the doctrines? As there is nothing knowable, that does not grow dark to our understandings a little beyond the entrance or surface, and wholly incomprehensible, if we attempt to pry still a little farther; and as in these high and mysterious subjects, our inquiries are sure to be sooner thrown out, and to a greater distance too, from all hope of satisfaction; it is my opinion we ought to rest in the full proof of two doctrines, separately exhibited, and set them down for unquestionable truths, though we should be wholly unable to clear up their consistency. If they are truths asunder, they are truths together also, though a poor reptile understanding should not see how. A healthful man knows, that wholesome food will nourish him; but how, he knows not, nor need he care. Why should he not take a useful truth from God in the same manner, and sit down contented?



I will however, lay before the reader those reflections, which have given ease to my own mind, and wish they may do the like by his, on the difficulties arising from the doctrines already stated and proved.

Let the first be, the old weather-beaten difficulty, that future free volitions, or actions, cannot with certainty be foreseen, because the certainty of the foresight makes it necessary, that the action, if foreseen, should be done, whereas the freedom of the agent puts it in his power to do, or not do, that action, and therefore he may abstain from doing it, which must inevitably destroy the certainty of such foresight.

Yet it hath been naturally demonstrated, that God did from eternity know every thing knowable, and experimentally, that he does certainly foreknow, and did actually predict the moral actions of some men, who were unquestionably free to do, or not do those actions. The difficulty therefore must be founded on a mistake, and well it may, for who can deny, there is a faculty or power in God, whereby he foresees with certainty the action of a free agent, in some such manner as we see the action while it is a doing? Our seeing a man act does by no means cause him to act, nor take away his liberty of acting, or not acting. I see John walking, but I do not by my seeing make him walk. I see him afterward sit down, but I do not by my seeing, or by any other power over him, make him sit. He is all the time free to do either the one or the other, and my knowledge of what he is doing, absolutely certain. Farther, I foresee, but with some uncertainty indeed, that he will eat and drink, before an entire year, from the present minute, shall go round, or die for want of food. But my foresight, whether certain, or uncertain, it matters not in this case, neither causes him, nor hinders him, to eat. He is free as to either. Now God foresees with certainty, we hypothetically and uncertainly; but there is no more reason for supposing his certain, than our uncertain foresight, to bear on the freedom of any created agent; not, I am sure, that we can conceive. If it should be said that God foresees, because he first causes or predestines the thing foreseen, this is inverting the natural order, laid down by St. Paul, and making God the author of all sins he foresees.

The question now is, whether God by some faculty, 'analogous to a sixth sense in us,' concerning the nature and operation of which we can have no idea, having no such sense, may not as naturally foresee, as we see, the free action of another man. To say, he hath no such faculty, is to deny, without a possibility of knowing a single tittle of the fact to be affirmed, or denied, a truth which, after all, must be received as a truth, or God cannot be God, nor the Scriptures the word of God; but the word of some other being, more knowing than God, who could with certainty predict, a thousand years before, the free volitions and actions of moral agents. Let me earnestly entreat you, my reader, to think in this matter, as a man born blind does by the sense of seeing in you. He can form no idea of that sense, nor of its operation, yet you easily convince him, that you perceive innumerable objects at too great a distance for him to perceive by any, or all his senses. He wonders, but he believes; nay, by repeated experiments is compelled to believe. All this time, he knows you to be but a man, in all other respects, of the same nature with himself. If he were sent into the world, without the sense of seeing, for no other reason, but to convince the rest of mankind, that in the infinitely incomprehensible being, there may be certain faculties and powers, of which they can have no notion, and one particularly, which gives him a sight of future actions; can we suppose a more beneficent end in the natural defect of our sightless neighbour? This is a case so nearly in point, that the faculty of foreseeing in God is scarcely more a mystery to you, than the faculty of seeing in you, is to the man who cannot see. A man blind from his infancy, is more easily convinced of this faculty in God, than a seeing man; his own case compared with that of others, naturally leading his faith to a conclusion, without which he had been an infidel, like many, who are cursed with the sense of seeing; so that we may cry out, as our Saviour did in a case not very dissimilar, 'for judgment' are the doctrines of pre-science and freedom made known, 'that they who see not may see, and that they who see may be made blind.'

For my own part, had no man ever been born blind, I should have found no difficulty in believing, that God is omniscient, that there are other faculties in God, than in

man, and infinitely superior, and that by one of these he can more easily and certainly foresee the free action of his intelligent creature, than I can see it. Of this I am perfectly well assured; as I am, that I can freely do a good or bad action, or omit it, and that I ought to feel remorse for the one, or joy for the other, as for an action peculiarly my own. If I do not know how this foreknowledge in God, and this freedom in me, consist with each other, it is no matter; I know they are consistent, which perfectly satisfies me, who know a thousand other things with perfect certainty, the consistency of which I am too ignorant to see. I will not, however, confess myself ignorant of that which I really know, because of my ignorance of other things which I neither do, nor can know. I cannot doubt, much less will I deny, that my soul and body are connected into the person who writes this, though I am as wholly ignorant of the copula, by which they are united, as I am of the consistency of God's foreknowledge with my own liberty of action. Here, I conceive, is divine prescience, and human freedom of action, perfectly reconciled to a modest and rational understanding, content to comprehend in this as far, and no farther, than in all other knowable matters, which, pursued to the utmost limits of human comprehension, become there as mysterious and unfathomable, as this foreknowledge and freedom have ever appeared to be in the most gross or sceptical understanding.

Another difficulty attending the doctrines, proved, is that predestination of our everlasting doom shocks both the understanding and heart, as repugnant to the infinite justice and goodness of God. A man does not make himself, does not create his own strong or weak understanding, his good or bad dispositions of nature; nor place himself under parents, or education, or circumstances, or in an age or country, of his own choosing. Yet from these result that cast and tendency of the man to virtue or vice, which foreseen, procures, according to my doctrine, that favour and grace of God, or that rejection and reprobation, which were predestinated, ere he existed.

Why then are we not as much shocked with the doctrine of a future judgment? Is it not because it follows our actions, as reward should naturally come after merit, and pu-

nishment after demerit? Yes; and so they do, predestination notwithstanding. Our reward and punishment are not to begin till our state of probation shall be over, and our sentence justly passed. But if we have freely obeyed, or rebelled, where is the difference to us, whether our sentence was fixed upon fore or afterknowledge? I can indeed see none. If the judge and jury perfectly know beforehand, that the prisoner is guilty, or not guilty, of the indictment, and that on trial, the evidence for him or against him, will be full and irresistible, may they not as justly fix and determine his sentence, ere they go into court, as when the whole proceeding is over? The trial is of use to others, in the way of satisfaction and example, but can give no new light or conviction to the triers. The predestination I have defined in this treatise, is a doctrine demonstrated, and must be received as a truth, from which a good man may extract comfort, and a bad man terror, as our seventeenth article hath observed. Neither the doubts of ignorant persons, nor the cavils of pert and infidel sciolists, will ever be able to shake the belief of it, in minds that have well digested the subject. As to the latter part of the difficulty, we must confess, that in fact some men have by nature better understandings, better dispositions, and better opportunities of encouraging the advancement of both, from education, &c. than others. Let the difference arise from whence it will, it is certain God foresaw it, and will make the former happy, if they uniformly go on to improve these initial advantages, and the latter miserable, if they do not use their best endeavours to replace their natural evil dispositions with such as are better. Trace the difference between these two sorts of men to what source you please; and be the reasons of God's acting by each in the manner laid down, ever so unfathomable, the fact, both in respect to their widely different kind of lives, and his widely different manner of regarding them, is an incontestible fact, wherein he must be justified either by reason, or at least by faith, if we do not mean to arraign and judge our Judge. Here is a deep mystery. Yet into this darkness we may bring with us such light, as shall dissipate, in some measure, the doubts of rational and modest men. So far as this cannot be perfectly accomplished, may be safely left to faith in the divine goodness.

It is true, the providence of God, or the natural course of things, education, custom, &c. give every man his particular nature, and largely influence the peculiar temper and tendency of his actions. Yet it must not be forgotten, that every man is born morally free, and intelligent too as to the difference between virtue and vice, and their effects on his own happiness or misery. Over and above this, God offers his grace and assistance to every man, and, in the course of his providence, cherishes, corrects, warns every man. Every man therefore may be a good man if he pleases, and is surely to blame, if he is the reverse. There is nothing a bad man values himself so much for, as his liberty, and nothing he more grossly abuses. To tell him he is a slave, or which is the same thing, a necessary agent, is to offer the highest affront to his understanding, or at least to his opinion of it. Place before him a dish of wholesome food, and a cup of deadly poison, tell him the opposite qualities of both, and insist on his inability to choose the former. He falls to, and proves the falsity of your assertion, with the reality of his own sound sense and liberty. Now place moral good and evil, with their infinitely important consequences, before him. Bid him choose. He does, but embraces the evil, and instantly throws the blame on his nature, on Providence, on fate, on custom, or on education; that is, he violently maintains, he is a fool, a slave, or a mere machine, under irresistible motives to wickedness. Yet he every day acts against those motives or temptations from one passion, in order to gratify another. God gave him grace sufficient to overcome them all, but he chose to be wicked, knowing, that to be wicked is to be miserable. He took party with temptation against grace, and that with all his heart. God foresaw it, and must have looked with displeasure on it; but, in fixing his punishment did certainly make large allowances for his weakness of understanding, and want of resolution. On the other hand, 'whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,' as an introduction to their everlasting happiness, in consequence, we may reasonably suppose, of his having foreseen somewhat in them, which conciliated his favour and blessing, which somewhat, style it as you will, must, one should think, have been the result of freedom, or it

could not have rendered its possessors the objects of divine favour, for with God necessity can have no merit.

Some add to this another difficulty, still more bold and futile, namely, if God, with certainty foresaw, that a very great part of mankind would be wicked, and finally undone by their sins, why did he create them. What compelled him, against the tendency of his infinite justice and goodness, to make a number of beings, whose misery he foresaw inevitable?

It is certain, that God was perfectly free in all respects, and particularly in the work of creation, and more particularly still in the creation of all morally free beings. This is an unfathomable mystery; and it is another, that one half of eternity passed, ere the infinitely good God gave being to any creature. God made all things, free, as well as necessary agents, with perfect freedom, when and how he pleased, and could have remained to all eternity without creating any thing, or could have created the world in another manner than he did. To prove this, it is enough to say, that he is perfectly good, freely good, and in no degree, or respect, a necessary agent. He foresaw with certainty all he made, yet made all without the smallest compulsion from his own nature, from his plan of creation, or from his foreknowledge. These things are true, and must be consistent though no created mind can shew how. It is even too bold to say, as some do, that he made the world in the best manner he could make it, for it is possible he may have made innumerable worlds, and one in a better manner, than another. It is, I think enough to say, as he himself did, on finishing this system, 'behold, all is good.' The men who make this objection, so extend their own liberty, as to leave it little or no bounds; and at the same time, are for cramping the liberty of God. They represent him, not only as bound by eternal laws, which he must not, cannot transgress, but as a necessary agent in respect to all the good he hath done, or can do. Now, I esteem his goodness voluntary, and from my soul thank him for the being he hath given me, as voluntarily given; and for all the infinite good he hath done to me, as voluntarily done. The lawless subjects would needs give laws to their king. They would set themselves at liberty in action, and tie him up in judgment. What is

this, but preparing the way for wickedness by petulance and presumption? As to the present difficulty, I must, after proving it, insist, that God made his intelligent creatures morally free, that he gave them understanding to distinguish between good and evil, a love of good, and an abhorrence of evil, and set both before them. It follows, therefore, that if they choose the evil, they are to blame themselves for the consequence, not to murmur against their Maker. Being is a free gift of God, and a blessing in itself to all, on whom it hath been bestowed; so great a one too, that many prefer eternal misery to annihilation. To this blessing are annexed ten thousand others, all of them as freely conferred, previous to any actual merit in the receivers. But when mankind had perversely abused all this, and flown into open disobedience and rebellion against their Maker, he with infinite pity schemed their redemption by the death of his Son; and grace sufficient for their retrieval, by the aids of his Holy Spirit. After all this, have a race of free beings any reason to complain? Have they not numberless reasons to be thankful? Not they, you rejoin, whose misery was foreseen by their Creator. Yes they too, I insist, for what hath God done to them, but that, which you and they unanimously agree to be very good. If they are undone, I repeat it, their own voluntary act and deed alone hath undone them. You will expect a reason from me for calling this a futile difficulty. But have I not a right so to call it, after proving, that the foreknowledge of God is not conditional, hypothetical, or precarious, but absolutely certain? He did not foreknow in this manner, if such and such angels and men are created, they will be wicked and miserable. No, he foresaw, as well their existence, as their wickedness and misery, with absolute certainty. That his foreknowledge of their actions was infallible, is an unquestionable truth. That some of them are or will be, miserable, is an unquestionable truth. That he nevertheless freely gave them being, is another unquestionable truth. If you cannot, in your own mind, reconcile these glaring truths to one another, nor take it modestly for granted, that they are reconcilable to one another, and to the divine justice and goodness; that is, if you will assent to nothing but so far only as you can account for it, nor will at all believe in God, nor trust him with his own



creation, I am sorry for it, and pray God to give you a more rational turn of mind, it being wholly beyond my ability to help you, in that important respect, any other way. But still remember this, that you are a morally free agent, that the foreknowledge, and predestination of God, do not in the smallest degree, bear in upon, diminish, or any way affect, your moral liberty; and that therefore, if you are undone, you are undone by yourself, in direct opposition to all the aids that could be so lent you, as to leave you still a free being, and in spite of infinite mercy itself.

To confess, that God freely gave being to a number of creatures, whom he foresaw, first in a state of sin, and then in irretrievable misery, and then to ask, why he gave them being, is to grant the act of God, and then to question its rectitude. That this attack on the divine justice is as foolish as it is impious, may be easily shewn. The very thing, which represents the universe, as a work worthy of its Maker, is the creation of intelligent and free beings. For these all other creatures were made. In these therefore must be found, not only by far the most excellent and glorious part, but also the end and perfection, of the creation. The blank of nonentity had done as much honour to the Divine Being, as a world of machinery, or necessary agents, without one mind to contemplate or enjoy it. Again, of all the objects in view on the intended production of a world, virtue, we naturally conceive, must have stood foremost. Yet virtue in rational creatures is impossible, without liberty given to be vicious, and, with them both, room made for reward and punishment. If therefore virtue was willed by the Deity, vice must have been permitted. The justice and mercy of God must have been for ever unknown, nay, utterly unemployed, if both virtue and vice had been excluded from the system of things. It was therefore fit, that intelligent and morally free agents should have been created, though the Maker, with absolute certainty, foresaw, the good use which some were to make of this freedom, and the gross abuse of it in others. Shall not God make one to be good and happy, because he foresees that another will be wicked and miserable? Is the same key that shuts hell, to lock up heaven too? Is God, in order to exclude a devil out of his world, to exclude himself also? Lest some creatures should do evil, is neither

God, nor his other creatures, ever to do good? Is it not a divine benefaction to give us our choice of infinite happiness or misery, since the power to distinguish and choose is given us also? Well, some one will say, I am more naturally and powerfully inclined to vice, which brings on misery, than to virtue, which is attended with happiness. Be it so; yet are you not by far more inclined to heaven, than hell, and may not the fear of the latter push you, as fast, as the desire of the former, draws you upward? If it may, be thankful, that hell also was created, for by your own confession you want the influence of both.

Well, but to pursue my subject, I will suppose you ready to assent to the doctrines and solutions laid before you, were it not for a still greater difficulty, thrown in your way by St. Paul, who appears to handle the point of predestination, in a manner, and upon principles, very different from mine. He, you urge, says nothing of moral freedom, but speaks of God as ‘predestinating some to be conformed to the image of his Son; as loving some, and hating others, before they were born, or had done any good or evil; as having mercy on whom he will have mercy, without regard to him that willeth, or runneth,’ but only to his own intention to shew compassion; as ‘raising up a man, that he might shew his power in him; and as hardening whom he will.’ On this, you observe, the apostle starts an objection, ‘Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?’ and answers it thus; ‘Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?’

This passage of the apostle did, I confess, appear not only dark, but dreadful to me, for a long time, and must have still continued to do so, but for two things; first, his illustrating the argument, in reference to the reprobate and rejected, with such cases, as of Esau and Pharaoh, which seem

to point only at the temporal dispensations of providence, and the use which God makes of bad men in this world, to bring about his gracious purposes of faith and salvation for others, brought within the verge of his mercy and favour by better dispositions, foreseen; and secondly, his having said in the foregoing chapter, that, 'whom God did foreknow, he also did predestinate;' which, although it does relate to Christianity, and consequently to a future life, I take as a key to all he delivers on the subject. He sets forth the predestination as posterior to, and an effect of, the foreknowledge. Let us therefore lay it down for a rule, that whomsoever God did foreknow to be of dispositions acceptable to himself, and predisposed to faith and obedience, he elected as his own children, loved, and predestinated, not only to be vessels of honour in this life, that is, to be called into his church, but to be happy for ever. These are they whom St. Peter, speaking to the very same purpose, calls 'the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' Does man elect with, and God without, reason? No, he foreknew, and therefore elected, such as were fit objects of his choice. And let us also take it for a rule, that whomsoever he foreknew to be of evil and perverse dispositions, he rejected, hated, and predestinated to be vessels of dishonour here and hereafter. All this, we suppose for the present, he did, ere any of them was brought into being, or had began to act. It was as reasonable, that he should love the lovely, and hate the hateful, before, as after, they had made proof of their opposite qualities on the stage of action, since he perfectly foreknew what each of them would be, and do. We love the man whom we do but believe to be of a good mind and heart, before we see any proofs of either. We are affected in a contrary manner to those, whom we but think of an opposite turn. And why should not God have stood so affected towards both kinds of men, since he perfectly knew them, before they had a being. Approbation, esteem, and love, grow as naturally out of foreknowledge, especially when perfect and certain, as out of actual and experimental trial. The same is true too of abhorrence and contempt.

Taking rise then from the divine foreknowledge, and

supposing the distinction between elect and reprobate to be thereby made, let us consider the whole race of mankind, already created, under the hands of God, as a mass of clay under those of a potter; and let us allow, that he hath a right to mould, by his providential dispensations (for the passage evidently relates to the works of providence, not of creation) the separate parts of that mass into what forms he pleases; who shall say unto him, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Who shall say, Why hast thou made me a mean utensil, and that other a more dignified piece of furniture? Are they not his own property by right of creation out of nothing? If they are, surely he may, of his own unmerited goodness, raise up one, and put down another. But he can, and one day will assign the reason of this preference. Nay, even now we may suppose it. If the pieces of clay, now animated, shew a strong disposition to form themselves by particular and opposite models, and if he saw this from the beginning, the good, whom he helps to be better, have reason to be thankful, and the bad, whom, after rejected means of reformation, he hardens to providential purposes of great moment, for which their own natural perversity could not sufficiently qualify them, have no reason to charge him with injustice. But if the whole mass hath degenerated into an inaptitude to the finer forms, and it requires a miracle to restore it, shall the artificer be charged with partiality and injustice, if, working some part of it anew into its pristine purity, he should of this make such vessels as are intended for the highest purposes, and of the rest such only, as are applicable to lower and more sordid, but still necessary, uses? Pharaoh was, in himself, a tyrant and an oppressor. But tyrant as he was, if God had not hardened his heart, he could not have gone the lengths he did, nor so effectually have served the purposes of Providence. Lost already to himself, God renders him still more impenetrable to conviction, that in him the mighty power of God may be made more fully manifest in two numerous nations. If the creature of God will not serve him one way, why should not the Creator force him to be useful another? The devil and his angels having raised the first rebellion in the universe of God's creatures, and fallen from a state, not of faith, but of vision; not of trial, but of complete happiness, were deserv-

edly excluded from mercy, and driven, through total dereliction and despair, into such a horrible obduracy in wickedness, as rendered them not only examples of divine vengeance, but most useful instruments, in the hands of overruling wisdom and power, for the execution of a providential scheme, out of which more good to the cause of virtue, and more glory to God, will be derived, than had resulted from their perseverance in duty.

This hardening, which at first hearing sounds so harshly, ought to be considered. When the heart is softened, and made penetrable to the motions of grace, by affliction, &c. we with reason believe this change to be the mixed effect of God's Spirit, and the towardly disposition of that heart yielding to chastisement, and opening itself to the influx of new and better thoughts, with which the divine agent of virtue inspires it. This blessed Spirit alone can sufficiently warm and soften the heart of man. But if any man, by long-continued resistance, and repeated insults, hath quenched the Spirit within him, then it is, that, for want of a mollifying warmth, he grows hard like wax, and becomes incapable of good impressions. His hardness is the mixed effect of his own cold and perverse disposition, and of the divine dereliction; yet, to conclude it was not in his power to subdue his disposition to the motions of grace, is to exculpate him entirely, as having no hand in hardening himself. Here we may discern whence arises the first degree of hardness, which is enough to fit a man for his own destruction. There is however a higher degree, which may be requisite to qualify him for the purposes of providence; and this he is brought to by an evil spirit, permitted, if not sent, to enter into his heart, and there to work every spring of action within him. Such was the case of Saul, after the Spirit of God had left him. And more remarkably still, such was the case of Judas, after having received the sop, when the devil entered into him, and hardened him for an action, which we cannot suppose him capable of, merely on the strength of his own peculiar avarice and other bad qualities. Nevertheless, thus hardened, though he became an instrument of the devil in the murder of Christ, was he not an instrument of God too, in working salvation for all men? In the same manner I think is to be explained, that re-

markable passage of Isaiah, concerning the hardness and blindness of the Jews, quoted by our Saviour himself, by St. John, and twice by our apostle; 'The Lord said, Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.' All this, in St. John's quotation, is given as the act of God; and in that of St. Paul, the Jews are charged with closing their own eyes, Acts xxviii. 27, and again, Rom. xi. 8. The act is ascribed to God; from whence I conclude, that it was the mixed effect of divine providence and Jewish perversity. He who hath considered the infinite service done to Christianity by the Jews, as thus blinded, and consequently enemies to Christ and his gospel, will at once perceive the drift of this providence, and accede to the explanation I have given to the places of Scripture under consideration.

There is another expression of the apostle in this passage, which seems to bear still harder on my assertion of moral freedom in man. It is this; 'So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.' I hope I have laid nothing across the real sense of this text. Certain it is, I could not have intended it, for I ascribe every thing to the mercy of God, and nothing to man, but a mere will and choice, often not more than a bare wish. But does not the text imply, that man hath a will, as well as a power to run? And what, in reference to good and evil actions, is the will of man? Let St. Paul himself answer the question. 'To will,' saith he, 'is present with me. When I would do good, evil is present with me.' It is of man 'to plough and sow, but it is of God to give the increase. He that planteth' even the gospel, 'and he that watereth, is nothing, but God that giveth the increase.' Yet Paul was in the right to plant, and Apollos to water, though the labours of both should have come to nothing, had not God been pleased to bless and prosper those labours. The true meaning then of the text in question is, man may will, and so far is free, but his will is of no force to accomplish its own purpose. The mercy of God, and his free grace alone, can do that. However,

is not God pleased with a will to do good in man, who might, if he were to follow the corrupt dispositions of his nature, as readily, or more readily, will to do evil?

You will say then, with the opponent in the passage, 'Why doth God yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?' To this question I have already given the answer of St. Paul, and here shall add, which is a known truth, that all wicked men have resisted the will of God, nay, and good men too, but in a less heinous degree. The apostle could not have intended to grant, that no man does, or can, resist the will of God, for he speaks of men who 'resist the truth,' that is, the truths of God, and says, 'the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Did this blessed saint believe, that sin is agreeable to the will of God? Why then should he exhort men to forsake their sins, to die to sin, &c. Surely he thought it utterly offensive to him, who 'cannot look on sin.' The truth is, the objector means no such horrible piece of impiety, as may be easily understood by St. Paul's answer, or if he did, he deserved no answer. But supposing he said these words in reply to those of the apostle, 'whom he will, he hardeneth,' which was really the case, then we readily grant, that a man hardened, as Judas, for a particular purpose of Providence, does not, in regard to that purpose, resist the will of God, though he often did so before, for purposes of his own, which provoked God to give him over to a reprobate mind, since which, being no longer disposed to obey the moral will of God, he like the devil, is compelled to promote the providential purposes of his Maker, even by his wickedness. In one sense, no man resisteth the will of God, who permits us, generally speaking, to act as we please. In another, we act against his will, as often as we sin, for he saith, sin not.

Having sufficiently delivered my thoughts on the most difficult parts of this passage, and having often insisted, that God predestinated those, whom he foreknew, to be conformed to the image or resemblance of his Son, on account of the good and nurturable dispositions he saw in them, I leave it to the reader to judge for himself, whether this was the foreseen recommendation, for which they were thus elected and preferred to others; or whether it was



somewhat else in them, which, ere they were yet raised out of the quarry, gave the great statuary an occasion to judge, that they were of fit materials to take the figure and polish of so beautiful an image. He chose the block because he saw a Jesus in it. While some are said to be predestinated to this image, it is not said here, or elsewhere, that any man was predestinated to wickedness, or the image of the devil. We find indeed, that Christ, 'was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, to be taken,' and 'by wicked hands to be crucified and slain;' but it is not said there, that God predestinated his crucifiers to the perpetration of that enormous deed. He foresaw it indeed in all its circumstances, as the concurrent act of all who were concerned in it. Nay, he determined and decreed the amazing transaction. But it is not intimated, that he caused any one of them, Caiaphas, Pilate, Judas, to act the part he did in the horrible tragedy. Yet, had even this been said, it could not have represented God as the author of their sin, inasmuch as having foreseen the extreme readiness of these wretches to run into the most flagitious crimes, if he had appointed them to this particular piece of cruelty, so necessarily instrumental to the salvation of mankind, rather than suffered them, at that time, to vent their wickedness on other objects, what had he done more, than brought good out of evil, and employed the devil, and his infernal agents, in the service of infinite goodness?

It is true, that all have sinned, which, without moral freedom, not one could have done, and all freely subjected themselves to the sentence of eternal death, and therefore the execution of that sentence on all could bring no imputation of injustice on their Judge. On the other hand, his mercy must be glorified, if he is pleased to save some. If he 'hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,' be it for what reason you will, is this to impeach his justice? Surely not. If you forgive one debtor your demand, are you therefore dishonest or unjust, in exacting your money from another, whom you love less, though perhaps you love only out of whim and humour; and will you charge God with partiality or injustice, for a preference founded on some weighty reason, which you do not know, and on infallible wisdom too, which you readily acknowledge?

At the end of this much agitated passage, the apostle saith, 'But if' (what if, in our English version does not rightly give the sense of the original) 'God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles' (the other verses from the twenty-fourth to the thirtieth, of the ninth chapter to the Romans, being all thrown in as parenthetical); 'what shall we say then?' ver. 30, why, 'that the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to the righteousness, which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith.' Any other way of interpreting the place, but this, goes against the rules of grammar, and wrongs the sense and connexion of the apostle. He seems to have kept this question in reserve for a yet farther solution of the difficulties pressed upon him by the subject, and for a winding up of his argument in an application of the whole to believers and unbelievers; to the infidel Jews, on whom blindness in part had fallen, and who, for this, as vessels of wrath and dishonour, were made examples of divine vengeance; and to the Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, who had attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith. This is as much as to say, what will you, or can you, say, but that God is just, if he, with longsuffering and undeserved patience, bears the perversity of men, voluntarily, obstinately, and desperately wicked, who have rendered their own destruction inevitable, in order to shew his power and majesty by the judgments justly poured on them at length, that all others, at once adoring his lenity and equity, may 'learn to hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously;' and that a better sort of men, who for their voluntary attachment to goodness, and their ready acceptance of his gospel, even under circumstances of persecution on that very account, may be admired and honoured by the rest of mankind, and the more, for a fair comparison with the former? Here the apostle represents God as angry

with the wicked, whom he calls 'the vessels of wrath;' but why angry, if not for their wickedness, and abuse of his patience? Surely it could not have been the meaning of this saint, that God was angry with them for no reason, for nothing; and surely, if in sinning they had been necessary agents, and had only done, what they could not avoid doing, he must have been angry at them without cause or reason. On the other hand, why was he better pleased with such as are here called, 'vessels of mercy,' but because, having seen them well disposed to a free election of righteousness, he had, even ere he called them, prepared them by a portion of preventing grace, for the glory of that election, and of the high improvements in piety and virtue, to be made in them, as naturally consequent thereto? If in pursuance of this reasoning, we conclude, that God, having foreseen the dispositions and actions of all men, did decree and predestinate, for the well-disposed, assistance sufficient to conform them with the image of his son; and decreed also, that the ill-disposed should not have the offer of this assistance, only to be slighted and abused; or, which is equally and perfectly just, should have predestinated them to the dishonour and misery, he foresaw, they would choose; we shall, I believe, safely rest in a great truth, consistent in itself, and perfectly consonant to infinite mercy in regard to the former, and infinite justice in regard to the latter. St. Paul sets forth predestination as the effect of foreknowledge, and under this position, as explanatory of his subsequent reasonings, proceeds to that passage, the more difficult part of which we have endeavoured to clear up by a short, but, I hope, satisfactory descant upon each.

God then, from all eternity foresaw, with certainty, the being, and actions, whether good or bad, of every man; and from all eternity decreed or predestinated his fate, as to happiness and misery, disgrace or glory. It was long after this, that he entered on his work of creation, and after that again, but immediately, on the work of providential interposition. If therefore in the course of either work, or of both together, he hath formed some vessels to honour and some to dishonour, what hath St. Paul done more, than every other man must do, in justification of God's dealings with men? Most certainly every man must confess there

was in God a perfect foreknowledge of every thing ; must consequently believe, that he prejudged every man ; must be fully convinced, that he afterward peopled heaven with angels, and earth with men, among which orders of being some have voluntarily transgressed, and have inherited, or shall inherit, the punishment, previously threatened to their transgression. Must he not, to conclude, have therefore, either as Creator, or as the providential Governor of his works, made some vessels to dishonour, since, with absolute certainty, he foresaw both the actual existence, and obstinate impenitence in wickedness, of some, who had it in their power to adorn his creation with shining examples of piety and virtue ? Hath he not then made some to dishonour, since, ere he made them, he perfectly foresaw what they were to be, and what they would actually do ? We cannot possibly take the words of St. Paul in a more rigorous sense than this ; yet nothing can be more clearly true, than this. Let him who dares, call the rectitude and justice of his Maker in question for it. The moral freedom of angels and men sufficiently accounts for the whole to my understanding. The truth is, ‘ God made them all upright, but they have sought out to themselves many inventions,’ and made themselves wicked. God foreknowing this, nevertheless did give them being, and in that sense only, and so far only, is said to have made them to dishonour, but to a dishonour of their own choice. A man begets a son, gives him good instructions, and sets him a good example ; is he to be blamed, if the youth proves a villain, and ends his days on the gallows, though the father, by begetting, may be said to have made him a vessel of dishonour, for had he not begotten him, he had never been either wicked or unhappy. I do not propose this as a parallel case, in any sense, but that of our apostle, to whose meaning, if I mistake not, it comes fully up.

The reasonings of the apostle, thus cleared respectively on the particular parts, that seem to require elucidation, may be briefly summed up in the following manner, beginning at the 29th verse of the 8th, and ending with the 33d of the 11th chapter. The candid, intelligent, and attentive reader will easily perceive, that in this short sketch I do justice to the drift of our apostle.

Whom God foreknew to be of good dispositions towards religious truth, towards faith and virtue, he predetermined to a resemblance of Christ in true holiness of life. These he called into his church; these he justified as partaking by faith the righteousness of Christ; and these he exalted into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. What shall we say then to these things? Why, we shall readily say, If God be for us, who shall be against us? He hath freely given his Son for us, and with him every thing we stand in need of, as his children adopted in Christ Jesus. Nothing therefore shall be able to separate us from our love of Christ, nor from the love which God bears to us as members of Christ.

As to the Jews, who are my brethren according to the flesh, I am in extreme pain for them, on account of their general unbelief, so great indeed, that I would willingly suffer any thing, even the second excommunication, or separation from Christ, though not a final nor total excision, if by that means I might bring them into his gospel, or render them objects of his mercy. However, they are not all infidels. There is a remnant or number of them, who, by the grace of God have embraced the gospel, and are brought within the terms of salvation. In regard therefore to the Jews, the word of God hath taken some effect. They are not, it is true, all Israelites, who are descended from Israel. The children, to whom the promise of God was given, are not to be reckoned according to the flesh, for the carnal minded are rather the enemies of God. This is no new thing, for it was just so in the days of Abraham and Isaac. The promise went in favour of Isaac, the son of Abraham by Sarah, and not in favour of Ishmael; and again in favour of Jacob, though the younger son of Isaac by Rebecca. These and their posterity, as children of the promise, were counted for the seed; and these as foreseen by God to be of proper dispositions, were beloved and chosen by him, ere they were born. Their brothers, foreseen too as unfit objects of divine preference, were hated or rejected, so as that the designation of a peculiar people, and the birth of the Messiah, by whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, were affixed to the line of Isaac and Jacob. Is God now, on account of this preference, unjust? No, for

surely he hath a right to bestow his unmerited favours on whom he will, and reject whom he will, especially as their personal merits and demerits respectively, were with certainty foreseen. As to demerits, the case of Ishmael and Esau may be well illustrated by that of Pharaoh, who blinded by himself, and hardened against the most glaring causes of conviction, was raised up to worldly power, and farther hardened, that God, in him, might shew the superiority of his own power over all kings, and their gods, in the sight of his people, and of all mankind. No doubt, Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh, with their will, would have wished for, and chosen a better lot, than that which fell to their share, though a great deal happier, at the worst, than they deserved. But their will was no rule with God, who saw farther, and schemed with infinitely higher wisdom and goodness, mercy, let me call it; for the best of them, on either side, had no right to claim any thing from God. If Isaac and Jacob were better men than their brothers, they were not good enough to bring in God as their debtor for any thing. It may be here objected, why did God find fault with Ishmael, Esau, and Pharaoh, since they did not in any thing resist his will? And it may be as easily answered, that they did resist his will, or they had been better men than they were. It may be also asked of the objector, whence he conceived the impious boldness to arraign the dispensations of Providence, who hath surely as much right to choose out of mankind, whom he shall raise to honour, or throw into disgrace, as a potter hath to make, out of the same lump of clay, one utensil for a higher, and another for a lower purpose, all mankind being his own property. This is allowed to a potter who cannot distinguish any part of his clay as finer than another; but undoubtedly much greater is the right of God over men, whose comparative fitness or unfitness, for any purpose, he can distinguish with infinite exactness. But if God was willing to shew his wrath to, and his power over, a worse kind of men, and did, for that end, exalt the one and debase the other, in the place of infidel Jews, adopting the believing Gentiles, what shall we say to it, but that the Gentiles were preferred, on account of their faith to the Jews, who went about presumptuously to establish their own righteousness by the works

of the law? Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth in him, and shall confess with the mouth that God hath raised him up from the dead. This man shall be saved. There is no difference made by God, under the Christian dispensation, between Jew and Greek, for the same God is Lord of both. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, be his country and nation what it will, shall be saved; but indeed this calling upon the Lord is not to be expected from such as know not the Lord. But who are they who have not had an opportunity of knowing him? Is not the sound of his preachers gone out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world? But if other nations may apologize for their want of faith by their ignorance, the Jews at least can have no pretence to such excuse, who have apostatized from their own prophecies, and resisted the evidence of miracles. Hath God then cast away his own people? No, none of those whom he foreknew as his, but hath reserved a remnant to himself, according to the election of grace. These he foreknew, he chose, he called, he sanctified. Thus he hath dealt with them, and they are thankful for it, as men who did not deserve it, though they were qualified to receive it, and as fully sensible, that it is the effect of God's free grace and mercy. Israel then at large hath not obtained that which he is in search of, but only the remnant, the election. As to the rest, they were blinded, and God gave them, pursuant to their own perverse choice, a spirit of slumber, with eyes, that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day. They hardened themselves in pride and worldly-mindedness against all opportunities of conviction. They rejected the truth. They crucified the Lord of life. On this, that they might continue to give the testimony of enemies to Christianity, they were farther so blinded and hardened, that, with their eyes open, they could not see the light of the gospel; with their ears open, they could not hear its loud and powerful sound. In this condition, they are still of signal service to the Gentile world, and shall be more so, when God shall open their eyes, and call them by faith into his church. This, after all I have said on the subject, must still be a mystery, of which, as such, you ought not to be ignorant, that blindness in



part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake. God hath included them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Here is the real drift of the apostle's argument, wherein he speaks entirely of providential dispensations, exhibited in this life to whole nations, Ishmaelites, Edomites, Israelites, Egyptians, and the Gentiles of all countries; by no means of individuals, but so far only as they were concerned with large communities of men. Neither does he enter into the points of election to eternal life, or reprobation, any farther, than as the aforesaid dispensations may ultimately result in either.

From what hath been already said, both the possible and actual origin of moral evil may be sufficiently seen and accounted for. About this a number of questions by far more nice and difficult, than useful, have been started, and are still agitated among the over curious. The Fatalists have one hypothesis, the Manichees another, and there is a third, held by those who deny that there is any evil in the universe. The first have no meaning for their word, fate. The second assert a flat contradiction; and the third are refuted by fact, nothing being more evident to reason, than that there is abundance of moral evil in the world, nor to sense, than that punishment, or the miseries consequent upon sin, are far from eligible things. To say that more good may, or will be, made to result from sin, than could have been hoped for without it, is to say nothing, for evil is evil, let its consequences be as profitable as you please. Besides, it is a great deal more rational to say, that God brings good out of evil, than that evil is naturally productive of good.

The questions relating to Providence are more mysterious, and at the same time more useful, as well as more akin to the subjects we have been handling. The natural world hath been thought by many to be governed wholly by stated causes, from which their proper effects must invariably and necessarily proceed. I cannot accede to this opinion, but think it more probable, that these works of God continue still to require his supporting and directing hand. However, whether they naturally do or not, it is cer-

tain, that as they were made for the intelligent part of the creation, and in some measure put in subjection to it, they are, in smaller matters, changeable, and often actually changed, by angels and men, who, though they cannot alter the courses of the heavenly bodies, can nevertheless kindle or extinguish a fire, and that to very important purposes, whether good, as to warm themselves, or evil, as to burn others, and give to certain parts of matter a situation or adjustment, which the natural influence of causes, or course of things, had not otherwise given. But though this might be disputed, it must be confessed, that God could, and most men believe, did, suspend, counteract, and overpower, in many cases, the stated efficiency of natural causes, in favour of the moral world, when conviction, virtue, and happiness, could not have been so well produced, without this species of providential interposition.

It is this species of interposition, which we call a miracle, whereon the proof of a divine revelation, the greatest instance of providential goodness, known to mankind, hath been made chiefly to depend. Accordingly every Christian, in a brief summary of revelation, begins with declaring his faith in God, not only that 'he is,' but also, 'that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' and a protector of all who depend on him. The creed as repeated by each of us in person, and for himself only, sets out with a profession of faith and trust in God, that is, in the particular, as well as general, providence of God. There is no one point more insisted on in the holy Scriptures, than this, nor more amply vouched by experience. All faith, all prayer, without it, must be reduced to downright absurdity and presumption. The history of the world, whether sacred or profane, if well understood, is a mixed history of God's dealings with man, and of their behaviour towards him and one another.<sup>a</sup>

Laying this down, as a doctrine admitted, the question may be asked, in what manner, and how far, doth the Divine Being interfere with the liberty of moral agents? Or how is it possible, that his providence, and our freedom can consist?

The manner and the degree of providential interposition are placed so far above all possibility of human comprehension, that nothing more presumptuous, than such questions

<sup>a</sup> See Strong's Providential History of Mankind.

can be conceived. If the wisdom and goodness of God are acknowledged, let us not dare to dispute his power, but rather earnestly pray for the highest exercise of it, and say to him, 'thy will be done.' Are we not infinitely safer in his hands, than our own? We however frequently see the manner and degree of providential interposition in particular instances, and by what means, and how far, the hand of our heavenly King is employed in raising up one man, or nation, and putting down another. This is enough for our conviction. Let us not therefore propose our how, or our why, to the King of kings, at least while we are modest enough to believe, an earthly king may govern wisely on maxims, and by reasons, which we do not see into.

Neither let us doubt the divine interference with the will of moral agents, and their actions, merely because we cannot comprehend the manner or degree of that interference. If our Judge will hold us to account only so far as he permits us to be free, we have no reason to impeach his justice. He will not judge us for his actions, but our own. The truths of his holy religion are revealed to us in order to deliver us from the slavery of error and sin. 'You shall know the truth,' saith Christ to his disciples, 'and the truth shall make you free.' The unbelieving Jews, to whom he also said it, thought themselves free, without that truth; but he soon convicted them of slavery to sin, the worst sort of servility. Now, it was by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that he promised to guide them into all truth, and through the truth, into 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Does the grace of God then enslave us, or force our wills or actions? No, it finds us miserable slaves, but gives us strength to exert and maintain that liberty, to which we are born as the children of God, whose service is perfect freedom. I know nothing of compulsory grace, nor of compulsory faith, but that of devils, who would be infidels, were not the causes of faith too powerful for their resistance. If there are men who are able to resist even its historical evidence, it is true, then, that there are men more blind, at least in this respect, if not worse in others, than devils.

God governs the world, which he made, and will judge it. His government is founded on infinite wisdom, sweetened by infinite goodness, and authorized by right of creation, and almighty power. This government I call his pro-

vidence, to which I not only submit with my whole soul and heart, but rejoice in it as my sole anchor of safety, as well when I do not, as when I do understand the reasons for this or that dispensation. This deference, in a limited degree, I pay to the chief magistrate of that civil society, whereof I am a member; and know full well, that if it is not paid by me and others, there can be no civil society. For want of it, in this year, 1770, we are on the point of anarchy among ourselves, or of slavery to some foreign power. But is it not enough to conceive and utter rebellion against the state? Must we also call in question the providence and government of God? In making these reflections I grow sick, while under that, which gives occasion to them, the nation sickens too, but without reflection.

Having delivered my sentiments, and finished the reasonings, on which they are grounded in my weak understanding; I shall conclude with two or three observations.

There are men who conceitedly square every thing by the extent of their own capacities, which they are not apt to under-rate. As often as any two propositions do but seem to contradict each other, although each hath been demonstrably proved, the casuists I am speaking of, do not hesitate a moment to pronounce one of them false. This they do in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. This they do in regard to the foreknowledge and decrees of God, on the one hand, and the moral freedom of man, on the other. Hence some, taking the side of foreknowledge and decrees, have denied the existence of created spirits, made mere machines and necessary agents of all men, and consequently ascribed their vices, as well as virtues, to God alone. Others, adopting the moral liberty of angels and men, have undeified the Infinite Being by limiting his knowledge, and charging him with the creation of a world, whereof he knew not the grand result. They do not consider these two propositions, God foreknew every thing, and, man is morally free, but as opposites; nor reflect, that although to a bounded understanding they may seem irreconcilable, yet in that of God they may most easily consist with each other. Hence a large book to prove the great truths of divine foreknowledge and predestination, and to run down the moral freedom of men and angels. Hence too another, as large, to prove the important truth of moral freedom in both these ranks of

agents, and to refute the doctrines of foreknowledge and predestination. In these times of more candour, I have ventured to assert and prove both those seemingly contradictory doctrines; and, for the sake of many good Christians, who have often, in conversation, put me on these subjects, and still remain bewildered, I have attempted to shew how far we may proceed towards a reconciliation of the great truths in question, and where we ought to rest our inquiries, as in points above our comprehension, which indeed every thing else is, if pursued beyond our abilities and wants.

Were we to climb up into the highest heavens, we should not be able to comprehend the mysteries of mercy, revealed in the work of our redemption and salvation, but still revealed as mysteries, to be partly known, and partly believed. Or were we to dive into the deepest hell, we should never be able to comprehend the mysteries of justice threatened, but still threatened as mysteries, in the punishment of the guilty, which we can only conceive in part, and believe in part.

All true religion, rightly understood, takes its rise from predestination, rightly understood. On the part of God, what is true religion, but that immense plan, whereby, ere the world was made, he purposed to create and govern all things? Every act of his providence, the paradisaical state, the first and second covenant, the judgment to come, were predetermined. These predeterminations, all of them just and good, were founded on infinite and perfect knowledge, which could not have been either infinite or perfect, if all was not perfectly and certainly foreseen. On the part of man, all true religion is founded on such knowledge of God and his will, as man can acquire, and on faith, where knowledge fails. To man too, as a necessary part of religion, a foreknowledge of such events as concern him most, is imparted; and on these two is erected the predestination or predetermination freely made in the breast of every Christian, to keep the covenant between God and his soul, to lead, as far forth as he is able, a new and holy life; and to stand issue at the last day for all the thoughts, words, and actions of that life. On these terms, as not only just, but good and gracious also, every believer freely embraces the covenant, in his judgment, an infinite and wholly undeserved benefit.

I heartily wish, all the divines and casuists, who have heretofore handled these, and the like topics, had been blessed with my narrowness of capacity, and the mean opinion I have of it. Had this been the case, every one would have been content to take a doctrine on God's word: no mysteries of man's inventions had been added to those of God's revealing; no heresies, no schisms, no animosities had ever disturbed the church of God, or exposed it to the ridicule of infidels; no religious subtleties, in short, had staggered the faith of one, and turned the head of another. It was a vicious love of women that brought Solomon, the wisest of men, on his knees to a plurality of gods. And what but an equally vicious conceit of his own understanding could have brought Sir Isaac Newton, that exalted genius in mathematical and natural knowledge, to a belief in, and adoration of, a like plurality? How poor, how vain, how despicable is the understanding of man, particularly in religious matters, when not submitted to the wisdom of God! How admirably does the Spirit of God defend us in this instance, against the poison of error, gilded by the lustre of a great name! 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 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 foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. You see 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 things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.' It hath been promised, that we 'shall be all taught of God.' This promise hath been most amply fulfilled. What need we then, or how dare we heap to ourselves other teachers, who although they are called great men by their disciples, what are they to the great God? Or what must he be, who prefers them?

A  
SUMMARY OF RELIGION,  
IN  
SEVENTEEN PROPOSITIONS.

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*Religious controversies ought to be short.*

A POINT not worth deciding, ought not to be debated. No religious point is worth deciding, if all mankind are not concerned to know it, as a point of some importance to their happiness. Such points ought to be examined by few arguments, and those arguments couched in few, intelligible, and precise terms. Many words dissipate the force of an argument, in regard to the understanding, bewildered as in a wood; and besides, give unnumbered handles to sophistical replies, and those to as many, and equally sophistical rejoinders, which changes the controversy, from an inquiry about the point in view, to a combat between the controvertists, not for truth, but victory. Led away by the common practice, I have written a great deal on religious controversies; but now that time and experience have let me see, how vain and fruitless this method generally proves, and how much more decisive, one good argument, reduced to half a dozen words, is found to be, I will here endeavour to banish all disputes about religion by urging one argument or two, in the briefest manner I can, on each debated article, of importance enough to all mankind, to merit a discussion.

Proposition I. *There is a God.*

The world could not have made itself, yet was made, for it discovers infinite power and wisdom in its origin and architecture. It was therefore made by a being of such power and wisdom, who was from eternity, and unmade, for such a being could not have been made by himself, nor by another, for was he made by another, that other must be author of all things, and the God whose being I would prove.

Proposition II. *There is but one God.*

The world could not have been made, but by a Being of infinite and unlimited power and wisdom. To create a world



out of nothing requires infinite unlimited power; and to make it in the manner it is made, requires infinite unlimited wisdom. Now to suppose the possibility of two, or more, such beings, is contradictory to itself. Two beings cannot, each of them, have all power and wisdom; but he who hath not all power, is not infinitely powerful, nor is he infinitely wise, who hath not all wisdom. God saith, 'I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God, I know not any.' To make this last a good proof, I maintain that,

*Proposition III. God hath made a revelation of himself, and of the true religion, wherein this assertion of God himself is contained.*

Religion was from the beginning necessary to mankind, who cannot subsist out of society, nor in society without religion, nor well in society without true religion; therefore the good and beneficent God gave to mankind a true religion, but not by the light of nature alone, for this hath every where failed to teach it, even among those who had the benefit of some instruction. If a true religion was given to mankind, it must have been given by divine revelation to human reason as a recipient, not an original fountain of religious light. This revelation was fully proved to come from God by such predictions as nothing but infinite wisdom could utter, and such wonders, as nothing but infinite power could perform. The religion thus revealed, together with the proofs of its divine origin and authority, may be seen in the holy Bible; a book written by God himself. If herein the true religion may not be found, necessary as the true religion is, there is no true religion to be found among mankind. That the wonders and miracles therein said to be wrought, were actually and really wrought, we have the attestation of many who saw them wrought, and died to prove the veracity of that attestation. The antiquity of the predictions is indisputable, and their truth, as the effect of divine foreknowledge, is made also incontestible by the completion of many such predictions, exhibited at this very time in our sight, or to our knowledge.

*Proposition IV. Paganism cannot be the true religion.*

For it sets forth many gods, all of them, more or less weak, foolish, or wicked.

Proposition V. *Manicheism cannot be the true religion.*

For it sets up two eternal, independent Beings, contrary to proposition the second, and ascribes darkness, wickedness, and consequently weakness or defect, to one of them; and yet ascribes the creation of matter, which is an effect of almighty power, to that very Being.

Proposition VI. *Mahometism cannot be the true religion.*

For it indulges lust, rapine, and slaughter, to its disciples, and proposes to gratify the desire of these as its grand reward or sanction. A deceitful and bloody impostor, not the good God, was its author.

Proposition VII. *Judaism is not the true religion.*

For the pentateuch and prophecies, on which it rests, set it forth as only a temporary, a preparatory, a typical, and national dispensation; fix the limits of its duration, and refer its professors to the Messiah, as the end of the law, and as one who should appear under the second temple, and give to all nations the true and perfect religion. The Jews, blinded by, and bigoted to, the shadow, rejected the substance, to which the shadow had been superadded only under the law, for Christianity was from the beginning.

Proposition VIII. *Jesus is the Messiah or Christ, and his religion the true and universal religion.*

Ere that temple was destroyed, and at the very time and place foretold by the prophets, a person appeared, who filled all the prophetic characters of the Messiah, wrought innumerable miracles himself, and by his disciples, and gave to the world a religion, worthy of God, and productive of human reformation and happiness. And that this religion might not in after ages be lost, or corrupted by the fancies or interests of bad men, he caused it to be faithfully recorded, together with a succinct history of his transactions here on earth, in the writings of the New Testament. Him the Jews crucified, and to this day do every thing in their power to oppose and suppress his religion; whereby, throughout all the nations of the earth, wherein they are dispersed, they, as enemies, attest the truth and genuineness of those pro

phesies, which foretel both the Messiah and his religion, and likewise their blind apostacy from the obvious meaning of those prophecies, their dispersion over all nations, and the use made by Providence of their infidelity to prove and spread the universal religion.

The religion of the Bible, or holy Scriptures, appears, from this short chain of reasoning to be the true, or universal religion, which we its professors call, Christianity, from the name, or rather title of its blessed author, which is the same in Greek with the Hebrew word, Messiah, and signifies, anointed. The divinely inspired Scriptures, particularly those of the New Testament, are the word of God himself, who therein teaches his readers, what they are to believe and do, in order to a thorough reformation of their lives, and their everlasting happiness. Humility and attention are necessary to a profitable perusal of these books ; nor is it less necessary, that we should understand them in the most plain, common, and obvious meaning of the words, their author having written them for all mankind. For want of this humility, attention, and simplicity of understanding, it hath happened, that the vain, the cursory, the subtle, the wicked readers of Scripture, have laboured to graft their own erroneous and wicked opinions on the word of God, and, by forced interpretations of that sacred book, often given those opinions an appearance of Christian truth, though very remote from it, or repugnant to it. Hence infinite arguments and disputes, which expose true religion to the mockery of infidels, and often sap the faith of its professors. And hence such animosity and hatred among Christians, and such a spirit of persecution in some towards others, as is the very reverse of that love or charity, which is placed by Christ at the head of all Christian virtues. That well meaning men, at least, may no longer draw error from the source of truth ; nor hatred from the fountain of love ; nor confusion from the dictates of infinite wisdom and order ; I will take the liberty to reduce the reigning controversies among Christians, each of them, to the short issue of a single point, decided by a text or two, of God's word. They who will not be convinced or concluded by God's own word, they themselves acknowledging it to be his word, are not likely to be concluded by long and dissipated reasonings of men.

Proposition IX. *Christ is God.*

If Christ is God, he is, by proposition the second, the one only God, for there is but one God. That Christ is God is plain from John i. 1—3. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word (i. e. Christ) was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him (Christ) and without him was not any thing made that was made.’ Rom. ix. 5, ‘Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever.’ There are a great number of other texts that assert the true and real Deity of Christ, and in no one text is it once said, that Christ is not God.

Proposition X. *The Holy Ghost is God.*

If the Holy Ghost is God, he is, by proposition the second, the one only God, for there is but one God. That he is God is evident from his being called, Rom. xv. 19, by way of distinction from all other spirits, ‘the Spirit of God;’ and Heb. ix. 14, ‘the eternal Spirit.’ ‘He who lies to him, lies to God;’ Acts v. 3, 4.

Proposition XI. *The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are one.*

For we are baptized into the joint name (which can be no other than God), or into the joint authority (which can be no other than equal) of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that by the express appointment of Christ, with a declaration from himself, that whosoever believeth and is baptized (at least into this faith) shall be saved; and whosoever shall not believe (at least thus much) shall be damned.

Proposition XII. *They are not to be listened to, but with horror, who say there are three gods.*

For it hath been proved, proposition the second, and is the foundation principle of the Bible, and of all true religion, that there is one only God. Whosoever therefore asserts, as the Arians do, that there is one supreme God, and two inferior, created, or delegated gods, namely Christ, and the Holy Ghost, directly contradicts the word and assertion of God himself, and is guilty of horrible blasphemy.

**Proposition XIII.** *We have remission of sins through faith in the blood and death of Christ.*

‘We all have sinned—but are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth,’ or fore-ordained, ‘to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, and to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past;’ Rom. iii. 23—25. ‘He (Christ) his own self bear our sins in his body on the tree;’ 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‘Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;’ Heb. ix. 28. ‘Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh;’ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

**Proposition XIV.** *Ye we are by no means to imagine that good works are needless.*

‘For faith without works is dead;’ James ii. 20. ‘Bring forth works meet for repentance;’ Matt. iii. 8. ‘This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works;’ Tit. iii. 8.

**Proposition XV.** *He is not to be listened to, but with abhorrence, who proudly pretending to supremacy over the whole church of Christ, and infallibility, dictates any thing contrary to the word of God.*

‘You know,’ saith Christ, ‘that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, but so shall it not be among you;’ Mark x. 42, 43. ‘Feed,’ saith St. Peter, 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. ‘the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage.’ Yet the pope of Rome is styled by his abettors, and styles himself, universal bishop, head, and lord over God’s whole inheritance on earth. God saith, ‘Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image. Thou shalt not bow down to it, nor worship it;’ Exod. xx. 4, 5. But the pope saith, ye shall have graven images in the church. Ye shall bow down to them, and worship them. Christ saith, giving the eucharistical cup to his disciples, ‘Drink ye all of it;’ Matt. xxvi. 27. But the pope saith, the laity shall not drink of it.

Christ saith, John v. 39, 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life.' But the pope saith, ye shall not read the Scriptures, unless I please to give you a special licence so to do. With this church no man can communicate without rebelling against God, in obedience to the pope.

Proposition XVI. *But wherever we are, we ought to communicate with the national established church, if it affords us every thing made necessary to our salvation by the word of God, and enjoins nothing contrary to the same.*

Such always ought to be the rule of communion and uniformity, wherein God the author of peace and love rejoices. To charity, every thing but truth, should be postponed. Our holy religion is light and love. If we are so divided, that we cannot enter one house, nor surround one table of the Lord, how can we with one mind, and one mouth glorify God? Rom. xv. 6. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. i. 10, having observed that they were divided, and followed different teachers or leaders, saith, '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 says again to the same Corinthians, 'Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you;' 2 Cor. xiii. 11. To the Philippians he saith, 'Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that I may hear ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;' Phil. i. 27. Amidst religious differences charity is always lost, and the more unhappily, as the causes of difference are of the less moment, for in this case nothing but hatred and animosity can create and keep up the schism. Like the quarrels of brothers, the disputes among Christians about smaller matters, when they agree in essentials, are always carried on with uncommon heart-burnings. Schismatical dissensions are nothing else, but quarrels. There a spirit of party, wholly alien from the Spirit of Christ, governs all; and reason is no more heard than charity is felt, no more indeed than in the contentions of froward children. As members of one body in Christ, we ought not surely to differ or dissent from

one another, on any account, much less on account of such things as do not interfere with the means of our salvation. Thus surely thought St. Paul, when he said to the Colossians, Col. iii. 14, 15, 'Above all these things (things of high import indeed, which he had just before recommended to them), put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.'

*Proposition XVII. Divine inspiration without miracles to prove it in him who pretends to it, is either delusion or hypocrisy.*

All the real messages sent by Almighty God to mankind, have been authenticated as his by the power of working miracles, given to the messengers for that very purpose. Such hath always been his gracious manner of dealing by us his rational creatures, to prevent a too easy credulity, and deception in matters of religion. Of him therefore, who says, he is inspired with more than the ordinary gifts of God's Holy Spirit, and on the strength of this pretence takes upon him to deliver any message from God, miracles should always be demanded. If he only delivers what hath been already delivered in the word of God, there is here no necessity for either inspiration or miracles, they having been long ago afforded for the establishment of all truths so delivered. But if the message appears to be new, then miracles are absolutely necessary to vouch it; or if contradictory to the Scriptures, then no miracles can prove it to come from God, for nothing can prove that God hath contradicted himself. A man inspired, must be 'a man approved of God by wonders,' Acts ii. 22, or to what purpose serves his inspiration? There was all the reason in the world, that the Corinthians should give heed and faith to the preaching of St. Paul, for 'truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among them, in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds,' 2 Cor. xii. 12. The salvation, preached at first by our Lord, was reported by those who heard him, 'God bearing them witness with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,' Heb. ii. 4. This having been his constant method, it is not to be supposed, without extreme absurdity, that he should, in these days,



expect our faith in new doctrines, on other, or less evidence. No protestations of any man that he feels the inspiration within him, no eloquence, no canting, foaming, bellowing, is to pass on a rational hearer for sufficient vouchers in this case; but must be considered as whimsical or hypocritical substitutes in the absence of more genuine signs and attestations, especially if the preachers of new doctrines, or the ringleaders of upstart sects, should take upon them to decry the plain institutions or doctrines of holy Scripture, for instance, should annul the sacraments, or deny the necessity of good works. When Christ's own institutions are abolished under pretence of a new inspiration, that inspiration must prove itself, not only as a reality, but as proceeding from God, by more miraculous evidence, than that which Christ exhibited to attest his authority in the appointment of those institutions. In like manner, if any man insists, that salvation is the produce or effect of good works only, and not of faith, he flatly contradicts the word of God, who saith, 'By grace ye are saved through faith;' Eph. ii. 8. 'The just shall live by faith,' Gal. iii. 11. Or on the other hand, if any man shall say, that good works are not necessary in him who hath an opportunity of performing them, and that we are to be saved by faith without works, he flatly contradicts the word of God, who saith by St. James, 'Faith without works is dead,' James ii. 20. What inspiration, what miracles, can prove such doctrines as these? Faith in God through Christ is the immediate organ, the necessary instrument of our salvation. But I deny the very existence and possibility of a saving faith, which is not productive of good works. I deny also, that actions, though right in themselves, are ever done, in a manner, and on motives acceptable to God, when no regard to God is had in doing them, nor to the obligations laid on us by the principles of faith and true religion.

Thus, I humbly apprehend, all controversies about religion ought to be handled, and thus may be soon and easily decided among the candid inquirers after truth. Among such as dispute about religion from any other motive, than a love of truth, neither this short method, nor that pursued through a thousand folios on each side, will produce any thing but error and ill nature. If I have here left out any point of importance, which ought to have been proved, it is

owing either to my inadvertence, or my mistaking such point for a matter of little moment. And if I have not fully proved the truth of any one proposition among those laid down, the failure is owing to my weakness, not to the want of arguments sufficient to demonstrate that proposition. I may have pitched upon a weaker argument, when a stronger might have been chosen, had it occurred; or I may have put the argument I did choose in a weaker light than it might have been put; but these defects are to be charged on me, not on my method, which, if rightly managed, might give an easy, short, and decisive solution to all the leading controversies among us on religious subjects. Since longer methods have been tried with very ill success, let this short one have a trial too, which will prevent abundance of trouble, if it does no more, and, at worst, will leave the point in question where it found it, without adding, as hath been unhappily the case, a number of new-invented difficulties, generated by the vague reasonings, or rather imaginations, of pretenders to knowledge, who in a fog of their own subtleties and refinements, for the most part, lose sight of even the question originally started, and almost always of the truth. If however I have done nothing else in this attempt, I have, at least, drawn a line across the wood of controversies, which if followed by a sincere inquirer, will give regularity, precision, and it is hoped, stability, to his progress in religious knowledge.

It will be easily observed, that this my line leads directly into the church, whereof I am a member. True, and did it lead into any other, I should instantly be a member of that other. Few men, now alive, have with more candour and diligence, through a long course of reading, disputing, meditating, sought for religious truth, than I have done; at the end whereof, I now solemnly call God to witness, that the Christian religion appears to my understanding the only religion of God, and the national church, wherein I most imperfectly endeavour to serve him, the single church on earth, wherein he may be served most agreeably to his word, and with the greatest safety to the soul of his rational servant.







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