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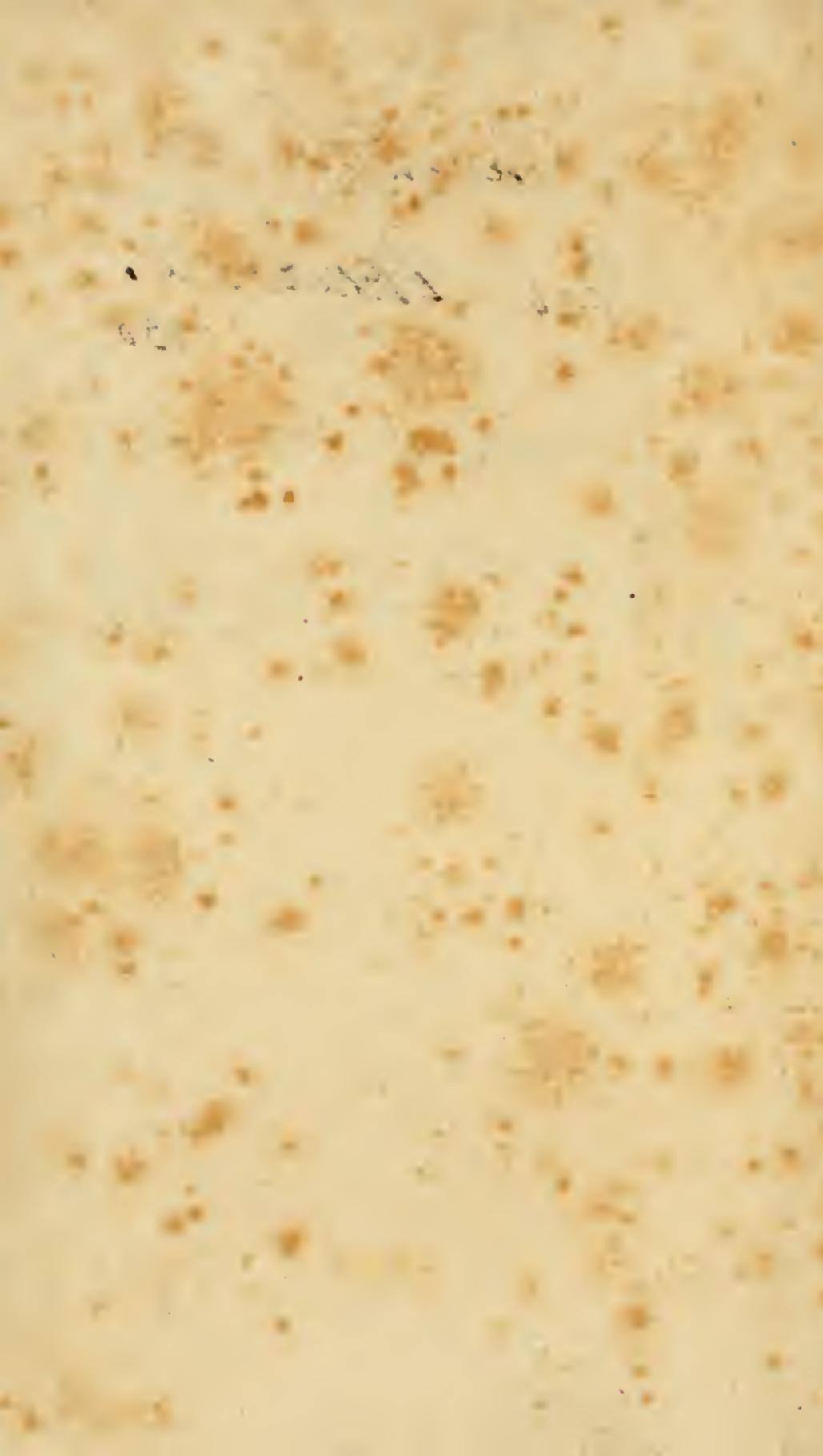
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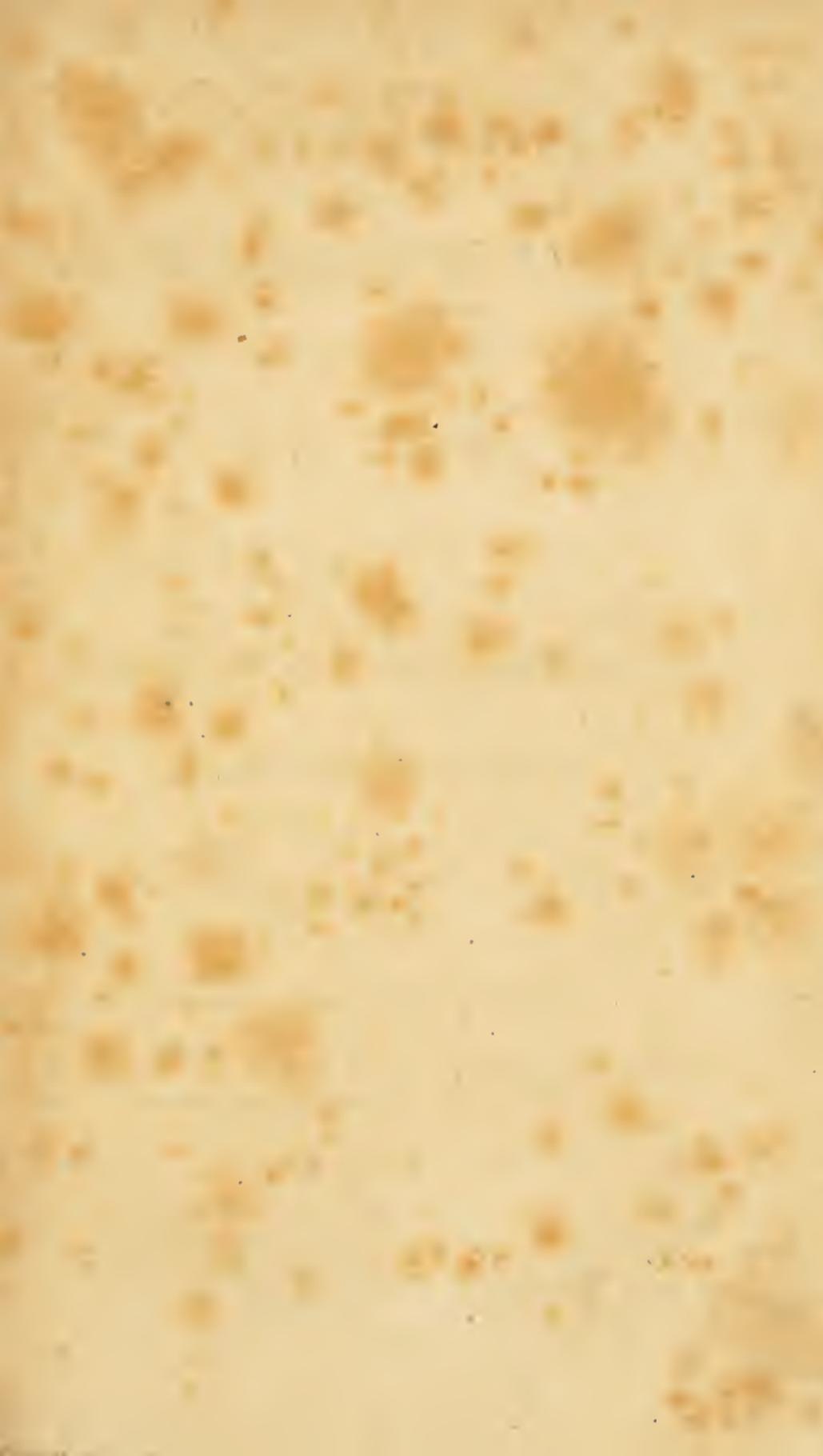
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DISCOURSES  
ON THE  
**COMMANDMENTS,**  
AND THE SACRAMENTS  
OF  
**BAPTISM**  
AND THE  
**LORD'S SUPPER.**  
FROM THE  
LECTURES ON THE CATECHISM  
BY  
**ARCHBISHOP SECKER.**  
WITH  
A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE, AND HIS SERMON ON  
CONFIRMATION.

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Selected, and edited by  
**A MINISTER of the P. Ep. CHURCH. in the U. S.**

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THESE lectures have been always considered by the Church of England as a standard work, and containing a most luminous and devout exposition of her doctrines; or, to use the words of Bp. Porteus, "one of the fullest, clearest, and exact compendiums of revealed religion, that the English language affords." In presenting them to public notice in this country, the Editor has been apprehensive, lest the size and cost of the volume containing *all* the Lectures, might prove an obstacle to the general circulation of such an invaluable work. The difficulty, however, was, where all is so excellent, to make a satisfactory selection: after mature deliberation, and weighty advice, he is induced to omit for the present the Lectures on the *creed*, and the Lord's prayer, although these may also probably constitute a separate volume of the same size hereafter. This omission however, he at any rate conceives, may more readily be supplied by other treatises on these parts of the catechism, than the lectures on the commandments and the sacraments, which the Reader, it is trusted, will find to be *eminently instructive and satisfactory*; and in which, even very high attainments in religious knowledge will discover additional light, and fresh excitements to devotion. But to those who study the other integral portions of the catechism, with a view either to learn or expound them, ample means are afforded by many approved publications: among other writers on these subjects, *Pearson on the Creed*, and *Mrs. H. More on the Lord's prayer*, are fully competent

to supply the omission which is now very reluctantly adopted, of these admirable lectures of the learned and pious Archbishop. As no commendations can be added to those, which these lectures have uniformly received since their first publication, it remains only to be desired, that they who may possess them, peruse them in the same spirit with which they were written, and thus render them instrumental, in promoting the genuine doctrines, and devout practices of our holy religion.

*Burlington, N. J. January, 1824.*

MEMOIR

OF THE

RT. REV. ARCHBISHOP

THOMAS SECKER, L. L. D.

CHIEFLY ABRIDGED FROM BISHOP PORTEUS'S REVIEW OF HIS GRACE'S  
LIFE AND CHARACTER.

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DR. THOMAS SECKER, late Archbishop of Canterbury, was born in 1693, at a village called Sibthorp, in the vale of Belvoir, Nottinghamshire. His father was a protestant dissenter, a pious, virtuous, and sensible man, who followed no profession: his mother, the daughter of Mr. George Brough, a substantial gentleman farmer of Shelton, in the same county.

Notwithstanding some disadvantages which are noticed to have occurred to him, in a private education; the subject of our memoir is stated, at the age of 19, to have made, not only a considerable progress in Greek and Latin, and to have read the best writers in both languages; but to have acquired a knowledge of French, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac; and had learned geography, logic, algebra, geometry, conic sections, and gone through a course of lectures on Jewish Antiquities and other points, preparatory to the critical study of the Bible. The disposition of his mind appears to have led him towards the ministry, and the result of his studies was, a solid conviction of the truths of the Gospel; yet, not being able to decide on some abstruse specula-

tive doctrines, nor to determine absolutely what communion he should embrace ; he resolved about the age of 23, to apply himself to the study of physic, which afforded him opportunity to weigh things more maturely in his thoughts, and to settle his opinions on mature reflection. After attending lectures two years in London, he went to Paris for farther improvement, and carried his attention to all the branches of medicine, including surgery, and midwifery. During this period, he kept up a close correspondence with Mr. Joseph (afterwards bishop) Butler, who had been a fellow student at Tewksbury.—Mr. Butler having been appointed preacher at the Rolls, at the recommendation of Dr. Clarke and Mr. Edward Talbot, son to bishop Talbot, he now took occasion to mention his friend, Mr. Secker, without Secker's knowledge, to Mr. Talbot, who promised, in case he chose to take orders in the Church of England, to engage the Bishop, his father, to provide for him. This was communicated to Mr. Secker in a letter from Mr. Butler, about the beginning of May 1720. He had not at that time come to any resolution of quitting the study of physic ; but he began to foresee many obstacles to his pursuing that profession, and having never discontinued his application to Theology, his former difficulties, both with regard to conformity, and some other doubtful points, had gradually lessened, as his judgment became stronger, and his reading and knowledge, more extensive. It appears also, from two of his letters, both prior to the date of Mr. Butler's above mentioned, that he was greatly dissatisfied with the divisions and disturbances, which at that period prevailed among the dissenters.

In this state of mind Mr. Butler's unexpected proposal found him, and after deliberating on the subject of such a change upwards of two months, he resolved to

embrace the offer, and quitted France about the beginning of August, 1720.

It was thought right by his friends, that he should have a degree from Oxford: with this view, and in order to expedite the process, he took the degree of M.D. at Leyden, in the year 1721, on which occasion he did himself great credit, by a thesis which he delivered on the occasion, "De Medicina Statica." He then entered himself a gentleman commoner of Exeter College, Oxford, and in a few months obtained the degree of B.A. in that University. He was ordained by Dr. Talbot, at that time Bishop of Durham, and preached his first sermon in March, 1723. The prelate now took him into his family as Chaplain, in which office he had Dr. Rundle for an associate. In 1724, he was presented to the valuable rectory of Houghton-le-Spring, in Durham; and being in a situation to maintain a family, he married the sister of Mr. Benson, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, and Mr. Talbot's widow came to live with Mr. and Mrs. Secker, from whom she received, to the end of life, the most assiduous attentions.

He now set himself down seriously to the duties of a country Rector, and supported that useful and respectable character throughout, with the strictest propriety. He omitted nothing which he thought could be of use; to the souls and bodies of the people intrusted to his care. He brought down his conversation and his sermons to the level of their understandings; he visited them in private, he catechised the young and ignorant, he received his country neighbours and tenants kindly and hospitably, and was of great service to the poorer sort of them, by his skill in physick, which was the only use he ever made of it. Though this place was in a very remote part of the world, yet the solitude of it perfectly suited his studious disposition, and the income arising

from it, bounded his ambition. Here he would have been content to live and die : here, as he has often been heard to declare, he spent some of the happiest hours of his life ; and it was no thought or choice of his own, that removed him to a higher and more public sphere ; but the situation did not agree with the health of Mrs. Secker, and he exchanged Houghton, for a prebend of Durham, with the rectory of Ryton. He continued to reside in the north till 1732, when, being nominated one of the chaplains of the King, he came to the metropolis, and in the following year he was presented with the rectory of St. James. On this occasion, he went to Oxford to take the degree of doctor of laws, not being of sufficient standing for that of Divinity, when he preached what was denominated an Act sermon, "On the advantages and duties of an Academical Education," which was regarded as a masterpiece of sound reasoning and good composition. It was printed at the desire of the heads of the houses, and quickly passed through several editions ; and the reputation derived from it, was thought to have contributed not a little to his advancement to the episcopal bench, which took place in Jan. 1734-5, when he was consecrated Bishop of Bristol, Dr. Benson, his brother-in-law, being at the same time consecrated to the see of Gloucester.

In his high office, as a Bishop, he exhibited the most striking proofs of a conscientious attention to all parts of his duty : he held a confirmation once every year, and examined and instructed the candidates several weeks before in the vestry, and gave them religious Tracts, which he also distributed at other times very liberally to those that needed them. He drew up for the use of his parishioners, his admirable course of Lectures on the Church Catechism ; and not only read them once every week on the usual days, but also every Sunday

evening, either at the Church, or one of the Chapels belonging to it. They were received with universal approbation, and attended regularly by persons of all ages and conditions; and the judgment of the public has since confirmed the opinion of his parishioners, and established the reputation of this work, as one of the fullest, clearest, and most exact compendiums of revealed religion, that the English Language affords.

The Sermons composed by him, were truly excellent and original: he laid before his audience, with equal freedom and plainness, the great Christian duties belonging to their respective stations, and reprov'd the follies and vices of every rank among them, without distinction or palliation. He studied human nature thoroughly, in all its various forms, and knew what sort of arguments would have most weight with each class of men. He brought the subject home to their bosoms, and did not seem to be merely saying useful things in their presence, but addressing himself personally to every one of them. Few ever possessed in a higher degree, the rare talent of touching on the most delicate subjects with the nicest propriety and decorum, of saying the most familiar things without being low, the plainest without being feeble, the boldest without giving offence. He could descend with such singular ease and felicity into the minutest concerns of common life, could lay open with so much address the various workings, artifices and evasions of the human mind, that his hearers often thought their own particular cases alluded to, and heard with surprise their private sentiments and feelings, their ways of reasoning and principles of acting, exactly stated and described. His preaching was, at the same time, highly rational, and truly evangelical. He explained with perspicuity, he asserted with dignity, the particular characteristic doctrines of the Gospel. He

inculcated the utility, the necessity of them, not merely as speculative truths, but as actual instruments of moral goodness, tending to purify the hearts, and regulate the lives of men; and thus by God's gracious appointment, as well as by the inseparable connexion between true faith and right practice, leading them to salvation.

These important truths he taught with the authority, the tenderness, the familiarity of a parent instructing his children. Though he neither possessed or affected the artificial eloquence, of an Orator who wants to amuse or mislead, yet he had that of an honest man who wants to convince, of a Christian preacher who wants to reform and to save, those who hear him. Solid argument, manly sense, useful directions, short, nervous, striking sentences, awakening questions, frequent and pertinent applications of Scripture; all these following each other in quick succession, and coming evidently from the speaker's heart, enforced by his elocution, his figure, his action, and above all, by the corresponding sanctity of his example; stamped conviction on the minds of his hearers, and sent them home with impressions not easy to be effaced.

In the spring of the year 1748, Mrs. Secker died of the gout in her stomach. She was a woman of great sense and merit, but of a very sickly constitution. They had been married upwards of 20 years, during the greatest part of which time, her extremely bad state of health and spirits, had put his affection to the severest trials; by which, instead of being lessened, it seemed to become stronger every day. He attended her in all her long illnesses, with the greatest care and tenderness, and was always ready to break off any engagement, any study, provided his company could procure her a moments ease or cheerfulness.

He continued in the See of Oxford, to which he

was translated in 1737 at the earnest request of Bishop Sherlock, upwards of twenty years; going on that whole time in the same even course of duty, and enjoying with the highest relish those leisure hours, which his retirement at Cuddesden sometimes afforded him, for the prosecution of his favourite studies. At length however, his distinguished merit prevailed over all the political obstacles to his advancement; and placed him, without any effort or application of his own, in that important station which he had shown himself so well qualified to adorn.—Within a very few days after the death of Archbishop Hutton, he received a message from the duke of Newcastle, acquainting him that his Grace had proposed him to the King for the vacant See of Canterbury. He returned the duke a short note of thanks, expressing at the same time his wishes, that his majesty might fix on a more proper person. Soon after this, his Grace desired an interview with the Bishop, at which he informed his lordship, that the King had appointed him Archbishop. This promotion accordingly took place, and he was confirmed at Bow-church, April 21, 1758.

In little more than two years after his Grace's promotion to the See of Canterbury, died King George II. Of what passed on that occasion, and of the form observed in proclaiming his successor George III. (in which the Archbishop of course took the lead) his Grace has left an account in writing. He did the same with regard to the subsequent ceremonials, of marrying and crowning the king and queen; which, in consequence of his station, he had the honour to solemnize, and in which he found a great want of proper precedents and directions. He had before, when Rector of St. James', baptized the king, who was born in that parish, and he was afterwards called upon to perform the same office, for the greatest part of his majesty's children:—a remark-

able, and perhaps unexampled concurrence of such incidents, in the life of one man.

From the time that he was made Dean of St. Paul's, his majesty used to speak to him at his levee occasionally, but with no particular marks of distinction; but after he became Archbishop, the king treated him with much kindness, and on one occasion was pleased to assure him very particularly, that he was perfectly satisfied with the whole of his conduct in that station; and it is remarked that his majesty, as well as all his people, had good reason to be so; for never did any one support the rank, or discharge the various duties of a metropolitan, with more true dignity, wisdom, and moderation, than Archbishop Secker. He considered himself as the natural guardian, not only of that church over which he presided, but of learning, virtue, and religion at large;—and, from the eminence on which he was placed, looked round with a watchful eye on every thing that concerned them, embracing readily all fit opportunities to promote their interest, and opposing, as far as he was able, all attempts to injure them.

Whenever any publications came to his knowledge, that were manifestly calculated to corrupt good morals, or subvert the foundations of Christianity, he did his utmost to stop the circulation of them: yet, the wretched authors themselves, he was so far from wishing to treat with any undue rigor, that he has, more than once, extended his bounty to them in distress; and, when their writings could not properly be suppressed (as was too often the case) by lawful authority, he engaged men of ability to answer them, and rewarded them for their trouble. His attention was every where: even the falsehoods and misrepresentations of writers in the newspapers, on religious or ecclesiastical subjects, he generally took care to have contradicted; and when they seemed

likely to injure in any material degree, the cause of virtue and religion, or the reputation of eminent and worthy men, he would sometimes take the trouble of answering them himself.

The welfare, the credit, the good influence of the Clergy, he had entirely at heart, and suffered nothing to escape his notice, that could in any proper way promote them. He earnestly endeavoured to prevent unworthy men, from bringing disgrace on the profession, and contempt on religion, by entering into orders. With this view it was, that he so strongly recommended the greatest care and caution in signing testimonials. "They are," says he, "the only ordinary information that we have, in a case of the utmost importance; where we have a right to be informed: for no one can imagine, that we are to ordain whoever comes, or depend on clandestine intelligence. We must therefore, and do depend, on regular testimonials—every part of which ought to be considered before it is given, and no consideration paid to neighbourhood, acquaintance, friendship, compassion, importunity, when they stand in competition with truth. It may be sometimes hard for you, to refuse your hand to improper persons; but it is only one of the many hardships, which conscience bids men undergo resolutely when they are called to them. It would be much harder, that your Bishop should be misled, the church of God injured, and the poor wretch himself, assisted to invade, sacrilegiously, an office, at the thought of which he hath cause to tremble." If any such, however, had unhappily found means to obtain ordination, he did his utmost to prevent their further progress; or, if that could not be done, very openly signified his dislike of their conduct; nor could he ever be brought to treat them, however considerable their rank might be, with any marks of esteem or respect. Men of worth and

eminence in the church, he cherished and befriended, and endeavoured to bring forward into stations, where they might be singularly useful: above all he distinguished, with peculiar marks of his favour, the conscientious and diligent parish priest. He was of opinion, that "the main support of piety and morals, consisted in the parochial labours of the Clergy; and that, if this country could be preserved from utter profligateness and ruin, it must be by their means." For their assistance therefore, in one important branch of their duty, he gave them in his third archi-episcopal charge, directions for writing and speaking sermons. The thoughts of such a man, on so nice and difficult a subject, must naturally raise some expectation, and that expectation will not be disappointed: they are the evident result of a sound judgment, matured by long experience and a thorough knowledge of mankind, and are every way worthy of one, who was himself so great a master of that species of composition and elocution. It was his purpose, after speaking of stated instructions, to have gone on to occasional ones; but he did not live, as he himself foreboded he should not, to accomplish that design.

With the Dissenters, his grace was sincerely desirous of cultivating a good understanding. He considered them, in general, as a conscientious and valuable class of men: with some of the most eminent of them, Watts, Doddridge, Leland, Chandler, Lardner, he maintained an intercourse of friendship or civility: by the most candid and considerate part of them, he was highly revered and esteemed, and to such among them as needed help, he showed no less kindness and liberality, than to those of his own communion. During the time of his high preferment, the Methodists made very rapid strides in the propagation of their principles: some of the bishops had declared against them; but Dr. Secker re-

commended to his clergy, moderation and kindness in their behaviour towards those whom he wished to consider as his future friends, but whom others were disposed to treat as enemies. His expressions in the conclusion of an answer to some charges of Dr. Mayhew, of Boston, display the Christian.

“Our inclination is, to live in friendship with all the protestant churches. We assist and protect those on the continent of Europe, as well as we are able. We show our regard to that of Scotland, as often as we have an opportunity, and believe the members of it are sensible that we do. To those who differ from us in this part of the kingdom, we neither attempt nor wish any injury; and we shall gladly give proofs to every denomination of Christians in our colonies, that we are friends to a toleration, even of the most intolerant, as far as it is safe; and willing that all mankind should possess all the advantages, religious and civil, which they can demand either in law or reason. But, with those who approach nearer to us, in faith and brotherly love, we are desirous to cultivate a freer communication, passing over all former disgusts, as we beg that they would. If we give them any seeming cause of complaint, we hope they will signify it in the most amicable manner. If they publish it, we hope they will preserve fairness and temper. If they fail in either, we must bear it with patience, but be excused from replying. If any writers on our side have been less cool, or less civil, than they ought and designed to have been, we are sorry for it, and exhort them to change their style when they write again; for it is the duty of all men, how much soever they differ in opinion, to agree in mutual good will and kind behaviour.”

During more than ten years that Dr. Secker enjoyed the See of Canterbury, he resided constantly at his

archi-episcopal house at Lambeth; as being not only most commodiously situated for his own studies and employments, but for all those who on various occasions, were continually obliged to have recourse to him. These reasons weighed with him so much, that no consideration, not even that of health itself, could ever prevail upon him to quit that place for any length of time. A few months before his death indeed, the dreadful pains he felt, had compelled him to think of trying the Bath waters; but that design was stopt, by the fatal accident which put an end to his life.

His grace had been for many years subject to the gout, which in the latter part of his life returned with more frequency and violence, and did not go off in a regular manner, but left the parts affected for a long time very weak, and was succeeded by pains in different parts of the body. About a year and a half before he died, after a fit of the gout, he was attacked with a pain in the arm near the shoulder, which having continued about a twelvemonth, a similar pain seized the upper and outer part of the opposite thigh, and the arm soon became easier. This was much more grievous than the former, as it quickly disabled him from walking, and kept him in almost continual torment, except when he was in a reclining position. During this time he had two or three fits of the gout; but neither the gout nor medicines alleviated these pains, which, with the want of exercise, brought him into a general bad habit of body.

On Saturday the 30th of July, 1768, he was seized, as he sat at dinner, with a sickness at his stomach. He recovered himself before night, but the next evening, whilst his physicians were attending, and his servants raising him on his couch, he suddenly cried out that his thigh-bone was broken. The shock was so violent, that

The servants perceived the couch to shake under him, and the pain so acute and unexpected, that it overcame the firmness he so remarkably possessed. He lay for some time in great agonies, but when the surgeons arrived, and discovered with certainty that the bone was broken, he was perfectly resigned, and never afterwards asked a question about the event. A fever soon ensued. On tuesday he became lethargic, and continued so till about five o'clock on wednesday afternoon, when he expired with great calmness, in the 75th year of his age.

On examination, the thigh-bone was found to be carious about four inches in length, and at nearly the same distance from its head. The disease took its rise from the internal part of the bone, and had so entirely destroyed its substance, that nothing remained at the part where it was broken, but a portion of its outward integument. And even this had many perforations, one of which was large enough to admit two fingers, and was filled with a fungous substance arising from within the bone. There was no appearance of matter about the caries, and the surrounding parts were in a sound state. It was apparent, that the torture which his Grace underwent during the gradual corrosion of this bone, must have been inexpressibly great. Out of tenderness to his family, he seldom made any complaints to them, but to his physicians, he frequently declared his pains were so excruciating, that unless some relief could be procured, he thought it would be impossible for human nature to support them long. Yet he bore them for upwards of six months, with astonishing patience and fortitude; sat up generally the greater part of the day, admitted his particular friends to see him, mixed with his family at the usual hours, sometimes with his usual cheerfulness; and, except some very slight defects of memory, retained all his faculties

and senses in their full vigour, till within a few days of his death.

He was buried, pursuant to his own directions, in a covered passage, leading from a private door of the palace to the north door of Lambeth Church ; and he forbade any monument or epitaph to be placed over him.

The following description is given of his person : He was tall and comely ; in the early part of his life slender and rather consumptive, but as he advanced in years, his constitution gained strength and his size increased, yet never to a degree of corpulency, that was disproportionate or troublesome. The dignity of his form corresponded with the greatness of his mind, and inspired at all times respect and awe ; but peculiarly so when he was engaged in any of the more solemn functions of religion ; into which he entered with such devout earnestness and warmth, with so just a consciousness of the place he was in, and the business he was about, as seemed to raise him above himself, and added new life and spirit to the natural gracefulness of his appearance. His countenance was open, ingenuous, and expressive of every thing right. It varied easily with his spirits and his feelings, so as to be a faithful interpreter of his mind, which was incapable of the least dissimulation : it could speak dejection, and on occasion, anger, very strongly ; but when it meant to show pleasure or approbation, it softened into a most gracious smile, and diffused over all his features, the most benevolent and reviving complacency that can be imagined.

**THE COMMANDMENTS, &c.****FIRST COMMANDMENT.***Thou shalt have none other gods but me.*

The whole duty of man consists in three points: renouncing what God hath forbidden us, believing what he hath taught us, and doing what he hath required of us: which accordingly are the things promised in our name at our baptism. The two former I have already explained to you, and therefore I proceed at present to the third.

Now the things which God requires to be done, are of two sorts: either such, as have been always the duty of all men; or such, as are peculiarly the duty of Christians. And our catechism very properly treats of the former sort first, comprehending them under those ten Commandments, which were delivered by the Creator of the world, on Mount *Sinai*, in a most awful manner, as you may read in the 19th and 20th chapters of *Exodus*. For though indeed they were then given to the Jews particularly, yet the things contained in them are such, as all mankind from the beginning were bound to observe. And therefore, even under the Mosaic dispensation, they, and the tables on which they were engraven, and the Ark in which they were put, were distinguished from the rest of God's ordinances by a peculiar regard, as containing the covenant of the Lord. And though the Mosaic dispensation be now at an end, yet concerning these moral precepts of it, our Saviour declares, that

*one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.* (Matt. v. 18.) Accordingly we find both him, and his apostles, quoting these ten commandments, as matter of perpetual obligation to Christians: who are now, as the Jews were formerly, *the Israel of God.*

Indeed the whole New Testament, and especially the sermon of our blessed Lord on the Mount, instructs us to carry their obligation farther, that is, to more points than either the Jews, a people of gross understanding and carnal dispositions, commonly took into consideration; or their Prophets were commissioned distinctly to represent to them: the wisdom of God foreseeing, that it would only increase their guilt: and further indeed, than the words of the commandments, if taken strictly, express. But the reason is, that being visibly intended for a summary of human duty, they both may, and must, be understood, by those who are capable of penetrating into the depth of their meaning, to imply more than they express. And therefore, to comprehend their full extent, it will be requisite to observe the following rules. Where any sin is forbidden in them, the opposite duty is implicitly enjoined: and where any duty is enjoined, the opposite sin is implicitly forbidden. Where the highest degree of any thing evil is prohibited; whatever is faulty in the same kinds though in a lower degree, is by consequence prohibited. And where one instance of virtuous behaviour is commanded, every other, that hath the same nature, and same reason for it, is understood to be commanded too. What we are expected to abstain from; we are expected to avoid, as far as we can, all temptations to it, and occasions of it: and what we are expected to practice, we are expected to use all fit means, that may better enable us to practice it. All, that we are bound to do ourselves, we are bound, on fitting occasions, to exhort and assist others to do, when it belongs to them:.

and all that we are bound not to do, we are to tempt nobody else to do, but keep them back from it, as much as we have opportunity. The ten commandments, excepting two that required enlargement, are delivered in few words: which brief manner of speaking hath great Majesty in it. But explaining them according to these rules; which are natural and rational in themselves, favoured by ancient Jewish writers, authorized by our blessed Saviour, and certainly designed by the makers of the catechism to be used in expounding it; we shall find, that there is no part of the moral Law, but may be fitly ranked under them: as will appear by what shall be said, in speaking separately on each commandment.

Before them all, is placed a general preface: expressing, first, the authority of him who gave them, *I am the Lord thy God*: secondly, His goodness to those whom He enjoined to observe them; *who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*. Now the authority of God over us Christians, is as great as it could be over the Jews. And His Goodness is much greater, in freeing us from the bondage of sin, and opening to us the heavenly land of promise, than it was in leading them, from *Egyptian* slavery to the earthly *Canaan*: though indeed this deliverance, having made so fresh and so strong an impression on them, was the fittest to be mentioned at that time.

The ten commandments being originally written, by the finger of God himself, on two tables of stone; and consisting of two parts, our duty to our Maker, and to our fellow-creatures, which we can never perform as we ought, if we neglect that we owe to ourselves; the four first, are usually called duties of the first table; the six last, of the second. And our Saviour, in effect, divides them accordingly, when he reduces them to these:

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart ; and thy Neighbour as thyself.*

The first Commandment is, *Thou shalt have none other Gods but me.*

The same reasons, which prove that God is, prove that there is but one God. The imagination of two or more Beings, each perfect and each infinite, is at first sight groundless. For one such Being is sufficient to produce and govern every thing else : and therefore more than one can never be proved by reason : and yet, if there were more, all men would surely have had some way of knowing it ; and till we have, we are not to believe it. Indeed we have strong reasons to believe the contrary : for if there is no difference between these several supposed Beings, they are but one and the same : and if there is any difference, one must be less perfect than the other, and therefore imperfect, and therefore not God. Besides, as the whole course of nature appears to proceed uniformly under one direction ; there is, without question, only one director ; not several, thwarting each other.

And what reason teaches in this matter, Scripture every where confirms : forbidding us to worship, or believe in, any other Deity, than the one Maker and Ruler of Heaven and Earth : who hath manifested Himself to all men by the works of His hands ; to the Patriarchs and Jews, by the revelations recorded in *Moses* and the Prophets ; and finally to Christians, by his Son our Lord : who, in a way and manner to us inconceivable, is one with the Father ; and the Holy Spirit with both : as I have already shown you, in discoursing on the Creed.

There being then this one only God, the commandment before us enjoins,

1. That we have him for our God :

II. That we have no other.

I. That we have him; that is, think so of him, and behave so to him, as his infinite perfection, and our absolute dependence on him, require: which general duty towards God, our catechism very justly branches out into the following particulars:

First, That we *believe in Him*. For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, (*Heb. xi. 6.*) The foundation on which this belief stands, I have shown in its proper place. And the great thing, in which it consists, is, that we fix firmly in our minds, recall frequently to our memories, and imprint deeply upon our hearts, an awful persuasion of the being and presence, the power and justice, the holiness and truth, of this great Lord of all. The consequence of this will be,

Secondly, That we *fear Him*. For such attributes as these, duly considered, must fill the most innocent creatures with reverence and self-abasement. But sinful and guilty ones, as we know ourselves to have been, have cause to feel yet stronger emotions in their souls from such a meditation: apprehensions of his displeasure, and solicitude for his pardon; leading us naturally to that penitent care of our hearts and lives, on which he hath graciously assured us, that, through faith in *Christ Jesus*, we shall be forgiven. And then, gratitude for his mercy will prompt us, to the

Third duty towards Him which our catechism specifies, that we *love Him: the fear of the Lord* being, as the son of *Sirach* declares, *the beginning of his love*. For whenever we come to reflect seriously on that goodness, which hath given us all the comforts that we enjoy; that pity which offers pardon, on most equitable terms, for all the faults that we have committed; that grace, which enables us to perform every duty acceptably; and that infinite bounty, which rewards our imper-

fect performances with eternal happiness; we cannot but feel ourselves bound to love such a benefactor, *with all our heart, and with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength*; to rejoice in being under his government; *make our boast of him all the day long*; and choose him for *our portion for ever*. (*Psalms* xliv. 8—lxxiii. 26.) A mind thus affected, would be uneasy, without paying the regard set down in the

Fourth place, which is, *to worship Him*; to acknowledge our dependence, and pay our homage to him; both in private, to preserve and improve a sense of religion in ourselves; and in public, to support and spread it in the world. The first part of worship mentioned in the catechism, and the first in a natural order of things, is *giving him thanks*. God originally made and fitted all his creatures for happiness: if any of them have made themselves miserable, this doth not lessen their obligation of thankfulness to him; but his continuing still good, and abounding in forgiveness and liberality, increases that obligation unspeakably. With a grateful sense of his past favours is closely connected, *putting our trust in him* for the time to come. And justly doth the catechism require it to be our *whole trust*. For his power and goodness are infinite: those of every creature may fail us; and all that they can possibly do for us, proceeds ultimately from him. Now a principal expression of reliance on God is, petitioning for his help. For if we *pray in faith*, (*James* i. 6—v. 15.) we shall live so too. And therefore trusting in him, which might have been made a separate head, is included in this of worship; and put between the first part of it, *giving thanks to him*; and the second, *calling upon him*: according to that of the Psalmist: *O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded*. To call upon God is to place ourselves in his presence; and there to beg of

him, for ourselves and each other, with unfeigned humility and submission, such assistance in our duty; such provision for our wants; and such defence against our enemies, of every kind; as infinite wisdom sees fit for us all. After this evident obligation, follows a

Fifth not less so: *to honour His holy name and word*: not presuming even to speak of the great God in a negligent way; but preserving, in every expression and action, that reverence to him, which is due: paying, not a superstitious, but a decent and respectful regard, to whatever bears any peculiar relation to him; his day, his church, his ministers: but especially honouring his holy word, the law of our lives, and the foundation of our hopes, by a diligent study and firm belief of what it teaches; and that universal obedience to what it commands, which our catechism reserves for the

Sixth and last, as it is undoubtedly the greatest, thing; *to serve Him truly all the days of our life*. Obedience is the end of faith and fear; the proof of love; the foundation of trust; the necessary qualification, to make worship and honour of every kind, acceptable. This therefore must complete the whole, that we *walk in all the Commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*, not thinking any one so difficult as to despair of it; or so small, as to despise it; and never be *weary in well-doing*: *for we shall reap in due season, if we faint not*: and *he alone shall be saved, that endureth to the end*. But we must now proceed to observe,

II. That, as this Commandment requires us to acknowledge the one true God; so it forbids us to acknowledge any other.

Both before, and long after the law of *Moses* was given, the generality of the world entertained a belief, that there were many Gods: a great number of Beings superior to men, that amongst them governed the world, and

were fit objects of devotion. To these, as their own fancy, or the folly or fraud of others led them, they ascribed more or less both of power and goodness; attributed to several of them, the vilest actions that could be; supposed them to preside, some over one nation or city, some over another; worshiped a few or a multitude of them, just as they pleased; and that with a strange variety of ceremonies, absurd and impious, immoral and barbarous. Amidst this crowd of imaginary deities, the real one was almost entirely forgot: false religion and irreligion divided the world between them: and wickedness of every kind was authorized by both. The cure of these dreadful evils must plainly be, restoring the old true notion of one only God: ruling the world himself—which therefore was the first great article of the Jewish faith, as it is of ours.

Christians can hardly in words profess a plurality of Gods: but in reality they do, if they suppose the divine nature common to more than one Being; or think our Saviour, or the Holy Spirit, mere creatures, and yet pay them divine honours. But besides these, we apprehend the church of *Rome* to sin against the present commandment, when they pray to angels, to the holy virgin and the saints, as being able every where to hear them; and having not only temporal relief, but grace and salvation in their power to bestow. Nay, were the plea, which they sometimes make, a true one; that they only pray to them to intercede with God; yet it would be an insufficient one. For there is no reason to believe, that they have any knowledge of such prayers: or if they had, as *there is one God*, so there is *one Mediator between God and man*: And we have neither precept, nor allowance, nor example, in the whole bible, of applying to any other, amongst all the absent inhabitants of the invisible world.

But there are several ways more, of transgressing this Commandment. If we ascribe things which befall us, to fate, or to chance, or to nature; and mean any thing real by these words, different from that order, which our Maker's providence hath appointed, we set up in effect, other Gods besides Him. If we imagine the influence of stars, the power of spirits; in short, any power whatever, to be independant of Him, and capable of doing the least matter, more than He judges proper to permit that it should: this also is having more Gods than one. If we set up ourselves, or others, above Him; and obey, or expect any one else to obey, man rather than God; here again is in practice, though not in speculation, the same crime. If we love, or *trust in uncertain riches*, more than in *the living God*; this is that *covetousness, which is idolatry*. If we pursue unlawful, sensual pleasures, instead of delighting in His precepts; this is making a *God of our own belly*. In a word, if we allow ourselves to practice any wickedness whatever, we serve, by so doing, the false *God of this world*, (2 Cor. iv. 4.) instead of the true God of heaven, besides whom we ought not to have any other: and therefore to Him alone be, as is most due, all honour and obedience, now and for ever. Amen.

## SECOND COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God; and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and show mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

WE are now come to the second commandment; which the church of *Rome* would persuade men, is only part of the first. But they plainly relate to different things. The first appoints, that the object of our worship be only the true God; the next, that we worship not Him under any visible resemblance or form. And besides, if we join these-two into one, there will be no tenth left: though the scripture itself hath called them ten (*Exod.* xxiv. 28. *Deut.* iv. 13—x. 4.): to avoid which absurdity, the *Romanists* have committed another, by dividing the tenth into two. And they might as well have divided it into six or seven; as I shall show you, in discoursing upon it. For these reasons, the oldest and most considerable, both of the Jewish and Christian writers, who distinguish the commandments by their number, distinguish them in the same manner that we do. Perhaps it may seem of small consequence, how that before us is counted, provided it be not omitted. And we must own that some persons, before the rise of popery, and some protestants since the reformation,

have, without any ill design, reckoned it as the Papists do. But what both the former have done, by mere mistake, these last endeavour to defend out of Policy : well knowing, that when once they have got the second to be considered as only a part of the first, they can much more easily pass it over, as a part of no great separate meaning or importance, than if it were thought a distinct precept. And accordingly, in some of their small books of devotion, they pass it over, and leave it out entirely\*. But it deserves as I shall now show you, another sort of regard.

The prophet *Isaiah* very justly puts the question : *To whom will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?* He is an invisible Spirit : therefore representing him in a visible shape, is representing him to be such as he is not. He is every where present : therefore a figure confined by its nature to a particular place, must incline persons to a wrong conception of him. He is the living, wise and powerful Governor of the world : therefore, to express him by a dead lump of matter must be doing him dishonour. We are unable indeed, at best, to speak or think worthily of him : and we cannot well avoid using some of the same phrases, concerning him and his actions, which we do concerning the parts and motions of our own bodies. But we can very well avoid making visible images of him : and the plainest reason teaches, that we ought to avoid it ; because they lower and debase men's notions of God ; lead the weaker sort into superstitious and foolish apprehensions and practices ; and provoke those of better abilities, from a contempt of such childish representations, to dis-

\* This they do in the Latin office of the virgin, and in some of their English devotional books. Indeed there they omit likewise all but the first sentence, of our fourth commandment, and the promise in our fifth ; perhaps to palliate their preceding omission.

regard and ridicule the religion, into which they are adopted.

Therefore, in the early ages of the world, many of the heathens themselves had no images of the Deity. Particularly, the ancient *Persians* had none. Nor had the first *Romans*; *Numa*, their second King, having as the philosopher *Plutarch*, himself a Roman magistrate, though a *Greek* by birth, tells us, forbidden them to represent God in the form, either of a man or any other animal. And accordingly, he saith, they had neither any painted or engraved figure of him for 170 years; but temples, void of any image of any shape: thinking it impious to liken a superior nature to inferior ones; and impossible to attain the notion of God otherwise, than by the understanding. (*Plut. in Num. p. 65. Ed. Par. 1624.*) And *Varro*, one of the most learned of their own authors, after acknowledging, that during more than 170 years, they worshipped the Gods without any visible representation, added, that had they never had any, their religion had been the purer: for which opinion, amongst other evidences, he brought that of the Jewish people: and scrupled not to say in conclusion, that they who first set up images of the Gods in the several nations, lessened the reverence of their countrymen towards them, and introduced error concerning them. So much wiser were these Heathen *Romans* in this point, than the Christian *Romans* are now.

But when some of the eastern kingdoms had fallen into this corruption; particularly the *Egyptians*, who claimed the invention as an honour, (*Herodot. l. 2. §. 4.*) the great care of God was, to preserve or free his own people from it. The words of this commandment express that purpose very strongly, and very clearly forbid, not only making and worshiping representations of false Gods, but any representation of God at all. And to show yet more fully, that even those of the true God

are prohibited by it, *Moses*, in *Deuteronomy*, immediately after mentioning the delivery of the ten commandments, adds with respect to the second: *Take therefore good heed unto yourselves: for ye saw no manner of similitude, on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you the similitude of any figure.* (*Deut. iv. 12—15, 16.*) And when the Israelites made a golden calf in the wilderness, though evidently their design was to represent by it, not a false object of worship, but *the Lord* (in the original it is *Jehovah*) who brought them out of the land of *Egypt*; yet they were charged with it, and punished for it, as a breach of their covenant with God: and *Moses* accordingly broke, on that occasion, the two tables of the commandments, which were, on their part, the conditions of that covenant. Again, in after-times, when the Kings of *Israel* set up the same representation of the same true God, at *Dan* and *Bethel*; the scripture constantly speaks of it, as the leading sin, from which all the rest of their idolatries, and at last their utter destruction, proceeded. For, from worshipping the true God by an image, they soon came to worship the images of false Gods too; and from thence fell into all sorts of superstition, and all sorts of wickedness.

Yet the church of *Rome* will have it, that we may now very lawfully and commendably practice what the Jews were forbidden. But observe; not only the Jews, but the Heathens also, who never were subject to the law of *Moses*, are condemned in scripture for this mode of worship. For *St. Paul's* accusation against them is, that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imaginations; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man.* And in another place, he argues with the *Athenians* thus: *Forasmuch as we are the offspring of*

*God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

Where then is or can be, the allowance of that image worship in the bible, for which multitudes of the Romish communion are as earnest, as if it was commanded there? Nor is antiquity more favourable to it than scripture. For the primitive Christians abhorred the very mention of images: holding even the trade of making them to be utterly unlawful. And indeed, pretending to frame a likeness of God the Father Almighty, *whom no man hath ever seen, or can see*, as some of that church have done, without any censure from the rulers of it, liberal as they are of censures on other occasions, is both a palpable and a heinous breach of this commandment. For, though we find in the Old Testament, that an angel had sometimes appeared, representing his Person, as an ambassador doth that of his prince; and though in a vision of *the ancient of days, his garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool*; yet these things gave the Jews no right then, and therefore can give us none now to make other, or even the like representations of him, contrary to his express order.

Our blessed Saviour indeed existed in a human form, but we have not the least knowledge of any one part or feature of his person. And therefore all attempts of exhibiting a likeness of him, are utterly vain. Besides, he hath appointed a very different memorial of himself, the sacrament of his body and blood; and we ought to think that a sufficient one. These others can serve no good purpose, but what, by due meditation, may be attained as well without them. And there is great and evident danger of evil in them, from that unhappy proneness of mankind, to fix their thoughts and affections on sensible

objects, instead of raising them higher : which, if any one doth not feel in himself, he must however see in others. But particularly in this case, long experience hath given sad proof, that from setting up images of our gracious Redeemer, the holy virgin, and other saints, to remind persons of them and their virtues ; the world hath run on to pay such imprudent and extravagant honours to the figures themselves, as by degrees have arisen to the grossest idolatry.

Indeed some of the Popish writers tell us, that they do not worship their images. Yet others of them, who have never been condemned for it, say quite the contrary, that they do worship them ; and with the very same degree of worship, which they pay to the persons represented by them. Nay, their public authorized books of prayers and ceremonies, not only appoint the crucifix to be adored, but in form declare, that divine adoration is due to it. And accordingly they petition it, in so many words, expressly directed to the very *wood*, as *their only hope, to increase the joy and grace of the godly, and blot out the sins of the wicked.\**

But let us suppose them to pay only an inferior honour to images, and to worship the holy Trinity and the saints by them : Having no ground, or permission to pray at all to saints departed, they certainly have none to use images for enlivening their prayers. If any words can forbid the worship of God, his Son and Spirit, by Images, this Commandment forbids it. And if any excuses or distinctions will acquit the Papists of transgressing it, the same will acquit the ancient Jews and Heathens also. For if many of the former mean only, that their adoration should pass through the image, as it were, to the person for whom it was made ; so did

\* See Dr. Hickes' collection of Controversial discourses, vol. 1. p. 47.

many of the Pagans plead, that the meaning was just the same\*: yet the Scripture accuses them all of idolatry. And if great numbers of the Pagans did absolutely pray to the image itself, so do great numbers of the Papists too; and some of their own writers honestly confess and lament it.

But farther: had they little or no regard, as they sometimes pretend, to the image, but only to the person represented by it; why is an image of the blessed virgin, in one place, so much more frequented, than another in a different place, and the prayers made before it, thought to have so much more efficacy?

Upon the whole therefore, they plainly appear to be guilty of that image-worship, which reason and Scripture condemn. Nor do they so much as alledge either any command or express allowance for it. And yet they have pronounced a curse upon all who reject it.

But let us go on, from the prohibition to the reasons given for it in the Commandment. The first is a very general, but a very awful one: *For the Lord thy God is a jealous God*: not jealous for himself, lest he should suffer for the follies of his creatures; that cannot be: but jealous for us, for his spouse the church; lest our notions of his nature and attributes, and consequently of the duties which we owe to him, being depraved, and our minds darkened with superstitious persuasions, and fears, and hopes; we should depart from the fidelity which we have vowed to him, and fall into those grievous immoralities, which *St. Paul*, in the beginning of his epistle to the *Romans*, describes as the consequences of idolatry, and which have been its consequences in all times and places.

\* See a remarkable proof of this produced in an Epistle to Mr. Warburton, concerning the conformity of Rome Pagan and Papal; printed for Roberts, 1748, 8vo. p. 21.

The second reason for this prohibition is more particular : that God will *visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him*: For, observe, worshipping him irrationally, or in a manner which he hath forbidden, he interprets to be hating him : as it must proceed, wholly or in part, from a dishonourable opinion of him, and tend to spread the like opinion amongst others. Nor are we to understand by this threatening, that God will ever, on account of the sins of parents, punish children, in the strict sense of the word, *punish*, when they deserve it not.\* But, in the course of things established by his providence, it comes to pass, that the sins of one person, or one generation, lead those who come after into the same, or other, perhaps greater sins : and so bring upon them double sufferings, partly the fruits of their predecessor's faults, partly of their own. And when successive ages follow one another in crimes, besides the natural bad effects of them, which punish them in some measure, God may justly threaten severer additional corrections, than he would else inflict for their personal transgressions†; both because it may deter men from propagating wickedness down to their posterity, and because, if it doth not, inveterate evils demand a rougher cure. Accordingly, here the Israelites are forewarned, that if they fell into idolatry, they and their children would fall by means of it, into all sorts of abominations : and not only these would of course produce many mischiefs to both, but God would chastise the following generations with heavier strokes, for not taking warning, as they ought to have done, by the misbehaviour and sufferings of the former. Denouncing

\* Against this wrong imagination, Cotta in Cic. de Nat. 1, 3, 6. §. 38. inveighs vehemently.

† See Sherlock on providence, p. 382—390.

this intention beforehand must influence them, if any thing could : because it must give them a concern both for themselves and their descendants too ; for whom, next to themselves if not equally, men are always interested. And therefore, visiting sins upon them to the third and fourth generation, seems to be mentioned ; because either the life, or however, the solicitude of a person may be supposed to extend thus far, and seldom further.

This threatening therefore was not only just, but wise and kind, on the supposition, which in general it was reasonable to make, that in such matters children would imitate their wicked progenitors. And whenever any did not, either their innocence would avert the impending evils, or they would be abundantly rewarded in a future life, for what the sins of others had brought upon them in the present.

But if God hath threatened to punish the breach of this precept *to the third and fourth generation*, he hath promised to *show mercy unto thousands*, that is, so long as the world shall endure, to *them that love him and keep his Commandments*. To the Jews he fulfilled this engagement, as far as they gave him opportunity, by temporal blessings. And amongst Christians there is ordinarily a fair prospect, that a nation or a family, pious and virtuous through successive ages, will be recompensed with increasing happiness in every age : which is a powerful motive, both for worshipping God in purity ourselves, and educating those who are placed under our care, to do so too. Yet it must be acknowledged, that neither the rewards foretold, nor the punishments denounced in this Commandment, are so constantly distributed on earth under the gospel-dispensation, as they were under that of the law. But still our Maker as certainly requires, as ever he did, since he is a *Spirit*,

*to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and the inducement to it is abundantly sufficient, that the idolaters, amongst other sinners, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone. Not that we are to be forward in applying so dreadful a sentence to the case of those, whether Christians or others, who in this or any respect, offend through such ignorance or mistake, as, for ought we can tell, is excusable. May our heavenly Father forgive them : for they know not what they do. But we should be very thankful to him, for the light which he hath caused to shine upon us ; and very careful to walk in it as becomes the children of light, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*

## THIRD COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain : for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

The first commandment having provided, that we should worship only the one true God ; and the second prohibited worshipping him in a manner so unworthy and dangerous, as by Images ; the third proceeds to direct, that we preserve a due reverence to him in our whole conversation and behaviour. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.* Under these words are forbidden several things, which differ in their degrees of guilt.

1 The first and highest offence is, when we swear by the name of God falsely. For vanity in Scripture, frequently means something which is not what it would appear. And hence using God's name, *in vain*, or to vanity, principally signifies, applying it to confirm a falsehood. Doing this deliberately, is one of the most shocking crimes of which we can be guilty. For taking an oath is declaring solemnly, that we know ourselves to be in the presence of God, and him to be witness of what we speak ; it is appealing to him, that our words express the very truth of our hearts, and renouncing all title to his mercy, if they do not. This it is to swear : and think then what it must be to swear falsely. In other sins men endeavour to forget God : but perjury is daring and braving the Almighty to his very face ; bidding him take notice of the falsehood that we utter, and do his worst.

Now of this dreadful crime we are guilty, if ever we swear, that we do not know or believe what indeed we do; or that we do know or believe what indeed we do not: if ever, being upon our oaths, we mislead those whom we ought to inform; and give any other than the exactest and fairest account that we can, of any matter concerning which we are examined. Again, if we promise upon oath to do a thing, without firmly designing to do it: or if we promise not to do a thing, without firmly designing to abstain from it: this also is forswearing ourselves. Nay further; provided the thing which we promise, be lawful, if we do not ever after take all the care that can be reasonably expected, to make our promise good, we are guilty of perjury; and of living in it, so long as we live in that neglect. If indeed, a person hath sworn to do what he thought he could have done, and it proves afterwards unexpectedly that he cannot; such a one is chargeable only with mistake, or inconsiderateness at most. And if we either promise, or threaten any thing, which we cannot lawfully do: making such a promise is a sin, but keeping it would be another, perhaps a greater sin; and therefore it innocently may, and in conscience ought to be broken: But if we have promised what we may lawfully, but only cannot conveniently perform; we are by no means on that account released from our engagement: unless either we were unqualified to promise, or were deceived into promising; or the person to whom we have engaged voluntarily sets us at liberty; or the circumstances of the case be plainly and confessedly such, that our promise was not originally designed to bind us in them.

You see then what is perjury. And you must see, it is not only the directest and grossest affront to God, for which reason it is forbidden in the first table of the ten commandments, but the most pernicious injury to

our fellow-creatures : on which account you will find it again forbidden in the second table. If persons will assert falsely upon oath, no one knows what to believe ; no one's property or life is safe. And if persons will promise falsely upon oath, no one can know whom to trust ; all security of government and human society, all mutual confidence in trade and commerce, in every relation and condition, is utterly at an end. With the greatest reason therefore, are perjured wretches abhorred of all the world. And no interest of our own, no kindness or compassion for other persons, no turn or purpose of whatsoever sort to be served by it, can ever justify our swerving at all from truth, either in giving evidence, or entering into engagements. Nor must we think in such cases to come off with equivocations, evasions, and quibbles : and imagine it innocent to deceive this way. On the contrary, the more artful and cunning our falsehoods are, the more deliberate and mischievous, and therefore the wickeder they are. *Be not deceived ; God is not mocked :* and the following are the declarations of His sacred word to the upright man : *Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, and rest upon Thy holy hill ? He that speaketh the truth from his heart, and hath used no deceit with his tongue : he that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hinderance. But to the perjured : seeing he despiseth the oath, by breaking the covenant ; thus saith the Lord God : As I live, surely my oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will recompense it upon his head.*

Let us all stand in awe of so dreadful a threatening, and avoid so horrible a guilt. Particularly at present, let all who have sworn allegiance to the king, faithfully keep it, and that in regard to the oath of God, (*Eccl. viii 2.*) And let those who have not sworn, remember however, that merely claiming the protection of a govern-

ment, implies some promise of being dutiful to it in return: and that a successful rebellion would not only tempt multitudes of our fellow-subjects to perjury, but lay our country, its laws and religion, at the absolute mercy of a faith-breaking church.\*

One thing more should be added here; for it cannot well be mentioned too often, that next to false swearing, false speaking and lying, whether in what we assert or what we promise, is a grievous sin, and hateful to God and man. Though we do not call on our Maker to be witness, yet he is a witness of whatever we say, and it is presumptuous wickedness to utter an untruth in the presence of *the God of truth*. It is also at the same time very hurtful to other persons, and very foolish with respect to ourselves: For they who will lie, to conceal their faults or to carry their ends, are perpetually found out, disappointed and ashamed, for the most part, in a very little while: and then, for ever after they are distrusted and disbelieved, even when they speak truth: as indeed who can depend upon such, or who would venture to employ them? Many other faults may be borne, so long as honesty and sincerity last; but a failure in these cannot be passed over: so just is *Solomon's* observation, *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment*.

2. Another way of *taking God's name in vain* is, when we swear by it needlessly, though it be not falsely. For this also the words *in vain* signify.

One way of doing so, is by rash and inconsiderate vows: for a vow, being a promise made solemnly to God, partakes of the nature of an oath. And there may possibly be sometimes, good reasons for entering into this kind of engagement. But vowing to do what there

\* This paragraph was added in the time of the rebellion, 1745.

is no use of doing, is trifling with our Creator : making unlawful vows, is directly telling him we will disobey Him : making such without necessity as are difficult to keep, is leading ourselves into temptation : and indeed making any, without much thought and prudent advice first, usually proves an unhappy snare. One vow we have all made, and were bound to make, that of our baptism, which includes every real good resolution : that therefore let us carefully keep and frequently ratify, and we shall scarce have occasion to make any more.

Another very needless, and always sinful use of God's name, is by oaths in common discourse. Too many are there, who fill up with them a great part of their most trifling conversation ; especially if ever so little warmth arises in talk, then they abound in them. Now it is unavoidable, that persons who are perpetually swearing, must frequently perjure themselves. But were that otherwise, it is great irreverence, upon every slight thing we say to invoke God for a witness ; and mix *His holy and reverend name*, with the idlest things that come out of our mouths. And what makes this practice the more inexcusable is, that we cannot have either any advantage from it, or any natural pleasure in it. Sometimes it arises from a hastiness and impatience of temper, which is but increased by giving this vent to it : whereas it is every one's wisdom, not to let it break out in any way, much less in such a way. But generally, it is nothing more than a silly and profane custom, inconsiderately taken up, and there are the strongest reasons for laying it down immediately. It will make us disliked and abhorred by good persons, and scarce recommend us to the very worst. No person is the sooner believed for his frequent swearing : on the contrary, a modest serious affirmation is always much more regarded ; and if any one's character is so low that his word

cannot be taken, he must think of other methods to retrieve it, for he will not at all mend matters, by the frequent repetition of an oath. Then if swearing be affected as becoming; it is certainly quite otherwise, in the highest degree. The very phrases used in it, as well as the occasions on which they are used, are almost constantly absurd and foolish: and surely profaneness can never lessen the folly. Besides, they make the conversation of men shocking and hellish. They are acknowledged to be disrespectful to the company in which they are used: and if regard to their earthly superiors can restrain persons from swearing, why should not the reverence, owing to our heavenly Father, do it much more effectually? But indeed, the indulgence of this sin wears off by degrees all sense of religion, and of every thing that is good.

Justly therefore doth our Saviour direct: *But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.* (Matth. v. 34, 35, 36.) That is; avoid, not only the grosser oaths, but all the silly refinements and softenings of them, which men have contrived in hope to make them seem innocent: for, though the name of God be not expressed, yet if it be implied by mentioning something relating to God, instead of himself; indeed whatever form is used to disguise it, the intent is the same: and the effect will be, bringing a sacred obligation into familiarity and contempt. Keep yourselves therefore, throughout the whole of your common conversation, within the bounds of a plain affirmation or denial: for whatever goes beyond these, proceeds

from a bad turn of mind, and will produce bad consequences.

If indeed, we be required to swear before a magistrate or public officer, for the discovery of truth and the doing of justice, this is notwithstanding lawful. For our Saviour forbids it only in *our communication*, our ordinary discourse: and he himself, our great pattern, answered upon oath to *the High Priest*, who *adjured him by the living God*. Or though we be not called upon by law, yet if some other weighty and extraordinary occasion should oblige us to call our Maker to witness: as *St. Paul* hath done, in more places than one of his epistles; then also we may allowably do it, provided it be always with sincerity and reverence. For by oaths, thus taken, men are benefited; and the name of God not profaned, but honoured. But in our daily talk and communication with each other, it is our Saviour's peremptory precept, *swear not at all*; a rule so evidently right and important, that even heathens have strictly enjoined and followed it, to the shame of too many who call themselves Christians.

Together with common swearing should be mentioned another sin, very near akin to it and almost always joined with it; that monstrous custom of cursing, in direct contradiction to all humanity, and to the express words of Scripture, *bless, and curse not*. To wish the heaviest judgments of God, and even eternal damnation to a person, for the slightest cause, or none at all; to wish the same to ourselves, if some trifling thing that we are saying be not true, which frequently after all is not true; amounts to the most desperate impiety, if people at all consider what they say. And though they do not, it is even then thoughtlessly treating God and his laws, and the awful sanctions of them, with contempt: and blotting out of their minds all serious regard to subjects,

that will one day be found most serious things. *His delight was in cursing*, says the psalmist, *and it shall happen unto him: he loved not blessing, therefore shall it be far from him.*

3. Besides the offences already mentioned, all indecent and unfit use of God's name in our discourse, though it be not in swearing or cursing, comes within the prohibition of the Commandment. All irreverent sayings, and even thoughts concerning His nature and attributes, His actions and His commands, fall under the same guilt; unless we are tormented with such thoughts whether we will or not: for then they are only an affliction, not a sin. All sorts of talk, ridiculing, misrepresenting, or inveighing against religion, or whatever is connected with it, incur the like condemnation. Nay, even want of attention in God's worship, *drawing near to Him with our mouths*, whilst *we remove our hearts far from Him*, (*Isaiah xxix. 13.*) if it be wilfully or carelessly indulged, makes us chargeable, in its degree, with the sin of *taking his name in vain.*

4. Though we no way profane his name ourselves; yet if we entice others to perjury and falsehood, or provoke them to rash oaths and curses; or give them any needless temptation to blaspheme God; to speak disrespectfully, or think slightly of their Maker or His laws, natural or revealed; by such behaviour also we become accessory to the breach of this commandment, and rank ourselves with those, whom it expressly declares *God will not hold guiltless*: that is, will not acquit, but severely punish.

Let us therefore be watchful, to preserve continually such an awe of the supreme Being upon our own minds, and those of all who belong to us, as may on every occasion effectually influence us to give the glory due unto

His name, both in our more solemn addresses to Him, and in our daily words and actions. For *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him.* (*Psalms lxxxix. 7.*)

## FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

*Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God : In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : Wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.*

IF the worship of God were left at large to be performed at any time, too many would be tempted to defer and postpone it, on one pretence or another, till at length it would not be performed at all. And therefore, though He were to be adored only by each person separately, and in private, it would be very expedient to fix on some stated returning seasons for that purpose. But reason shows it to be requisite, and the experience of all ages proves it to be natural, that as we are social creatures, we should be social in religion as well as other things, and honour in common our common Maker ; that we should unite in giving thanks to Him for the blessings of life, a very great part of which we should be incapable of, without uniting : that we should join in praying forgiveness of the sins which we too often join in committing ; petition Him together for the mercies which we have need of receiving together ; and, by assembling to learn and acknowledge our several duties, keep alive in one another, as well as ourselves,

that constant regard to piety and virtue, on which our happiness depends here and hereafter.

Since therefore, on these accounts, there must be public worship and instruction; it is not only expedient, but necessary, that there should be also fixed times appointed for it by sufficient authority. And how much and what time should be devoted to this purpose, every society must have determined for themselves, and would have found it hard enough to agree in determining, if God had given no intimation of His will in the case. But happily we are informed in the history of the creation, that the Maker of the world, having finished His work in six days, (which He could as easily have finished in one moment, had it not been for some valuable reason, probably of instruction to us) *blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it*: that is, appointed every return of it to be religiously kept as a solemn memorial, that *of Him, and therefore to Him are all things.* (Rom. xi. 36.) It is much the most natural to apprehend, that this appointment took place from the time when it is mentioned; from the time when the reason of it took place. And it is no wonder at all, that in so short a history, notice should not be taken of the actual observation of it before *Moses*: for notice is not taken of it in 500 years after *Moses*. Yet we know of a certainty, that in his time at least, it was ordered to be observed, both in this fourth Commandment, and in other parts of the law, which direct more particularly the manner of keeping it.

The thing most expressly enjoined the Jews in each of these passages is, resting from all manner of work; and not suffering their families, their cattle, nor even the strangers that lived amongst them, to labour on that day. And the reason of this rest, given in the Commandment as you have it in the book of *Exodus*, is, that

*the Lord rested on the seventh day from His work of creation. Not that this, or any thing, could be a fatigue to Him: for the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary. (Isaiah xl. 28.)* But the expression means, that having then finished the formation of the world, he ceased from it, and required men also to cease from their labours every seventh day; in memory of that fundamental article of all religion, that the heavens and earth were made and therefore are governed, by one infinitely wise, powerful, and good Being. And thus was the *Sabbath*, which word means the day of rest, a sign, as the Scripture calls it, *between God and the children of Israel; (Exod. xxxi. 13. 17. Ezek. xx. 12. 20.)* a mark to distinguish them from all worshippers of false deities.

But besides this principal reason for the repose of every seventh day, two others are mentioned in the law; that it might remind them of that deliverance from heavy bondage, which God hath granted them: *remember, that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out thence: therefore He commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day: and likewise that their servants and cattle might not be worn out with incessant toil; that thine ox and thine ass may rest; and the son of thine handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.* Such mercy indeed is little more than common prudence; but there are in the world multitudes of hard-hearted wretches, who would pay small regard to that consideration, were they left to their own liberty.

Now, merely abstaining from common work on this day, in obedience to God's command for such religious and moral ends as these, was undoubtedly sanctifying or keeping it holy. But then we are not to suppose that the leisure thus provided for men, was to be thrown away just as they pleased, instead of being usefully

employed. God directed the Jews: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy might; and the words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Now, as he required them to attend so constantly to these duties; he could not but expect they should attend more especially to them on that day, when the great foundation of all duty, his creating the world, was appointed to be commemorated; and when they had nothing to take off their thoughts from what they owed to God their Maker. There was a peculiar sacrifice appointed for that day: there is a peculiar psalm composed for it, the ninety-second; and these things are surely further intimations to us, that it must have been a time peculiarly intended, for the offering up of prayers and thanksgivings to heaven.

Few indeed, or none of God's laws, were well observed in the days of the Old Testament. But still, as the Priests and Levites were dispersed through the Jewish nation, that they might teach the people religion; so we read, that in good times they did teach it accordingly: and when could this be, but on the Sabbath day? We see it was the custom of religious persons, on that day, to resort to the prophets that were in Israel; doubtless to hear the word of God from their mouths. (2 Kings iv. 23.) We see public happiness promised on this condition, that men should *honour the Sabbath of the Lord, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words.* We see absolute ruin threatened for the profanation of it, (Jer. xvii. 27.) We see a time foretold, when *from one Sabbath to another all flesh should come to worship before the Lord,* (Isa. lxvi. 23.)

And in consequence of this, when their captivity had taught the Jews a stricter regard to their duty, *synagogues* and houses of prayer, were erected *in every city* where the Maker of all things was publicly adored, and His law read and preached every Sabbath-day. (*Acts xv. 21.*)

Such was the state of things, when our Saviour came into the world; whose religion being intended for all mankind equally, the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, in which the Jews alone were concerned, was mentioned no longer in the divine laws: but instead of the commemoration of this, was substituted that of the redemption of the world from the dominion and punishment of sin, which our blessed Redeemer accomplished by His death, and proved Himself to have accomplished by His resurrection. Accordingly, the first day of the week, being the day of his resurrection, was appointed in thankful remembrance of it, for the time of public worship amongst Christians, and therefore is called by *St. John, the Lord's day*; (*Rev. i. 10.*) though in common language it be more usually called Sunday, as it was even before our Saviour's time, and may be for a better reason since, because on it Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arose. Accordingly, some of the earliest fathers give it that name.

And that no one may doubt the lawfulness of this change of the day, it plainly appears from several passages of *St. Paul*, that we are not bound to observe the day of the Jewish sabbath: and it still more plainly appears in the scripture history of the apostles, that they did observe and direct the observation of our present Christian Sabbath; as the whole church hath constantly done since, from their times to this, though it doth not appear that they called it the Sabbath-day for many hundreds of years. One day in seven being still kept, the memory

of the creation is as well preserved, and the intent of this commandment as fully answered, as before : and that one day in seven being chosen, on which our Saviour rose again, the memory of the redemption wrought by him and called in scripture *a new creation* (2 Cor. v. 7—Gal. vi. 15.) is, in the properest manner, as well as with the greatest reason, perpetuated along with the former.

The day being then thus fixed which we ought to keep holy, it remains to consider how it ought to be kept. And,

1. It must be a day of rest, in order to commemorate God's *resting*, as the scripture expresses it, *from all His work which He created and made* ; and to allow that ease and refreshment, which, with so great humanity, the commandment requires should be given, not only to servants, but to the very cattle. Besides, it cannot be a day of religion to mankind, without such vacation from the ordinary labours of life, as may give sufficient leisure to distinguish it by exercises of piety. But then, as Christians are not under a dispensation so rigorous in outward observances as that of *Moses*, they are not bound to so strict and scrupulous a rest as the Jews were. Though, indeed, the Jews themselves became at last, much more scrupulous in this matter than they needed, and are accordingly reprov'd by our blessed Saviour, from whom we learn this general rule, that *the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath* : and therefore all works of great necessity, or great goodness and mercy, if they cannot be deferred to another time, be they ever so laborious, may very allowably be done then. Only, so far as the public wisdom of the laws of the land hath restrained us, we ought certainly to restrain ourselves, even from such things as in our private opinion, we might otherwise think innocent. As to matters of less labour, what propriety and decency,

#### FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

and reasonable convenience require, we surely need not omit. And what the practice of the more religious and considerate part of those amongst whom we live allows, hath without question no small title to our favourable opinion. But the liberties taken by thoughtless or profane persons, are not of any authority in the least, and the safest general rule to go by, is to omit whatever may be sinful and is needless, and neither to require nor suffer those who belong to us, to do, on this day, what we apprehend is unlawful to do ourselves.

2. A reasonable part of our day of holy rest must be employed in the public worship of God. This, you have seen, the Jews understood to be requisite on their Sabbath: and the earliest accounts which we have of ours informs us, that *on the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread: (Acts xx. 7)* which means to celebrate the Lord's supper. That with this was joined *the apostles' doctrine and prayer*, we learn from another place of the same book of scripture, *(Acts ii. 42.)* And that every Lord's day was dedicated to the public offices of piety, the history of the church fully shows from the beginning. To strengthen the obligation of attending on these offices, the laws of the land also enjoin it: and as all persons need instruction in their duty both to God and man, and the generality have scarce any other season for it than the leisure of the Sunday; if this most valuable time be either taken from them, or thrown away by them, they must become ignorant and vicious, and of consequence miserable in this world and the next. How wicked then, and how unwise, is it, either to throw contempt on such an institution, or on frivolous pretences to neglect improving by it!

3. Besides assembling in the church on the Lord's day, every one should employ some reasonable part of it in the private exercises of piety; in thinking over their

past behaviour, confessing their faults to God, and making prudent resolutions against them for the future; in praying for the mercies which they more especially want, and returning thanks for the blessings with which providence hath favoured them; in cultivating a temper of humanity; in doing acts of forgiveness, and setting apart something according to their ability, for acts of charity; (for which last *St. Paul* hath particularly recommended this time, *1 Cor. xvi. 2.*) and in seriously considering at home, whatever they have heard in God's house. For our public religion will soon degenerate into a useless form, unless we preserve and enliven the spirit of it by such means as these, in private: to which they above all persons, are bound on the Lord's day, who either have little leisure for them on others, or make little use of it.

When once persons have brought themselves to spend so much of the Sunday as is fitting in this manner; it will then, and not before, be time for them to ask how the remainder of it may be spent: for it is a very bad sign to be careless of observing what is commanded, and zealous of extending to the utmost, what at best is only permitted. Over-great strictness however must be avoided: and therefore decent civility and friendly conversation, may both innocently and usefully have a place in the vacant part of our Lord's day; of which it is really one valuable benefit, that it gives even the lowest persons an opportunity of appearing to each other in the most agreeable light they can, and thus promotes mutual good will. Nor is it necessary at all to banish cheerfulness from our conversation on this day; which being a festival, though a religious one, we should partake of all God's blessings upon it with joyful hearts. But then such instances of freedom and levity in conversation and behaviour, as would scarce be proper at any

time, are doubly improper at this : and tend very fatally to undo whatever good the preceding part of the day may have done.

And as to taking further liberties, of diversions and amusements, though they are not in express words forbidden (for the desire of them is not supposed in the word of God) yet by the laws both of church and state they are. And what need is there for them, or what good use of them ? If persons are so vehemently set upon these things, that they are uneasy to be so much as one day in seven without them, it is high time that they should bring themselves to more moderation, by exercising some abstinence from them. And if they are at all indifferent about them, surely they should consider, what must be the effect of introducing and indulging them : what offence and uneasiness these things give the more serious and valuable part of the world ; what comfort and countenance to the unthinking and irreligious part : what a dangerous example to the lower part : what encouragement they afford to extravagance and the mad love of pleasure : what a snare they place in the way of all, that think them unlawful, and yet will thus be tempted to these liberties first and then to others, against their consciences : and, to add no more, how unhappily they increase the appearance (which, without them, God knows, would be much too great) of religion being slighted and disregarded, especially by the upper part of the world, who should be the great patterns of it.

And if this be the case of merely unseasonable diversions, imprudent and unlawful ones are still more blameable on this day : but most of all, that crying sin of debauchery and intemperance, which perverts it from the service of God to the service of the devil, and leads persons more directly than almost any thing else, to utter destruction of body and soul. Therefore let us be care-

ful, first to guard ourselves against these transgressions, then to keep our children, servants, and dependents from the like, if we make any conscience of doing well by them, or would have any prospect of comfort in them. Nor let us think it sufficient, to restrain them from spending the day ill: but to the best of our power and understanding, encourage and assist them to spend it well: and God grant we may all employ in so right a manner, the few Sabbaths and few days which we have to come on earth, that we may *enter* at the conclusion of them, *into that eternal Sabbath, that rest which remaineth for the people of God, in heaven.*

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

## PART I.

*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

HAVING explained the precepts of the first table, which set forth the duty of men to God; I now come to those of the second, which express our several obligations one to another.

Now the whole law concerning these matters, is briefly comprehended, as St. Paul very justly observes, in this one saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Our neighbour, is every one with whom we have at any time any concern, or on whose welfare our actions can have any influence. For whoever is thus within our reach, is in the most important sense near to us, however distant in other respects. To *love our neighbour* is to bear him good-will, which of course will dispose us to think favourably of him and behave properly to him. And to *love him as ourselves*, is to have not only a real, but a strong and active good-will towards him; with a tenderness for his interests, duly proportioned to that which we naturally feel for our own. Such a temper would most powerfully restrain us from every thing wrong, and prompt us to every thing right: and therefore is *the fulfilling of the law*, so far as it relates to our mutual behaviour.

But because on some occasions, we may either not see, or not confess we see what is right and what otherwise; our Saviour hath put the same duty in a light somewhat different, which gives the safest, fullest,

and clearest direction for practice that any one precept can give. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them.* Behaving properly depends on judging truly ; and that, in cases of any doubt, depends on hearing with due attention both sides. To our own side we never fail attending : the rule therefore is, give the other side the same attention by supposing it your own ; and after considering carefully and fairly, what, if it were indeed your own, you should not only desire (for desires may be unseasonable) but think you had an equitable claim to, and well-grounded expectation of from the other party, that do in regard to him. Would we but honestly take this method, our mistakes would be so exceedingly few and slight and innocent, that well might our blessed Lord add, *For this is the law and the prophets.*

Yet, after all, there might be difficulty sometimes, especially to some persons, in the application of a rule so very general ; and therefore we have in the commandments, the reciprocal duties of man to man branched out into six particulars : the first of which, contained in the fifth Commandment, relates to the mutual obligations of superiors and inferiors : the rest, to those points in which all men are considered as equals.

It is true, the precept now to be explained, mentions only one kind of superiors : *Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother.* But the case of other superiors is so like that of father, that most of them have occasionally the very name of father given them in most languages ; and therefore the regard due to them also, may be very properly comprehended and laid before you, under the same head. It is likewise true, that the duty of the inferior alone is expressed in the Commandment ; but the corresponding duty of the superior is, at the same time, of necessity implied : for which reason I shall dis-

course of both ; beginning with the mutual obligations of children and parents, properly so called, which will be a sufficient employment for the present time.

Now the duty of children to their parents is here expressed by the word *honour*, which in common language signifies a mixture of love and respect, producing due obedience ; but in Scripture language it implies further, maintenance and support when wanted.

1. Love to those, of whose flesh and blood we are, is what nature dictates to us in the very first place. Children have not only received from their parents, as instruments in the hand of God, the original of their being ; but the preservation of it through all the years of helpless infancy : which the needful care of them gave much trouble, took up much time, required much expense ; all which parents usually go through with so cheerful a diligence and so self-denying a tenderness, that no return of affection on the childrens' part, can possibly repay it to the full, though childrens' affection is what, above all things, makes parents happy. Then, as life goes on, it is their parents that give or procure for them such instruction of all kinds, as qualifies them, both to do well in this world, and be for ever blessed in another ; that watch over them continually with never-ceasing attention, consulting their inclinations in a multitude of obliging instances, and bearing with their perverseness in a multitude of provoking ones ; kindly restraining them from a thousand pernicious follies, into which they would otherwise fall, and directing their heedless footsteps into the right way, encouraging, rewarding, and, which indeed is no less a benefit, correcting them also, as the case requires ; full of solicitude all the while for their happiness, and consuming themselves with labour and thoughtfulness for their dear objects, to improve, support, and advance them in their lives, and

provide for them at their deaths. Even those parents, who perform these duties but imperfectly, who perhaps do some very wrong things; do notwithstanding, almost all of them, so many right and meritorious ones, that though the more such they do the better they should be loved, yet they that do least, do enough to be loved sincerely for it as long as they live.\*

2 And with love must ever be joined, due respect, inward and outward. For parents are not only the benefactors, but in rank the betters, and in right the governors of their children; whose dependence is upon them, in point of interest, generally: in point of duty, always. They ought therefore to think of them with great reverence, and treat them with every mark of submission, in gesture, in speech, in the whole of their behaviour, which the practice of wise and good persons hath established, as proper instances of filial regard. And though the parents be mean in station or low in understanding; still the relation continues, and the duty that belongs to it. Nay, suppose they be faulty in some part of their conduct or character, yet children should be very backward to see this, and it can very seldom be allowable for them to show that they see it: from the world they should always conceal it, as far as they can, for it is shocking beyond measure in *them* to publish it. And if ever any thing of this nature must be mentioned to the parents themselves, which nothing but great necessity can warrant or excuse; it should be with all possible gentleness and modesty, and the most real concern at being obliged to so unnatural an office.

3 Love and respect to parents will always produce obedience to them, a third duty of the highest importance. Children, for a considerable time, are utterly

\* See Xenophon's memoirs of Socrates, l. 2. c.

unqualified to govern themselves; and so long as this continues to be the case, must be absolutely and implicitly governed by those, who alone can claim a title to it. As they grow up to the use of their understanding, reason should be gradually mixed with authority, in every thing that is required of them: but at the same time children should observe, what they may easily find to be true in daily instances, that they are apt to think they know how to direct themselves, much sooner than they really do; and should therefore submit to be directed by their friends in more points, and for a longer time, than perhaps they would naturally be tempted to wish. Suppose, in that part of your lives which is already past, you had had your own way in every thing, what would have been the consequences? Very bad ones you yourselves must see: and your elders now see, what you will also in time, that it would be full as bad were you to have your way now: and what all who are likely to know agree in, you should believe and submit to. Your parents and governors have at least more knowledge and experience, if they have no more capacity, than you; and the trouble which they take, and the concern which they feel about you, plainly show that your good is the thing which they have at heart. The only reason why they do not indulge you in the particulars that you wish, is, that they see it would hurt you: and it is a dreadful venture for you, to think, as yet, of trusting yourselves. Trust therefore to them, whom you have all manner of reason to trust; and obey them willingly, who by the laws of God and man, have a right to rule you, and, generally speaking, a power to make you obey at last, be you ever so unwilling.

Not that children are bound to obedience in all things, without exception. Should a parent command them to lie, to steal, to commit any wickedness; God commands

the contrary; and He is to be obeyed, not man. Or should a parent command any thing of consequence, directly opposite to the laws of the land and the injunctions of public authority; here the magistrate being the superiour power, in all things that confessedly belong to his jurisdiction, is to be obeyed rather than the parent, who ought himself to be subject to the magistrate.\* Or, if in other points, a parent should require what was both very evidently and very greatly, unsuitable to a child's condition and station, or had a clear tendency to make him miserable; or would be certainly and considerably prejudicial to him through the remainder of his life; where the one goes so far beyond his just bounds, the other may allowably excuse himself from complying. Only one case must be both so plain and without of such moment, as may justify him, not only in his own judgment, which may easily be prejudiced, but in that of every considerate person whom he hath opportunity of consulting; and in the general opinion of mankind. And even then, the refusal must be accompanied with the greatest decency and humility; and the strictest care to make amends, by all instances of real duty, for this one seeming want of duty.

In proportion as young persons approach to that age, when the law allows them to be capable of governing themselves, they become by degrees less and less subject to the government of their parents; especially in smaller matters: for, in the more important concerns of life, and above all, in the very important one of marriage, not only Daughters, (concerning whom the very phrase of *giving them in marriage* shows, that they are not to give themselves as they please) but sons too, should have all possible regard to the authority, the judgment, the

\* See Taylor's Elements of Civil Law, p. 387, 388, 389.

blessing, the comfort of those to whom they owe every thing. And even after they are sent out into the world to stand on their own bottom, still they remain for ever bound not to slight, or willingly to grieve them; but in all proper affairs, to consult with them and hearken to them, as far as it can be at all expected in reason or gratitude, that they should.

4. The last thing, which in scripture the phrase of honouring parents comprehends, is affording them decent relief and support, if they are reduced to want it. For thus our Saviour explains the word in his reproof of the pharisees, for *making this commandment of no effect by their tradition. God commanded, honour thy father and thy mother: but ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me: that is, what should have relieved you, I have devoted to religious uses; whosoever should say this, and honoureth not his father or his mother, he shall be free: (Matt. xv. 4, 5, 6.)* In *St. Mark* it is, *Ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother. (Mark vii. 12.)* And in other places of scripture, besides this, honouring a person signifies contributing to his maintenance: as *1 Tim. v. 17, 18. Let the elders that rule be counted worthy of double honour: especially they who labour in the word and doctrine; for the scripture saith, the labourer is worthy of his reward.*

How worthy parents are of this, as well as the other sorts of honour, when they need it, sufficiently appears from all that hath been said. If they deserve to be loved and respected, surely they are not to be left exposed to distress and want by those whom they have brought into life, and for whom they have done so much: but children, even if they are poor, should both be diligent in working and provident in saving, to keep their helpless parents from extremities: and if they are in compe-

tently good circumstances, should allow them a liberal share of the plenty which they enjoy themselves. Accordingly St. Paul directs, that both *children and nephews*, that is grandchildren, for so the word *nephew* always means in scripture, should *learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents : for that is good and acceptable before God*. Indeed nature as well as christianity, enjoins it so strongly, that the whole world cries out shame where it is neglected : and the same reason which requires parents to be assisted in their necessities, requires children also to attend upon them and minister to them, with vigilant assiduity and tender affection, in their infirmities ; and to consult on every occasion, their desires, their peace, and their ease: and they should consider both what they contribute to their support, and every other instance of regard which they show them, not as an alms given to an inferior, but as a tribute of duty, paid to a superior. For which reason perhaps it may be, that relieving them is mentioned in scripture under the notion of honouring them.

One thing more to be observed, is, that all these duties of children belong equally to both parents : the mother being as expressly named as the father, in the commandment, and having the same right in point of reason. Only, if contrary orders are given by the two parents to the child, he is bound to obey that parent rather, whom the other is bound to obey also : but still preserving to each all due reverence, from which nothing, not even the command of either can discharge him.

And now I proceed to the duties of parents to their children, on which there is much less need to enlarge than on the other. For not only parents have more understanding to know their duty, and stronger affections to prompt them to do it ; but indeed, a great part of it

hath been already intimated, in setting forth that of children to them. It is the duty of parents, to take all that kind care, which is the main foundation of love; to keep up such authority, as may secure respect; to give such reasonable commands, as may engage a willing obedience; and thus to make their children so good, and themselves so esteemed by them, that they may depend, in case of need, on assistance and succour from them.

More particularly, they are bound to think them, from the first, worthy of their own inspection and pains: and not abandon them to the negligence, or bad management of others: so to be tender of them and indulge them, as not to encourage their faults; so to reprove and correct them, as not to break their spirits or provoke their hatred: to instil into them the knowledge, and require of them the practice, of their duty to God and man: and recommend to them every precept, both of religion and morality, by what is the strongest recommendation, a good and amiable example: to breed them up as suitably to their condition as may be; but to be sure not above it: watching over them with all the care that conduces to health; but allowing them in none of the softness that produces luxury or indolence, or of the needless distinctions, that pamper pride; to begin preparing them early, according to their future station in life, for being useful in it to others and themselves: to provide conscientiously for their spiritual and eternal, as well as temporal good, in disposing of them; and bestow on them willingly, as soon as it is fit, whatever may be requisite to settle them properly in the world: to lay up for them, not by injustice, penuriousness, or immoderate solicitude, all that they can; but by honest and prudent diligence and attention, as much as is sufficient, and to distribute this amongst them, not as fondness, or resentment, or caprice, or vanity, may dictate; but in a rea-

sonable and equitable manner, such as will be likeliest to make those who receive it love one another, and esteem the memory of the giver.

These are, in brief, the mutual duties of parents and children ; and you will easily perceive that they are the duties in proportion of all who, by any occasional or accidental means, come to stand in the stead of parents or of children. The main thing which wants to be observed, is, that from the neglect of these duties on one side, or on both, proceeds a very great part of the wickedness and misery that is in the world. May God incline the hearts of all that are concerned either way in this most important relation, so to practise the several obligations of it, as may procure to them in this world, reciprocal satisfaction and joy, and eternal felicity in that which is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

### PART II.

IN my last discourse, I began to explain the fifth Commandment; and having already gone through the duties of children and parents, properly so called, I come now to the other sorts of inferiors and superiors; all which have sometimes the same names given them, and are comprehended under the reason and equity of this precept.

And here, the first relation to be mentioned is, that between private subjects and those in authority over them; a relation so very like that of children and fathers, that the duties on both sides are much the same in each.

But more particularly the duty of subjects is, to obey the laws of whatever government Providence hath placed us under, in every thing which is not contrary to the laws of God; and to contribute willingly to its support, every thing that is legally required, or may be reasonably expected of us: to be faithful and true to the interests of that society of which we are members, and to the persons of those who govern it; paying, both to the supreme power, and all subordinate magistrates, every part of that submission and respect, both in speech and behaviour, which is their due; and making all those allowances in their favour, which the difficulty of their office, and the frailty of our common nature demand: to love and wish well to all our fellow subjects, without exception; think of them charitably, and treat them kindly: to be peaceable and quiet, each minding

diligently the duties of his own station ; not factious and turbulent, intruding into the concerns of others : to be modest and humble, *not exercising ourselves in matters too high for us* ; but leaving such things to the care of our superiors, and the providence of God : to be thankful for the blessings and advantages of government, in proportion as we enjoy them : and reasonable and patient under the burdens and inconveniences of it, which at any time we may suffer.

The duty of princes and magistrates, it would be of little use to enlarge on at present. In general it is, to confine the exercise of their power within the limits of the laws, to which they are bound ; and direct it to the attainment of those ends for which they were appointed ; to execute their proper function with care and integrity, as *men fearing God, men of truth, hating covetousness* ; to do all persons impartial justice, and consult in all cases, the public benefit ; encouraging religion and virtue with zeal, especially by a good example ; punishing crimes with steadiness, yet with moderation ; and *studying to preserve the people committed to their charge, in wealth, peace, and godliness.* (*Communion office.*)

Another relation to be brought under this Commandment, is, that between spiritual fathers, the teachers of religion, and such as are to be taught.

The duty of us who have undertaken the important work of spiritual guides and teachers, is to deliver the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, in the plainest and strongest terms that we can ; insisting on such things chiefly, as will be most conducive to the real and inward benefit of our hearers : and recommending them in the most prudent and persuasive manner ; *seeking to please all men for their good, to edification, but fearing no man in the discharge of our consciences* ; and neither

saying or omitting any thing for the sake of applause from the many or the few, or of promoting either our own wealth and power, or that of our order; to instruct, exhort and comfort all that are placed under our care, with sincerity, discretion, and tenderness, privately as well as publickly, so far as they give us opportunity, or we discern hope of doing service: *watching for their souls, as they that must give account*; to rule in the church of God with vigilance, humility, and meekness, *showing ourselves in all things, patterns of good works*.

The duty of you, the christian laity, whom we are to teach, is to attend constantly and seriously on religious worship and instruction, as a sacred ordinance appointed by heaven for your spiritual improvement; to consider impartially and carefully what you hear, and believe and practise what you are convinced you ought; to observe with due regard the rules established for decent order and edification in the church, and pay such respect, in word and deed, to those who minister to you in holy things, as the interest and honour of religion require; accepting and encouraging our well-meant services, and bearing charitably with our many imperfections and failings:

A third relation, is that between masters or mistresses of schools and their scholars. The duty of the former is, diligently to instruct the children committed to them, in all the things which they are put to learn, suiting their manner of teaching, as well as they can, to the temper and capacity of each, and to take effectual care that they apply themselves to what is taught them; and do their best to watch over their behaviour, especially in the great points of religion and truth, modesty and good-humour; show countenance to such as are well-behaved and promising; correct the faulty, with needful, yet not with excessive severity; and get the incor-

rigible removed out of the way, before they corrupt others. And the duty of the scholars is, to reverence and obey their master or mistress, as if they were their parents; to live friendly and lovingly with one another as brothers and sisters; to be heartily thankful to all that give or procure them so valuable a blessing as useful knowledge; and industrious to improve in it, considering, how greatly their happiness here and hereafter depends upon it.

I come now to a fourth relation, of great extent and importance, that between heads of families and their servants.

When the New Testament was written, the generality of servants were, as in many places they are still, mere slaves; and the persons to whom they belonged, had a right to their labour and that of their posterity, for ever, without giving them any other wages than their maintenance; and with a power to inflict on them what punishments they pleased for the most part, even death itself, if they would. God be thanked, service amongst us, is a much happier thing: the conditions of it being usually no other, than the servants themselves voluntarily enter into for their own benefit. But then, for that reason, they ought to perform whatever is due from them, both more conscientiously and more cheerfully.

Now from servants is due, in the first place, obedience. Indeed, if they are commanded what is plainly unlawful, they *ought to obey God rather than man*; (*Acts v. 29.*) but still they must excuse themselves decently, though resolutely. And even lawful things, which they have not bargained to do, they are not obliged to do: nor any thing indeed, which is clearly and greatly unsuitable to their place and station, and improper to be required of them. But whatever they engaged, or knew they were expected to do; or what, though they did not know of

it beforehand, is usual and reasonable, or even not very unreasonable, they must submit to. For if they may on every small pretence, refuse to do *this*, and question whether *that* belong to their place, it is most evident, that all authority and order in families must be at an end; and they themselves will have much more trouble in disputing about their business, than they would have in performing it.

Servants therefore should obey: and they should do it respectfully and readily; not murmuring or behaving gloomily and sullenly, as if their work was not due for their wages; and contradicting, as if those whom they serve were their equals; but, as the apostle exhorts, *with good-will doing service*; (*Eph. vi. 7.*) *not answering again* (*Tit. ii. 9.*) and paying all fit honour to their master or mistress, and to every one in the family.

They are also to obey with diligence: to spend as much time in work, and follow it as closely all that time, as can be fairly expected from them; *not with eye-service, as men-pleasers* (these are the words of scripture, twice repeated there) *but with singleness of heart, fearing God*. Whatever industry therefore a reasonable master would require when his eye is upon them, the same, in the main, honest servants will use when his eye is not upon them: for his presence or absence can make no difference in their duty. He hath agreed with them for their time and pains, and he must not be defrauded of them.

With diligence, must always be joined care, that no business be neglected or delayed beyond its proper season: nothing mismanaged for want of thinking about it; nothing heedlessly, much less designedly, wasted and squandered; but all reasonable frugality and good contrivance shown, and all fair advantages taken, yet no other, for the benefit of those who employ them. Every servant would think this but common justice in

his own case; and therefore should do it as common justice in his Maker's case. Some perhaps may imagine that their master's estate or income, is well able to afford them to be careless or extravagant; but the truth is, few or no incomes can afford this: for if it be practised in one thing, why not in another? And what must follow, if it be practised in all? that certainly which we daily see, that persons of the greatest estates are distressed and ruined by it. Or, though it would not distress them at all, yet a master's wealth is no more a justification of servants wasting what belongs to him, than of their stealing it: and if one be dishonest, the other must be so.

Now dishonesty, every body owns to be a crime; but too many do not consider sufficiently how many sorts of it there are: observe then, that besides the instances already mentioned, and the gross ones that are punishable by law, it is dishonest in a servant, either to take to himself or give to another, or consent to the taking or giving, whatever he knows he is not allowed, and durst not do with his master's knowledge. There are, to be sure, various degrees of this fault, some not so bad as others, but it is the same kind of fault in all of them; besides that the smaller degrees lead to the greater: and all dishonesty, bad as it is in other persons, is yet worse in those who are intrusted, as servants are, and things put in their power upon that trust, which if they break, they are unfaithful as well as unjust.

Another sort of dishonesty is, speaking falsehoods: against which I have already in the course of these lectures given some cautions, and shall give more, therefore at present I shall only say, that whether servants are guilty of it amongst themselves, or to their masters or mistresses, whether against or in favour of one another, or even in their own favour; there are few things by which they may both do and suffer more harm than a lying tongue.

Truth therefore is a necessary quality in servants, and a further one is proper secrecy : for there is great unfairness in betraying the secrets, either of their master's business or his family, or turning to his disadvantage any thing that comes to their knowledge by being employed under him ; unless it be where conscience obliges them to a discovery, which is a case that seldom happens ; and, excepting that case, what they have promised to conceal, it is palpable wickedness to disclose ; and where they have not promised, yet they are taken into their master's house to be assistants and friends, not spies and talebearers ; to do service, not harm to him, and to every one that is under the roof.

Two other duties, of all persons indeed, but in some measure peculiarly of servants, are, sobriety, without which they can neither be careful or diligent, nor will be likely to continue just ; and chastity, the want of which will produce all manner of disorders and mischiefs in the family to which they belong, and utter ruin to themselves.

The last requisite which I shall mention, is peaceableness and good temper ; agreeing with and helping one another, and making the work which they have to do easy, and the lives which they are to lead together, comfortable. For it is very unfit, that either their masters or any other part of the family should suffer through their ill-humour ; and indeed they suffer enough by it themselves, to make restraining it well worth their while.

These are the duties of servants ; and as the faithful performance of them is the surest way of serving themselves and being happy in this world ; so, if it proceed from a true principle of conscience, God will accept it as service done to himself, and make them eternally happy for it in the next : whereas wilfully transgressing

or negligently slighting, the things which they ought to do, whatever pleasure or whatever advantage it may promise to produce to them for a while, will seldom fail of bringing them at last to shame and ruin even here, and will certainly bring them, unless they repent and amend, to misery hereafter.

But think not, I entreat you, that we will lay burdens on those below us, and take none upon ourselves: there are duties also, and very necessary ones, which masters and mistresses owe to their servants.

To behave towards them with meekness and gentleness, not imperiously and with contempt; and to restrain them as far as may be from incorrect conduct one to another; never to accuse, threaten, or suspect them, without or beyond reason; to hear patiently their defences and complaints; and bear with due moderation their mistakes and faults, neither to make them, when in health, work or fare harder than is fitting, or suffer them, when in sickness, to want any thing requisite for their comfort and relief; if they be hired servants, to pay their wages fully and punctually at the time agreed: if they are put to learn any business or profession, to instruct them in it carefully and thoroughly; not only to give them time for the exercises of religion, but assistance to understand, and encouragement to practise, every part of their duty: to keep them as much as possible, both from sin and temptation, and particularly from corrupting each other: To show displeasure when they do amiss as far, and no farther, than the case requires; and to countenance and reward them when they serve well, in proportion to the merit and length of such service. For all these things are natural dictates of reason and humanity, and clearly implied in that comprehensive rule of scripture: *masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing, that ye also have a Master in Heaven.*

There are still two sorts more of inferiors and superiors, that may properly be mentioned under this commandment: young persons and elder; those of low and high degree.

The duty of the younger is, to moderate their own rashness and love of pleasure, to reverence the persons and advice of the aged, and neither to use them ill or despise them, on account of the infirmities that may accompany advanced years; considering in what manner they will expect hereafter that others should treat them. And the duty of elder persons is, to make all fit allowances, but no hurtful ones, to the natural dispositions of young people; to instruct them with patience and reprove them with mildness; not to require either too much or too long submission from them, but be willing that they, in their turn, should come forward into the world; gradually withdrawing themselves from the heavier cares and the lighter pleasures of this life, and waiting with pious resignation to be called into another.

The duty of the lower part of the world to those above them, in rank, fortune, or office, is not to envy them, or murmur at the superiority which a wise though mysterious providence hath given them, but *in whatever state they are, therewith to be content*; and pay willingly to others, all the respect which decency or custom have made their due. At the same time, the duty of those in higher life is, to relieve the poor, protect the injured, countenance the good, discourage the bad, as they have opportunity; not to scorn, much less to oppress the meanest of their brethren; but to remember, that *we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ*; (Rom. xiv. 10.) *where he that doth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons.* (Col. iii. 25.)

And now, were all these duties conscientiously ob-

served by all the world, how happy a place would it be ! And whoever will faithfully do their own part of them, they shall be happy, whether others will do theirs or not ; and the Commandment assures them of it ; *that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* In all probability, if we obey his laws, and that now before us in particular, both longer and more prosperous will our days prove, in the land of our pilgrimage in which God hath placed us to sojourn ; but, without all question, eternal and infinite shall our felicity be, in that land of promise, the heavenly Canaan, which he hath appointed for our inheritance ; which that we may all inherit accordingly, He of his mercy grant, &c.

## SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt do no murder.*

HAVING set before you, under the fifth Commandment, the particular duties which inferiors and superiors owe each to the other, I proceed now to those remaining precepts, which express the general duties of all men to all men.

Amongst these, as life is the foundation of every thing valuable to us, the preservation of it is justly entitled to the first place: and accordingly the sixth Commandment is, *Thou shalt do no murder.* Murder is taking away a person's life, with design, and without authority. Unless both concur, it doth not deserve that name.

1. It is not murder unless it be with design. He who is duly careful to avoid doing harm, and unhappily notwithstanding that kills another, though he hath cause to be extremely sorry for it, yet is entirely void of guilt on account of it: for his will having no share in the action, it is not, in a moral sense, his. But if he doth the mischief through heedlessness or levity of mind, or inconsiderate vehemence, here is a fault: if the likelihood of mischief could be foreseen, the fault is greater; and the highest degree of such negligence or impetuous rashness, comes near to bad intention.

2. It is not murder unless it be without authority. Now a person hath authority from the law, both of God and man, to defend his own life, if he cannot do it otherwise, by the death of whoever attacks it unjustly; whose destruction in that case is of his own seeking, and *his blood on his own head.* But nothing short of the most

imminent danger, ought ever to carry us to such an extremity, and a good person will spare ever so bad a one, as far as he can with any prospect of safety. Again, proper magistrates have authority to sentence offenders to death, on sufficient proof of such crimes as the welfare of the community requires to be thus punished; and to employ others in the execution of that sentence: and private persons have authority, and in proper circumstances are obliged, to seize and prosecute such offenders: for all this is only another sort of self defence, defending the public from what else would be pernicious to it: and the Scripture hath said, that the sovereign power *beareth not the sword in vain*: (*Rom. xiii. 4.*) but in whatever cases gentler punishments would sufficiently answer the ends of government, surely capital ones are forbidden by this Commandment. Self-defence, in the last place, authorizes whole nations to make war upon other nations, when it is the only way to obtain redress of injuries which cannot be supported, or security against impending ruin. To determine whether the state is indeed in these unhappy circumstances, belongs to the supreme jurisdiction, and the question ought to be considered very conscientiously; for wars, begun or continued without necessity, are unchristian and inhuman: as many murders are committed, as there are lives lost in them; besides the innumerable sins and miseries of other sorts, with which they are always attended. But subjects, in their private capacity, are incompetent judges of what is requisite for the public weal; nor can the guardians of it permit them to act upon their judgment, were they to make one: therefore they may lawfully serve in wars which their superiors have unlawfully undertaken, excepting perhaps such offensive wars as are notoriously unjust. In others, it is no more the business of the soldiery to consider the grounds of their

sovereign's taking up arms, than it is the business of the executioner to examine, whether the magistrate hath passed a right sentence.

You see then, in what cases killing is not murder; in all but these, it is; and you cannot fail of seeing the guilt of this crime to be singularly great and heinous. It brings designedly upon one of our brethren, without cause, what human nature abhors and dreads most: it cuts him off from all the enjoyments of this life at once, and sends him into another for which possibly he was not yet prepared: it defaces the image, and defeats the design of God: it overturns the great purpose of government and laws, mutual safety: it robs society of a member, and consequently of part of its strength: it robs the relations, friends, and dependents of the person destroyed, of every benefit and pleasure which else they might have had from him; and the injury done in all these respects, hath the terrible aggravation, that it cannot be recalled. Most wisely therefore hath our Creator surrounded murder with a peculiar horror: that nature, as well as reason, may deter from it every one who is not utterly abandoned to the worst of wickedness, and most justly hath he appointed the sons of *Noah*, that is, all mankind, to punish death with death. *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.* (*Gen. ix. 6.*) And that nothing may protect so daring an offender, he enjoined the *Jews*, in the chapter which follows the ten Commandments: *If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die.* But supposing, what seldom happens, that the murderer may escape judicial vengeance; yet what piercing reflections, what continual terrors and alarms must he carry about with him! And could he be hardened against these, it would only subject

him the more inevitably to that future condemnation, from which nothing but the deepest repentance can possibly exempt him. For *no murderer hath eternal life; but they shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* (John iii. 15.—*Rev.* xxi. 8.)

But shocking, and deserving of punishment here and hereafter as this crime always is, yet there are circumstances which may augment it greatly. If the person whom any one deprives of life, be placed in lawful authority over him; or united in relation or friendship to him; or have done him kindnesses; or never hath done him any harm; or be, in a peculiar degree, good, useful, or pitiable; each of these things considerably increase the sin, though some indeed more than others. Again, if the horrid fact be formally contrived; and perhaps the design carried on through a length of time, this argues a much more steady and inflexible depravity of heart, than the commission of it in a sudden rage: but still, even the last, though it hath in the law of this country, a different name of man-slaughter given it, and a different punishment prescribed for the first offence; yet in the sight of God is as truly murder as the former, though freer from aggravations. The mischief done is done purposely; and neither passion nor provocation gives authority for doing it, or even any great excuse. For as God hath required us, he hath certainly enabled us to restrain the hastiest sallies of our anger, especially from such enormities as this.

Nor doth it materially alter the nature, or lessen at all the degree of the sin, if, whilst we attack another, we give him an opportunity to defend himself and attack us, as in duelling: Still taking away his life is murder: exposing our own is so likewise, as I shall quickly show you: and an appointment of two persons to meet for this pur-

pose under pretence of being bound to it by their honour, is an agreement in form to commit, for the sake of an absurd notion, or rather an unmeaning word, the most capital offence against each other and their Maker, of which, if their intention succeed, they cannot have time to repent.

As to the manner in which murder is committed, whether a person do it directly himself or employ another; whether he do it by force, or fraud, or colour of justice; accusing falsely, or taking any unfair advantage; these things make little further difference in the guilt, than that the most artful and studied way is generally the worst.

And though a design of murder should not take effect; yet whoever hath done all that he could towards it, is plainly as much a sinner as if it had: doing any thing towards it, or so much as once intending it, or assisting or encouraging any other who intends it, is the same sort of wickedness: and if a person doth not directly design the death of another, yet if he designedly doth what he knows or suspects may probably occasion it, he is, in proportion to his knowledge or suspicion, guilty. Nay, if he is only negligent in matters which may affect human life, or meddles with them, when he hath cause to think he understands them not, he is far from innocent; and there are several professions and employments, in which these truths ought to be considered with a peculiar degree of seriousness.

Further yet; if it be criminal to contribute in any manner towards taking away a person's life immediately, it must be criminal also to contribute any thing towards shortening it, which is taking it away after a time; whether by bringing any bodily disease upon him, or causing him any grief or anxiety of mind, or by what indeed will produce both, distressing him in his circum-

stances, concerning which the son of *Sirach* saith: *He that taketh away his neighbour's living, slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, is a blood-shedder.*

Indeed, if we cause or procure any sort of hurt to another, though it hath no tendency to deprive him of life, yet if it makes any part of his life more or less uneasy or uncomfortable, we deprive him so far of what makes it valuable to him, which is equivalent to taking so much of it away from him, or possibly worse.

Nay, if we do a person no harm, yet if we wish him harm, *St. John* hath determined the case: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* For indeed, hatred not only leads to murder, and too often, when indulged, produces it unexpectedly; but it is always, though perhaps for the most part in a lower degree, the very spirit of murder in the heart, and it is by our hearts that God will judge us. Should our dislike of another not rise to fixed hatred and malice, yet if it rise to unjust anger, we know our Saviour's declaration, *it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment. (Matt. v. 21, 22.)* That is, whosoever is angry, either with persons that he ought not, or on occasions that he ought not, or more vehemently, or sooner, or longer than he ought to be; is guilty in some measure of that uncharitableness of which murder is the highest act, and liable to the punishment of it in the same proportion.

Nor even yet have I carried the explanation of this commandment to the extent of our duty. Whoever doth not, as far as can be reasonably expected from him, endeavour to guard his neighbour from harm, to make peace, to relieve distress and want, fails of what love to

human kind certainly requires. Now *love is the fulfilling of the law*; and *he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.* (Rom. xiii. 10.—1 John iii. 14.)

We are also carefully to observe, that however heinous it is to sin against the temporal life of any one; injuring him in respect of his eternal interests is yet unspeakably worse. If it be unlawful to kill or hurt the body, or overlook men's worldly necessities; much more is it to *destroy the soul of our brother for whom Christ died*, or any way endanger it; or even suffer it to continue in danger, if we have in our power the proper and likely means of delivering it: and, on the other hand, all that mercy and humanity which, in the civil concerns of our neighbours is so excellent a duty, must proportionably be still more excellent in their religious ones, and of higher value in the sight of God.

Hitherto I have considered the prohibition, *thou shalt do no murder*, as respecting others; but it forbids also self-murder: As we are not to commit violence against the image of God in the person of any of our brethren; so neither in our own: As we are not to rob the society to which we belong, or any part of it, of the service which any other of its members might do to it, we are not to rob either of what *we* might do: As we are not to send any one else out of the world prematurely, we are not to send ourselves, but *wait with patience all the days of our appointed time, till our change come.* (Job xiv. 14.) If the sins which persons have committed prompt them to despair, they of all others, instead of rushing into the presence of God by adding this dreadful one to them, should earnestly desire *space to repent*, (Rev. ii. 21.) which, by his grace, the worst of sinners may do, and be forgiven. If their misfortunes or sufferings make them weary of life, he hath sent them these with design that they should not by unlawful means evade them, but

go through them well, whether they be inflicted for the punishment of their faults or the trial of their virtues. In either case we are to submit quietly to the discipline of our heavenly Father, which he will not suffer to be heavier than we can bear, whatever we may imagine, but will support us under it, improve us by it, and in due time release us from it. But in any case for persons to make away with themselves, is to arraign the constitution of things which he hath appointed; and to refuse living where he hath put them to live; a very provoking instance of undutifulness, and made peculiarly fatal by this circumstance, that leaving usually no room for repentance it leaves none for pardon: always excepting, where it proceeds from a mind so disordered by a bodily disease as to be incapable of judging or acting reasonably, for God knows with certainty when this is the cause and when not, and will accordingly either make due allowances, or make none.

And if destroying ourselves be a sin, doing any thing wilfully or heedlessly that tends to our destruction, must in proportion be a sin: Where indeed necessity requires great hazards to be run by some persons for the good of others; as in war, in extinguishing dangerous fires, in several cases which might be named; or where employments and professions which somebody or other must undertake, or such diligence in any employment as men are by accidents really called to use, impair health and shorten life; there, far from being thrown away, it is laudably spent in the service of God and man. But for any person to bring on himself an untimely end by adventurous rashness, by ungoverned passion, by an immoderate anxiety, or by an obstinate or careless neglect of his own preservation, is unquestionably sinful. And above all, doing it by debauchery or immoral excess, is a most effectual way of ruining soul and body at once.

Let us therefore be conscientiously watchful, against every thing which may provoke or entice us to be injurious, either to others or ourselves: and God grant, that we may so regard the lives of our fellow-creatures and so employ our own, that we may ever please the giver and Lord of life; and having faithfully lived to him here, may eternally live with him hereafter, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour. Amen.

## SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

IN speaking of this commandment, it is proper to begin with observing, that as in the sixth where murder is forbidden, every thing which tends to it or proceeds from the same bad principle with it, is forbidden too ; so in the seventh where adultery is prohibited, the prohibition must be extended to whatever else is criminal in the same kind ; and therefore in explaining it I shall treat, first of the fidelity which it requires from married persons, and then of the chastity and modesty which it requires from all persons.

First, of the fidelity owing to each other from married persons.

Not only the scripture account of the Creation of mankind is a proof to as many as believe in scripture, that the union of one man with one woman was the original design and will of Heaven ; but the remarkable equality of males and females born into the world, is an evidence of it to all men. Yet notwithstanding it must be owned, the cohabitation of one man with several wives at the same time, was practised very anciently in the darker ages, even by some of the patriarchs, who were otherwise good persons ; but having no explicit revealed rule concerning this matter, they failed of discerning the above-mentioned purpose of God, and both this error and that of divorce on slight occasions, were tolerated by the law of *Moses* : but that was only as the laws of other countries, which often connive at what the lawgiver is far from approving ; accordingly, God expressed par-

ticularly by the prophet *Malachi*, his dislike of these things: (*Mal. ii. 14, 15, 16,*) and our Saviour both tells the Jews that *Moses* permitted divorces merely *because of the hardness of their hearts*, and peremptorily declares, that *whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery*. Now certainly it cannot be less adulterous, to marry a second without putting away the first.

Nor is polygamy (that is, the having more wives than one at the same time) prohibited in holy writ alone, but condemned by many of the heathens themselves, who alledge against it very plain and forcible reasons. It is inconsistent with a due degree of mutual affection in the parties, and a due care in the education of their children. It introduces into families perpetual subjects of the bitterest enmity and jealousy; keeps a multitude of females in most unnatural bondage, frequently under guardians fitted for the office by unnatural cruelty, and tempts a multitude of males thus left unprovided for, to unnatural lusts. In civilized and well-regulated countries therefore, single marriages have either been established at first, or prevailed afterwards on experience of their preferableness: and a mutual promise of inviolable faithfulness to the marriage-bed, hath been understood to be an essential part of the contract: which promise is with us most solemnly expressed in the office of matrimony, by as clear and comprehensive words as can be devised; and unless persons are at liberty in all cases to slight the most awful vows to God, and the most deliberate engagements of each to the other; how can they be at liberty in this, where public good and private happiness are so deeply interested?

Breaches of plighted faith, as they must be preceded by a want of conjugal affection in the offending party,

so they tend to extinguish all the remains of it ; and this change will be performed, and will give uneasiness to the innocent one, though the cause be hid : but if it be known, or merely suspected by the person wronged, (which it seldom fails to be in a little time) it produces in warm tempers, a resentment so strong ; in milder, an affliction so heavy ; that few things in the world equal either : *for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave ; the coals thereof are coals of fire.* And with whatever vehemence they burn inwardly or outwardly, it can be no wonder, when perfidious unkindness is found in that nearest relation, where truth and love were deliberately pledged and studiously paid on one side, in expectation of a suitable return ; and when the tenderest part of the enjoyment of life is given up beyond recall into the hands of a traitor, who turns it into the acutest misery. To what a height grief and anger on one side, and neglect ripened into scorn and hatred on the other, may carry such calamities, cannot be foreseen : but at least they utterly destroy that union of hearts, that reciprocal confidence, that openness of communication, that sameness of interest of joys and of sorrows, which constitute the principle felicity of the married state. And besides, how very frequently do the consequences of these transgressions affect and even ruin the health or the fortune, it may be both, of the blameless person in common with the guilty, and perhaps entail diseases and poverty to successive generations !

These are fruits which unfaithfulness in either party may produce. In one it may produce yet more. A woman guilty of this crime, who, to use the words of scripture, *forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God*, brings peculiar disgrace on her husband, her children, and friends ; and may bring an illegitimate offspring to inherit what is the right of others :

nor is the infamy and punishment to which she exposes herself, a less dreadful evil for being a deserved one. And if falsehood on the men's part hath not all the same aggravations, it hath very great ones in their stead: they are almost constantly the tempters; they often carry on their wicked designs for a long time together; they too commonly use the vilest means to accomplish them, and as they claim the strictest fidelity, it is ungenerous as well as unjust, to fail of paying it. All men must feel how bitter it would be to them to be injured in this respect; let them think then what it is to be injurious in it: and since the crime is the same when committed by them, as when committed against them, let them own that it deserves the same condemnation from the Judge of the world. *The Lord hath been witness, saith the prophet, between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou dealest treacherously; yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. (Mal. ii. 14, 15.)*

It will be safest, but I hope it is not necessary, to add, that an unmarried man or woman, offending with the wife or husband of any one, being no less guilty of adultery than the person with whom the offence is committed, is consequently an accomplice in all the wickedness and all the mischief abovementioned; and this frequently with aggravating circumstances, of the greatest baseness and treachery and ingratitude and cruelty, that can be imagined. Whatever some may plead, surely none can think such behaviour defensible; and most surely they will not find it so: for *marriage is honourable in all; and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

The crime of adultery being so great, it follows, that all improper familiarities which, though undesignedly,

may lead to adultery, and all imprudent behaviour which may give suspicion of it, is to be avoided as matter of conscience; that all groundless jealousy is to be checked by those who are inclined to it, and discouraged by others, as most heinous injustice; and that every thing should be carefully observed by both parties, which may endear them to each other. No persons therefore should ever enter into the marriage bonds with such as they cannot esteem and love; and all persons who have entered into it, should use all means, not only to preserve esteem and love, but increase it: affectionate condescension on the husband's part, cheerful submission on the wife's; mildness and tenderness, prudence and attention to their common interest and that of their joint posterity, on both parts. It is usually, in a great measure at least, from the want of these engaging qualities in one or the other that falsehood arises, or some other evil, of a tendency to produce effects equally grievous, and therefore to be considered as equally forbidden.

But now, from the mutual fidelity required of married persons, I proceed, secondly, to the chastity and modesty required of all persons.

Supposing that only such as live single were to be guilty with each other, yet by means even of this licentiousness, in proportion as it prevails, the regularity and good order of society is overturned, the credit and peace of families destroyed, the proper disposal of young people in marriage prevented, the due education of children and provision for them neglected, the keenest animosities perpetually excited, and the most shocking murders frequently committed, of the parties themselves, their rivals, or innocent babes: in short, every enormity follows from hence, that lawless passion can introduce. For all sins indeed, but especially this, lead persons on

to more and greater; to all manner of falsehood to secure their success, all manner of dishonesty to provide for the expensiveness of these courses, all manner of barbarity to hide the shame or lighten the inconveniences of them; till thus they become abandoned to every crime, by indulging this sinful one.

But let us consider the fatal effects of it on the two sexes, separately. Women that lose their innocence, seldom fail of being soon discovered; lose their good name entirely along with it, and are marked out and given up at once to almost irrecoverable infamy; and even mere suspicion hath in some measure, the same bad consequences with certain poof. It is, doubtless, extremely unjust to work up mere imprudences into gross transgressions; and even the greatest transgressors ought to be treated with all possible compassion, when they appear truly penitent; But unless they appear so, a wide distinction between them and others ought to be made: and they who contribute, whether designedly or thoughtlessly, to place good, bad, and doubtful characters all on a level, do most preposterously obscure and debase their own virtue if they have any; keep guilt in countenance, and defraud right conduct of the peculiar esteem which belongs to it: thus injuring at once the cause of religion and morals, and the interests of society. But besides the general disregard, of which vicious women will experience not a little, even in places and times of the most relaxed ways of thinking, they have a sorer evil to expect; that of being, sooner or later, for the most part very soon, cast off and abandoned with contempt and scorn, by their seducers. Or even should they have reparation made them by marriage, this doth not take away the sin at all, and the disgrace but very imperfectly; not to say, that it still leaves them peculiarly exposed to the reproaches and the jealousy of their husbands ever after.

And if men that seduce women, are not looked on by the world with so much abhorrence as women that are seduced, at least they deserve to be looked on with greater: for there cannot easily be more exquisite-wickedness, than, merely for gratifying a brutal appetite or idle fancy, to change all the prospects which a young person hath of being happy and respected through life, into guilt and dishonour and distress, out of which too probably she will never be disentangled, under the false and treacherous pretence of tender regard. If we have any feeling of conscience within us, we must feel this to be most unworthy behaviour; and if the Ruler of the world hath any attention to the moral character of his rational creatures, which is the noblest object of His attention that can be conceived, He must show it on such occasions; and therefore may be believed, when He saith He will.

But supposing men not to corrupt the innocent, but to sin with such alone as make a profession of sin; yet even this manner of breaking the law of God hath most dreadful consequences: It hinders the increase of a nation in general—It leaves the few children that proceed from these mixtures, abandoned to misery, uselessness, and wickedness—It turns aside the minds of persons from beneficial and laudable employments to mean sensual pursuits—It encourages and increases the most dissolute, and in every sense, abandoned set of wretches in the world, common prostitutes, to their own miserable and early destruction, and that of multitudes of unwary youths, who would else have escaped. It debases the heart, by the influence of such vile and profligate company, to vile and profligate ways of thinking and acting: It sometimes produces quarrels that are immediately fatal; sometimes friendships that are equally so, to every valuable purpose of life. It leads men to extra-

vagance and profusion ; grieves all that wish them well ; distresses those who are to support them ; and drives them to the most criminal methods of supporting themselves. It tempts men to excesses and irregularities of every kind ; wastes their health and strength ; brings on them painful and opprobrious diseases, too often communicated to those whom they afterwards marry and to their miserable posterity, if they have any : by all these mischiefs, which for the most part come upon them in the beginning of their days, the remainder of them is usually made either *short* or *tedious*, perhaps both. (*Wisd.* ii. 1.) With great wisdom therefore doth *Solomon* exhort : *Remove thy way from the strange woman, and come not nigh the door of her house : lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel : lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof ; and I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers. For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.* (*Prov.* v. 8—13, 21, 22.)

It is very true, the sins of the flesh do not always produce all the bitter fruits which I have mentioned ; but then such instances of them, as at first are imagined the safest, frequently prove extremely hurtful ; or however entice persons on to worse, till they come at length to the most flagrant and pernicious. Very few who transgress the scripture-bounds, ever stop at those lengths which themselves, when they set out, thought the greatest that were defensible. Liberties taken by men before marriage, incline them to repeat the same liberties after marriage ; and also to entertain the most injurious jealousies of good women, grounded on the knowledge

which they have formerly had of bad ones : Their past successes embolden and excite them to new and more flagitious attempts, and by appetites thus indulged and habits contracted, they are carried on perpetually further and further, till they come to be guilty, and sometimes merely for the sake and the name of being guilty, of what they would once have trembled to hear proposed.

But supposing they keep within the limits of what they at first imagined to be allowable ; is imagination (and reason, when biassed by passions, is nothing better) the test of truth ? supposing their behaviour could be harmless otherwise, is not the example dangerous ? will or can the world around them take notice of all the pretended peculiarities that distinguish their case and preserve it from being a sin, while other crimes to which at first sight it is very like, are confessedly great ones ? or will not all, who have bad inclinations or unsettled principles, take shelter under their practice, and either despise their refinements, or easily invent similar ones for their own use ?

But further yet : if it be argued, that offences of this nature may by circumstances be rendered excuseable, why not others also ? why may not robbery, why may not murder be defended, by saying, that though undoubtedly in general they are very wrong, yet in such and such particular occurrences, there is on the whole very little hurt, or none at all done by them, but perhaps good : and what would become of the human race, were such pleas admitted ? The ends of government can be attained by no other than by plain, determinate, comprehensive laws, to be steadily observed ; and no one's inclinations or fanciful theories are to decide, when they bind and when not : but deviations from them are criminal, if on no other account, yet because they are

deviations: though differently criminal indeed according to their different degrees: thus in the matter before us, what approaches nearer to marriage is, ordinarily speaking, so far less blameable than what is more distant from it: but nothing can be void of blame, and of great blame, that breaks the ordinances of God and man. For even the latter, if they oblige the conscience in any case, must oblige it in this, where public and private welfare is so essentially concerned; and as to the former, though sensual irregularities may suit very well with some sorts of superstition, yet their inconsistency with any thing that deserves the name of religion, is confessed in effect by the persons guilty of them. For if some few do hypocritically, in vain hope for concealment, keep on the appearance of it, yet who amongst them can preserve the reality of it? offences of this kind, how plausibly soever palliated, yet being committed against known prohibitions, wear out of the mind all reverence to God's Commandments, all expectation of his future favour, nay the very desire of spiritual happiness hereafter. And though many who indulge in licentiousness, have notwithstanding very good qualities; yet, would they review their hearts and lives, they would find that they had much the fewer for it; and that those which remain are often made useless, often endangered, often perverted by it.

But the sins already mentioned, are by no means the only ones to be avoided in consequence of this Commandment: whatever invites to them; whatever approaches towards them; whatever is contrary to decency and honour; whatever taints the purity of the mind, inflames the passions, and wears off the impressions of virtuous shame; all immodesty of appearance or behaviour; all entertainments, books, pictures, conversations, tending to excite or excuse the indulgence of

irregular desires, are in their proportion prohibited and criminal: and unless we prudently guard against the smaller offences of this kind, the more heinous will be too likely to force their way; as our Lord very strongly warns us. *Ye have heard, it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* And although vicious inclinations were never to go further than the heart; yet, if, instead of merely intruding against our will, they are designedly encouraged to dwell there, they corrupt the very fountain of spiritual life, and none but *the pure in heart shall see God.*

All persons therefore should be very careful to turn their minds from forbidden objects, to fix their attention so constantly and steadily on useful and commendable employments as to have no leisure for vices, and to govern themselves by such rules of temperance and prudence, that every sensual appetite may be kept in subjection to the dictates of reason and the laws of religion; always remembering that christianity, both delivers to us the strictest precepts of holiness, and sets before us the strongest motives to it; our peculiar relation to a holy God and Saviour; our being *the temples of the holy Ghost*, (1 Cor. vi. 19.) *which temple if any man defile, him will God destroy*; (1 Cor. iii. 17.) our being *pilgrims and strangers on earth*, not intended to have our portion here, but to inherit a spiritual happiness hereafter; and *every one that hath this hope, must purify himself, even as God is pure.* (1 John iii. 3.) I shall conclude therefore with St. Paul's exhortation: *Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: for this ye know, that no whore-monger nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the*

*kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them: walk as children of light, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not steal.*

Under the eighth commandment, is comprehended our duty to our neighbour, in respect to his worldly substance; and to explain it distinctly, I shall endeavour to show,

I. What it forbids; and

II. What, by consequence, it requires.

As to the former, The wickedness of mankind hath invented ways to commit such an astonishing variety of sins against this commandment, that it is impossible to reckon them up, and dreadful to think of them: but most, if not all of them, are so manifestly sins, that the least reflection is enough to make any one sensible, how much he is bound conscientiously to avoid them, and he who desires to preserve himself innocent, easily may.

The most open and shameless crime of this sort, is robbery; taking from another what is his, by force: which, adding violence against his person to invasion of his property, and making every part of human life unsafe, is a complicated transgression, of very deep guilt.

The next degree is secret theft: privately converting to our own use what is not our own. To do this in matters of great value, is confessedly pernicious wickedness; and though it were only in what may seem a trifle, yet every man's right to the smallest part of what belongs to him, is the same as to the largest, and he ought no more to be wronged of one than of the other. Besides, little instances of dishonesty cause great disquiet; make the sufferers mistrustful of all about them, sometimes

of those who are the farthest from deserving it; make them apprehensive continually that some heavier injury will follow; and indeed almost all offenders begin with slight offences. More heinous ones would shock them at first: but if they once allow themselves in lesser faults, they go on without reluctance, by degrees, to worse and worse till at last they scruple nothing. Always therefore beware of small sins; and always remember, what I have before observed to you, that when any thing is committed to your care and trust, to be dishonest in that is peculiarly base.

But besides what every body calls theft, there are many practices which amount indirectly to much the same thing, however disguised in the world under gentler names: thus, in the way of trade and business, if the seller puts off any thing for better than it is, by false assertions or deceitful arts: if he takes advantage of the buyer's ignorance, or particular necessities or good opinion of him, to insist on a larger price for it than the current value; or if he gives less in quantity than he professes or is understood to give; the frequency of some of these things cannot alter the nature of any of them: none can be ignorant that they are wrong, but such as are wilfully or very carelessly ignorant: and the declaration of scripture against the last of them, is extended in the same place to every one of the rest: *Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small: thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God. (Deut. xxv. 13-16)*

On the other hand, if the buyer takes advantage of his own wealth and the poverty or present distresses of the seller, to beat down the price of his merchandise beyond reason; or if he buys up the whole of a commodity,

especially if it be a necessary one, to make immoderate gain of it; or if he refuses or neglects to pay for what he hath bought, or delays his payments beyond the time within which, by agreement or the known course of traffick they ought to be made; all such behaviour is downright injustice and breach of God's law. For the rule is, *If thou sellest ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another.* (Lev. xxv. 14.)

Again: borrowing on fraudulent securities, or false representations of our circumstances; or without intention or proper care afterwards to repay; preferring the gratification of our covetousness, our vanity, our voluptuousness, our indolence, before the satisfying of our just debts: all this is palpable wickedness; and just as bad is that of demanding exorbitant interest for lending to ignorant or thoughtless persons, or to extravagant ones for carrying on their extravagance; or to necessitous ones, whose necessities it must continually increase, and make their ruin after a while more certain, more difficult to retrieve, and more hurtful to all with whom they are concerned. The scripture hath particularly forbidden it in the last case, and enjoined a very different sort of behaviour: *If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then shalt thou relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase; but fear thy God, that thy brother may dwell with thee.* And the psalmist hath expressed the two opposite characters on these occasions, very briefly and clearly: *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.*

Another crying iniquity is, when hired servants, labourers, or workmen of any sort, are ill used in their wages; whether by giving them too little, or, which is

often full as bad, deferring it too long : the word of God forbids the last in very strong terms : *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him : the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee, (meaning, if demanded, or wanted,) all night until the morning: At his day shalt thou give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it ; for (or, when,) he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee. (Lev. xix. 13.—Deut. xxiv. 15.)* Nay, the son of *Sirach* carries it, with reason, (as I observed to you on the sixth Commandment) further still. *The bread of the needy is their life : he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, is a blood-shedder.*

But besides all these instances of unrighteousness, there are many more that are frequent in all kinds of contracts. Driving bargains that we know are too hard ; or insisting rigidly on the performance of them after they appear to be so : making no abatements, when bad times, or unexpected losses, or other alterations of circumstances call for them : not inquiring into the grounds of complaints when there is a likelihood of their being just : throwing unreasonable burdens upon others, merely because they dare not refuse them : keeping them to the very words and letter of an agreement, contrary to the equitable intention of it : or, on the other hand, alledging some flaw and defect in the form, to get loose from an agreement which ought to have been strictly observed : all these things are grievous oppression, and though some of them may not be in the least contrary to law, yet they are utterly irreconcilable with good conscience. Human laws cannot provide for all cases, and sometimes the vilest iniquities may be committed under their authority, and by their means.

It is therefore a further lamentable breach of this Commandment, when one person puts another to the

charge and hazard of law, unjustly or needlessly; or in ever so necessary a law-suit, occasions unnecessary expenses and contrives unfair delays: in short, when any thing is done by either party, by the counsel that plead or advise in the cause, or by the judge who determines it, contrary to real justice and equity.

Indeed, when persons by any means whatever, withhold from another his right; either keeping him ignorant of it or forcing him to unreasonable cost or trouble to obtain it; this, in its proportion is the same kind of injury with stealing from him. To see the rich and great, in these or any ways, bear hard upon the poor, is very dreadful: and truly it is little, if at all less so, when the lower sort of people are unmerciful, as they are but too often, one to another. For, as *Solomon* observes, *A poor man that oppresseth the poor, is like a sweeping rain, which leaveth no food*: but if it be a person ever so wealthy that is wronged, still his wealth is his own, and no one can have more right to take the least part of it from him without his consent, than to rob the meanest wretch in the world: suppose it be a body or number of men; suppose it to be the government, or the public, that is cheated; be it of more or less, be it of so little as not to be sensibly missed; let the guilt be divided among ever so many; let the practice be ever so common; still it is the same crime, however it may vary in degrees; and the rule is without exception, that *no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter.* (1 *Thess.* iv. 6.)

It surely scarce needs to be added, that whatever things it is unlawful to do, it is also unlawful to advise, encourage, help or protect others in doing: that buying, receiving, or concealing stolen goods, knowing them to be such, is becoming a partner in the stealth: and that being any way a patron, assistant, or tool of injustice, is

no less evidently wrong, than being the immediate and principal agent in it.

And as the injustice of all these things is very plain, so is the folly of them : common robbers and thieves are the most miserable set of wretches upon earth : in perpetual danger—perpetual frights and alarms—obliged to support their spirits by continual excesses, which, after the gay madness of a few hours, depress them to the most painful lowness ; confined to the most hateful and hellish society ; very soon, generally speaking, betrayed by their dearest companions, or hunted out by vigilant officers ; then shut up in horror, condemned to open shame, if not to an untimely death ; and the more surely undone for ever in the next life, the more insensible they are of their sufferings and their sins in this.

Nor do they, of whose guilt the law can take little or no cognizance, escape a heavy and bitter self-condemnation from time to time, nor usually the bad opinion of the world ; which last alone will frequently do them more harm, than any unfair practices will do them good. But especially this holds in the middle and lower, which is vastly the larger part of mankind : their livelihood depends chiefly on their character, and their character depends on their honesty : this would make amends for many other defects : but nothing will make amends for the want of it. Deceitful craft may seem perhaps a shorter method of gain, than uprightness and diligence ; but they who get wickedly, spend for the most part foolishly, perhaps wickedly too ; and so all that stays by them is their guilt : or let them be ever so cunning, and appear for a while to thrive ever so fast ; yet remember the sayings of the wise king : *An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning : but the end thereof shall not be blessed. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing : but righteousness delivereth from death. Wealth gotten by*

*vanity, shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.* Or, should the prosperity of persons who raise themselves by ill means, last as long as their lives, yet their lives may be cut short: for what the prophet threatens often comes to pass, and is always to be feared; *He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.* But should his days on earth be extended to the utmost; yet *the sinner, an hundred years old, shall be accursed.* For *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God: but the Lord is the avenger of all such.*

Let every one therefore consider seriously, in the first place, what this commandment forbids and abstain from it: though he fare more hard, though he lay up less, though he be despised for his conscienciousness: provided it be a reasonable one, surely it is well worth while to bear these things, rather than injure our fellow-creatures and offend our Maker.

But let us now proceed to consider,

Secondly, What the commandment before us, by consequence, requires. And,

1. It requires restitution of whatever we have at any time, unjustly taken or detained. For, that being in right not our own but another's, keeping it is continuing and carrying on injustice, therefore the prophet *Ezekiel* makes it an express condition of forgiveness: *If the wicked restore the pledge, and give again that he hath robbed; then he shall surely live, he shall not die.* Nor was it till *Zaccheus* had engaged to restore amply what he had extorted from any one, that our Saviour declared, *This day is salvation come to this house:* So that to think of raising wealth by fraud and then growing honest, is the silliest scheme in the world: for till we have returned, or offered to return as far as we can all that we have gotten by our fraud, we are not honest.

Nay, suppose we have spent and squandered it, still we remain debtors for it : and suppose we got nothing, suppose we meant to get nothing by any wicked contrivances in which we have been concerned ; yet if we have caused another's loss, any loss for which money is a proper compensation, what we ought never to have done, we ought to undo as soon and as completely as we are able, however we straiten ourselves by it ; otherwise we come short of making the amends which may justly be expected from us ; and while so important a part of repentance is wanting to demonstrate the sincerity of the rest, we cannot hope to be accepted with God.

2. This commandment also requires industry ; without which, the generality of persons cannot maintain themselves honestly ; therefore St. Paul directs : *Let him that stole, steal no more ; but rather let him (and certainly, by consequence, every one else that needs) labour, working with his hands the thing which is good.* And each of them is to labour, not only for himself, but for his family also, if he hath one ; both for their present, and if possible, their future maintenance in case of sickness, accidents, or old age. For as they who belong to him have, both by nature and by law, a claim to support from him, if they need it, and he can give it, neglecting to make due provision for them is wronging them ; and throwing either them or himself upon others, when he may avoid it, or might have avoided it by proper diligence, is wronging others : for which reason the same apostle commanded likewise, *that if any one would not work, neither should he eat.*

In order to be just therefore, be industrious : and doubt not but you will find it, after a while at least, by much the most comfortable as well as christian way of getting a livelihood. It is a way that no one ought to think beneath him, for *better is he that laboureth and*

*aboundeth in all things, than he that boasteth himself, and wanteth bread.* It is the best preservative that can be, from bad company and bad courses ; it procures the good will and good word of mankind ; it exempts persons from the contempt and reproach of which those have bitter experience, who make a dependent state their choice. *Begging is sweet in the mouth of the shameless ; but in his belly there shall burn a fire.* Very different from this is the case of the industrious. Their minds are at ease ; their bodies are usually healthy ; their time is employed as they know it should be : what they get they enjoy with a good conscience, and it wears well ; nor do only the fruits of their labour delight them ; but even labour itself becomes pleasant to them.

And though persons of higher condition are not bound to *work with their hands*, yet they also must be diligent in other ways, in the business of their offices and professions ; or, if they have none, yet in the care of their families and affairs, else the former will be ill-governed, wicked, and miserable, and the latter soon run into such disorder, as will almost force them, either to be unjust to their creditors and those for whom nature binds them to provide ; or to be guilty of mean and dishonourable actions of more kinds than one, to avoid these and other disagreeable consequences of their supineness. Besides, as the upper part of the world are peculiarly destined by Providence to be in one way or another extensively useful in society ; such of them as are not, defraud it of the service they owe it, and therefore break this commandment. But

3. To observe it well, frugality must be joined with industry, else it will all be labour in vain : for unwise expensiveness will dissipate whatever the utmost diligence can acquire ; but if idleness be added to extravagance, that brings on quick ruin ; and if intemperance

and debauchery go along with them, the case is then come to its extremity. Every one therefore, who desires to approve himself honest, should be careful to live within the bounds of his income, so as to have something in readiness against the time of inability and unforeseen events: but they who have, or design to have families, should endeavour to live a good deal within those bounds; and whoever spends upon himself, or throws away upon any other person or thing, more than he can prudently afford, (whatever false names of praise, as elegance, generosity, good-nature, may be given to this indiscretion) will be led before he is aware, to distress himself, perhaps many more; and be too probably driven at last to repair as well as he can, by wickedness, the breaches which he hath made by folly.

4. This commandment requires in the last place, that we neither deny ourselves, or those who belong to us, what is fit for our and their station, which is one kind of robbery; nor omit to relieve the poor according to our ability, which is another kind. For whatever we enjoy of worldly plenty is given us in trust, that we should take our own share with moderation, and distribute out the remainder with liberality. And as they, who have but little, will, most or all of them, at one time or another, find those who have less; very few, if any, are exempted from giving some alms: and whoever either penuriously or thoughtlessly neglects his proper share of this duty, is unjust to his Maker and his fellow creatures too. For the *good* which God hath placed in our hands for the poor, is undoubtedly, as the scripture declares it, *their due*: He hath given them no right to seize it: but He hath bound us not to *withhold* it from them (*Prov. iii. 27.*)

And now, having finished the two heads proposed I shall only add, that by observing these directions from

a principle of christian faith, and teaching all under our care to observe them from the same; the poor in this world may be *rich towards God*, and the rich may *treasure up in store for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come, which will enable them to lay hold on eternal life.*

## THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

The ninth commandment is connected with every one of the four which precede it: for neither the duties of superiors and inferiors, nor those amongst equals could be tolerably practised, neither the lives of men nor their happiness in the nearest relation of life, nor their possessions and properties, could ever be secure, if they were left exposed to those injuries of a licentious tongue, which are here prohibited. This commandment therefore was intended, partly to strengthen the foregoing ones, and partly also to make provision for every person's just character on its own account, as well as for the sake of consequences: for, independently on these, we have by nature (and with reason) a great concern about our reputations; and therefore the precept, *thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*, is in all views, of much importance.

The crime at which these words principally and most expressly point, is giving false evidence in any cause or trial; and as in such cases, evidence hath always been given upon oath, this commandment so far is the same with the third: only there, perjury is forbidden as impiety against God; here, as injurious to men. Now we are guilty of this sin, if, in bearing witness, we affirm that we know or believe any thing which we do not; or deny that we know or believe any thing which we do; or either affirm or deny more positively than we have good grounds: nay, if we only stifle by our silence, any fact which is material, though we are not examined par-

ticularly about it; still when we have sworn in general to speak the whole truth, we bear false witness if we designedly avoid it; especially after being asked, if we are able to say any thing besides relative to the point in question; for hiding the truth may as totally mislead those who are to judge, as telling an untruth: indeed, if by any means whatever we disguise the real state of the case, instead of relating it in the fairest and plainest manner that we can, we evidently transgress the intent of this commandment; and by doing it, the good name, the property, the livelihood, the life of an innocent person may be taken away; the advantages of society defeated, nay, perverted into mischiefs, and the very bonds of it dissolved. Therefore the rule of the Mosaic law is; *If a false witness rise up against any man, and testify against his brother that which is wrong; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother, and thine eye shall not pity.* With us indeed, the punishment extends not so far. But however mild such persons may find the penalties of human laws to be, or how artfully soever they may evade them; God hath declared: *A false witness shall not be unpunished: and he that speaketh lies, shall not escape.*

The commandment saith only, that we shall not bear false witness *against* our neighbour; but in effect it binds us equally, not to bear false witness for him: for in all trials of property, bearing witness for one party is bearing witness against the other; and in all trials for crimes, false evidence to the advantage of the person accused, is to the disadvantage and ruin of right and truth, of public safety and peace; by concealing and encouraging what ought to be detected and punished.

It being thus criminal to bear false witness, it must be criminal also to draw persons into the commission of so great a sin, by gifts, or promises, or threatenings,

or any other method. And in its degree, it must be criminal to bring a false accusation or false action, against any one; or to make any sort of demand, for which there is no reasonable ground.

Nay further, however favourably persons are apt to think of the defendant's side, yet to defend ourselves against justice, or even to deny it by unfair methods, is very wicked; for it ought to take place, and the sooner the better. Still, both the professors of the law, and others, may unquestionably say and do for a doubtful or a bad cause, whatever can be said with truth or done with equity; for otherwise it might be thought still worse than it is, and treated worse than it deserves. But if they do in any cause, what in reason ought not to be done; if they use or suggest indirect methods of defeating the intent of the law; if by false colours and glosses, by terrifying or confounding witnesses, by calumniating or ridiculing the adverse party, they endeavour to make justice itself an instrument for patronizing injustice; this is *turning judgment into gall*, as the scripture expresses it, *and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock*. (*Amos vi. 12.*)

But in a still higher degree is it so, if judges or jurymen are influenced in giving their sentence or verdict, by interest, relation, friendship, hatred, compassion, party; by any thing, but the nature of the case as it fairly appears to them. For designedly making a false determination, is completing all the mischief which bearing false witness only attempts: and in a word, whoever any way promotes what is wrong or obstructs what is right, partakes in the same sin, be it either of the parties, their evidences or agents; be it the highest Magistrate, or the lowest officer.

But persons may break this commandment, not only in judicial proceedings, but often full as grievously in

common discourse, by raising, spreading, or countenancing false reports against others ; or such as they have no sufficient cause to think true ; which is the case, in part at least, of most reports, by misrepresenting their circumstances in the world to their prejudice ; or speaking without foundation, to the disadvanage of their persons, understandings, accomplishments, temper, or conduct ; whether charging them with faults and imperfections which do not belong to them ; or taking from them good qualities and recommendations which do ; aggravating the former or diminishing the latter ; determining their characters from a single bad action or two ; fixing ill names on things which are really virtuous or innocent in them ; imputing their laudable behaviour to blameable or worthless motives ; making no allowance for the depravity or weakness of human nature, strength of temptation, want of instruction, wicked insinuations, vicious examples : and in all these ways persons may be injured, either by open public assertions, or more dangerously perhaps, by secret whispers, which they have no opportunity of contradicting. The scandal may be accompanied with strong expressions of hoping it is not true, or being very sorry for it ; and warm declarations of great good will to the party whom it concerns : all which may serve only to give it a more unsuspected credit ; Nay, it may be conveyed very effectually in dark hints, expressive gestures, or even affected silence ; and these, as they may be equally mischievous, are not less wicked for being more cowardly and more artful methods of defamation.

Further yet : speaking or intimating things to any person's disadvantage, though they be true, is seldom innocent ; for it usually proceeds from bad principles : revenge, envy, malice, pride, censoriousness ; unfair zeal for some private or party interest ; or at best, from

a desire of appearing to know more than others, or mere impertinent fondness for talking. Now these are wretched motives for publishing what will be hurtful to one of our brethren; sometimes indeed, bad characters and bad actions ought to be known; but much oftener not, or not to all the world, or not by our means, and we have need to be very careful from what inducements we act in such a case. Sometimes again things are known already, or soon will be known, let us be ever so silent about them; and then, to be sure, we are at more liberty: but even then, to take a pleasure in relating the faults of others is by no means right: and to reveal them, when they can be hid, unless a very considerable reason require it, is extremely wrong.

Indeed we should be cautious, not only what harm, but what good we say of others; for speaking too highly of their characters or circumstances, or praising them in any respect beyond truth, is *bearing false witness* about them, which may sometimes turn against them, and may often mislead those to whom we exalt them thus, and produce grievously bad consequences of many kinds; but the other is much the more common, and usually the more hurtful extreme.

We all think it an injury, in the tenderest part, when bad impressions are made on others concerning us; and therefore should conscientiously avoid doing the same injury to others: making them designedly, without a cause, is inexcusable wickedness: and even where we intend no harm, we may do a great deal. Whatever hurts in any respect the reputation of persons, always gives them great pain, and often doth them great prejudice, even in their most important concerns, for indeed almost every thing in this world depends on character; and when once that hath suffered an imputation, for the most part, neither the persons calumniated, be they ever

so innocent, can recover it completely by their own endeavours, nor the persons who have wronged them, be they ever so desirous, restore it fully to its former state : though certainly they who rob others of their good name, or even without design asperse it, are full as much bound to make restitution for that, as for any other damage which they cause. But were they not to hurt at all the person against whom they speak, still they hurt themselves, and lessen the power of doing good in the world : they often hurt their innocent families by the provocations which they give ; they grieve their friends ; they set a mischievous example in society ; and if they profess any religion, bring a dreadful reproach upon it, by a temper and behaviour so justly hateful to mankind.

It will be easily understood, that next to the raisers and spreaders of ill reports, they who encourage persons of that kind, by hearkening to them with pleasure, and by readiness of belief in what they say, contradict the intention of this commandment. Indeed we ought, instead of countenancing scandal and detraction, to express, in all proper ways our dislike of it : show the uncertainty, the improbability, the falsehood, if we can, of injurious rumours ; oppose the divulging even of truths that are uncharitable ; and set a pattern of giving every one his just praise.

It must now be observed further, that though undoubtedly those falsehoods are the worst, which hurt others the most directly, yet falsehoods in general are hurtful and wrong. And therefore lying, all use either of words or actions of known settled import, with purpose to deceive, is unlawful. And those offences of this kind which may seem the most harmless, have yet commonly great evil in them. Lying destroys the very end of speech, and leads us into perpetual mistakes, by the very means which God intended should lead us into truth : It puts

an end to all the pleasure, all the benefit, all the safety of conversation ; nobody can know, on what or whom to depend : for if one person may lie, why not another ? And at this rate, no justice can be done, no wickedness be prevented or punished, no business go forward. All these mischiefs will equally follow, whether untruths be told in a gross barefaced manner, or disguised under equivocations, quibbles, and evasions. The sin therefore is as great in one case as the other. And it is so great in both, that no sufficient excuses can ever be made for it in either, though several are often pleaded.

Many persons imagine, that when they have committed a fault, it is very pardonable to conceal it under a lie ; but some faults ought not to be concealed at all ; and none by this method ; which is committing two, instead of one, and the second, not uncommonly, worse than the first. An ingenuous confession will be likely, in most cases, to procure an easy pardon : but a lie is a monstrous aggravation of an offence ; and persisting in a lie can very hardly be forgiven. But above all, if any persons, to hide what they have done amiss themselves, are so vile as to throw the blame or the suspicion of it upon another, this is the height of wickedness ; and therefore particularly all children and servants, who are chiefly tempted to excuse themselves by telling falsehoods, ought to undergo any thing rather than be guilty of such a sin ; and on the other hand, all parents, masters and mistresses, ought to beware of punishing them too severely for their other offences, lest they drive them into a habit of this terrible one.

Some again plead for making free with truth, that they do it only in jest ; but these jests of theirs often occasion great uneasiness and disquiet, and sometimes other very seriously bad consequences : the Scripture ; therefore ; hath passed a severe censure upon them, *As a*

*madman, who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, am I not in sport? (Prov. xxvi. 19.)* To give another person vexation, or make him appear contemptible, though in a slight instance, is by no means innocent sport; and besides, to speak falsehood on any occasion is a dangerous introduction to spreading it on more, if not all occasions: For if so trifling a motive as a jest will prevail on us to violate truth, how can we be expected to withstand more weighty temptations?

However, it may perhaps at the least be thought, that lying to prevent mischief and do good, must be permitted. But the Scripture expressly forbids us to *do evil that good may come; (Rom. iii. 8.)* and they who allow themselves in it, will usually be discovered and lose their end; or if not, will never know where to stop: they will be enticed by degrees to think every thing good that serves their turn, let others think it ever so bad: those others again will think themselves authorized by such examples to take the same liberties, and thus all trust and probity will be lost among men; a much greater evil, than any good, which falsehood may do now and then, will ever compensate.

And if telling lies, even from these plausible inducements, be so bad; what must it be when they proceed from less excusable ones, as desire of promoting our own interest, or that of our party: and how completely detestable, when we are prompted to them by malice or undue resentment, or any other totally wicked principle!

Nor is the practice less imprudent than it is unlawful. Some indeed lie to raise their characters, as others do to gain their points; but both act very absurdly, for they miss of their purpose entirely as soon as they are found out, and all liars are found out, immediately for the

most part, but in a while without fail; and after that, every body despises and hates them: even when they speak truth, nobody knows how to credit them; and so, by aiming wickedly at some little advantage for the present, they put themselves foolishly under the greatest disadvantage in the world ever after. *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* (Prov. xii. 19, 22.) Beware then of the least beginning of a practice that will be sure to end ill: for if you venture upon falsehood at all, it will grow upon you, and entangle you, and bring you to shame, to punishment, to ruin. And, besides what you will suffer by it here, your portion, unless you repent very deeply and amend very thoroughly, will be with the father of lies hereafter; for *into the heavenly Jerusalem shall in no wise enter whosoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. Lying lips are abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight.* (Rev. xxi. 27.—Prov. xii. 22.)

There is yet another sort of falsehood, often full as bad as affirming what we do not think: I mean, promising what we do not intend, or what we neglect afterwards to perform, so soon or so fully as we ought. Whoever hath promised hath made himself a debtor: and unless he be punctual in his payment commits an injustice, which in many cases may be of very pernicious consequence.

Now in order to secure this great point of speaking truth, besides considering carefully and frequently the before-mentioned evils of departing from it, we should be attentive also to moderate the quantity of our discourse, lest we fall into falsehood unawares: for *in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.* Persons who suffer themselves to run on heedlessly in talk, just as their present hu-

mour disposes them, or the present company will be best pleased, or who will say almost any thing, rather than nothing ; must be perpetually transgressing some of the duties comprehended under this Commandment, which yet are of the utmost importance to be observed ; for, with respect to the concerns of this world, *He that loveth life, and would see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they speak no guile. (Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13.)* And as to our eternal state in the life to come, *If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.*

## TENTH COMMANDMENT.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.*

WE are now come to the tenth and last commandment, which is by the church of *Rome* absurdly divided into two, to keep up the number, after joining the first and second into one, contrary to ancient authority Jewish and Christian. How the mistake was originally made is hard to say : but undoubtedly they retain and defend it the more earnestly, in order to pass over the second Commandment as only part of the first, without a distinct meaning of its own ; and accordingly many of their devotional books omit it entirely. But that these two ought not to be thus joined and confounded, I have shown you already ; and that this now before us ought not to be divided, is extremely evident ; for it is one single prohibition of all unjust desires. And if reckoning up the several prohibited objects of desire makes it more than one commandment, for the same reason it will be more than two, for there are six things forbidden in general : and moreover, if this be two Commandments, which is the first of them ? for in *Exodus* it begins, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house*, but in *Deuteronomy*, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife* : and accordingly, some of their books of devotion make the former, some the latter of these, the ninth.\* Surely the

1 Their Manuel Prayers in English, 1725, puts, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*, for the ninth. But in the office of the virgin, both Latin and English, called the Primer, 1717, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house*, is the ninth.

order of the words would never have been changed thus in Scripture, had there been two commandments in them; but being one, it is no way material which part is named first: I say no more therefore on so clear a point, but proceed to explain this precept, of *not coveting what is our neighbour's*.

The good things of this life being the gifts of God for which all are to be thankful to him; desiring, with due moderation and submission, a comfortable share of them, is very natural and right: wishing that our share were better, is, in the case of many persons, so far from a sin, that endeavouring diligently to make it better is part of their duty. Wishing it were equal to that of such another, is not wishing ill to him, but only well to ourselves, and seeking to obtain what belongs to another may, in proper circumstances, be perfectly innocent: we may really have occasion for it; he may be well able to bestow it; or he may have occasion for something of ours in return, and on these mutual wants of men all commerce and trade is founded; which God, without question, designed should be carried on, because he hath made all countries abound in some things, and left them deficient in others.

Not every sort of desires therefore, but unfit and immoderate desires only, are forbidden by the words, *thou shalt not covet*. And these are such as follow: first, if our neighbour cannot lawfully part with his property nor we lawfully receive it, and yet we want to have it: one instance of this kind is expressed, *thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*: another is, if we want a person who possesses any thing in trust, or under certain limitations, to give or sell it in breach of that trust or those limitations; or if he can part with it, but is not willing, and we entertain thoughts of acquiring it by force and fraud, or of being revenged on him for his

refusal, this is also highly blameable; for why should he not be left quietly in possession of his own? indeed barely pressing and importuning persons contrary to their interest, or even their inclination only, is in some degree wrong; for it is one way of extorting things from them, or however of giving them trouble where we have no right to give it.

But though we keep our desires ever so much to ourselves, they may notwithstanding be very sinful; and such they are particularly, if they induce us to envy others, that is, to be uneasy at their imagined superior happiness, to wish them ill or take pleasure in any harm which befalls them; for this turn of mind will prompt us to do them ill, if we can, as indeed a great part of the mischief that is done in the world, and some of the worst of it, arises from hence. *Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand against envy?* (*Prov. xxvii. 4.*) Accordingly we find it joined in the New Testament, with *strife, railing, variance, sedition, murder, confusion, and every evil work.* (*Rom. i. 29. xiii. 13.—1 Cor. iii. 7.—2 Cor. xii. 20.—Gal. v. 20, 21.—1 Tim. vi. 4.—James iii. 14, 16.*) But were it to produce no mischief to our neighbour, yet it is the directly opposite disposition to that love of him, which is the second great precept of Christ's religion; it indeed deserves, in some respects, to be reckoned the worst of ill-natured sins: the revengeful man pleads for himself some injury attempted against him; but the envious person bears unprovoked malice to those who have done him neither wrong nor harm, solely because he fancies them to be, in this or that instance, very happy. And why should they not, if they can, as he certainly would, if he could? for the prosperity of bad people, it must be confessed, we have reason to be so far sorry, as they are likely to do hurt by it; but to desire their fall rather than their amendment; to

desire what may be grievous to any persons, not from good will to mankind but from ill will to them; to wish any misfortune even to our competitors and rivals, merely because they are such; or because they have succeeded and enjoy what we aimed at; is extremely uncharitable and inhuman: it is a temper that will give us perpetual disquiet in this world, (for there will always be somebody to envy,) and bring a heavy sentence upon us in the next, unless we repent of it and subdue it first.

But though our selfish desires were to raise in us no malignity against our fellow-creatures; yet if they tempt us to murmur against our Creator, and either to speak or think ill of that distribution of things, which His providence hath made; this is great impiety and rebellion of the heart against God, who hath an absolute right to dispose of the work of his hands as he pleases, and uses it always both with justice and with goodness to us. Were we innocent, we could none of us demand more advantages of any sort, than He thought fit to give us: but as we are guilty wretches, far from having a claim to this or that degree of happiness, we are every one liable to severe punishment: and therefore, with the many comforts and blessings which we have now, and the eternal felicity which, through the mercy of our heavenly Father, the merits of our blessed Redeemer, and the grace of the holy Spirit, we may, if we will, have hereafter, surely we have no ground to complain of our condition. For what if things be unequally divided here? we may be certain the disposer of them hath wise reasons for it, whether we can see them or not, and may be as certain, that unless it be our own fault, we shall be no losers by it, for *all things work together for good to them that love God.* (*Rom. viii. 20.*) Therefore, how little soever we enjoy,

we have cause to be thankful for it: and how much soever we suffer, we have cause to be resigned, nay thankful too even for that; as we may be the happier in this world for many of our sufferings, and shall, if we bear them as we ought, be improved in goodness by them all, and made happier to eternity.

But further yet: though we may not be conscious of what we shall study to hide from ourselves, that our desires carry us either to behave or wish ill to our neighbours or to repine against God; still, if they disturb and agitate our minds; if we are eager and vehement about the objects of them, we are not arrived at the state in which we should be found: some feeling of this inward tumult, especially on trying occasions, may be unavoidable by fallen man, and more of it natural to one person than another; but after all, it is voluntary indulgence, that gives our appetites and passions and fancies, the far greater share of their dominion. We inflame them when else they would be moderate: we affect things for which we have really no liking, merely because they are fashionable: we create imaginary wants to ourselves, and then grow as earnest for what we might do perfectly well without, as if the whole of our felicity consisted in it: this is a very immoral state of mind, and hurries persons, almost irresistibly, into as immoral a course of life. In proportion as worldly inclinations of any kind engage the heart, they exclude from it social affection, compassion, generosity, integrity; and yet more effectually love to God, and attention to the concerns of our future state. Nor do they almost ever fail to make us at present miserable as well as wicked: they prey upon our spirits, torment us with perpetual self-dislike, waste our health, sink our character, drive us into a thousand foolish actions to gratify them; and, when all is done, can never be gratified so as to give us any lasting satis-

faction. First, we shall be full of anxieties and fears ; when we have got over these and obtained our wish, we shall quickly find it comes very short of our expectation : then we shall be cloyed and tired and wretchedly languid, till some new cravings set us on work to as little purpose as the former did, or till we are wise enough to see, that such pursuits are not the ways to happiness.

But supposing persons are not violent in pursuing the imagined good things of this world ; yet if they be dejected and grieved that no more of them have fallen to their lot ; if they mourn over the inferiority of their condition, and live in a perpetual feeling of affliction (be it ever so calm) on that account, or indeed on account of any cross or disadvantage whatever, belonging to the present life ; this also is a degree, though the lowest and least, yet still a degree of inordinate desire : for we are not grateful, if, instead of taking our portion of happiness here with cheerfulness and feeling due acknowledgments for it, we only lament that it is not, in this or that respect more considerable ; and we are not wise, if we embitter it, be it ever so small, by a fruitless sorrow, instead of making the best of it.

These then being the excesses which this commandment forbids, the duty which of course it requires is, that we *learn, like St. Paul, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.* This virtue every body practises in some cases ; for who is there that could not mention several things which he should be glad to have, yet is perfectly well satisfied to go without them ? and would we but strive to be of the same disposition in all cases, the self-enjoyment that we should reap from it is inexpressible. The worldly condition of multitudes, is really quite as good as it needs to be ; and of many others (who do not think so) as good as it well can be : now for such to be anxious about mending it, is only being miserable

for nothing: and in whatever we may have cause to wish our circumstances were better, moderate wishes will be sufficient to excite a reasonable industry, to improve them as far as we can; and immoderate eagerness will give us no assistance, but only disquiet. More than a few consume themselves with longing for what indolence and despondency will not suffer them to try, if they can obtain. *The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.* And sometimes, on the contrary, the precipitance with which we aim at a favourite point, is the very reason that we overshoot the mark and miss it.

But supposing the most solicitous were always the most likely to gain their ends; yet this likelihood will be often crossed both by delays and disappointments, which to impatient tempers will be extremely grievous; and the saddest disappointment of all will be, that they will find the most perfect accomplishment of their wishes, after a very short time, to be little or no increase of their happiness: persons uneasy in their present situation, or intent on some darling object, imagine, that could they but succeed in such a pursuit, or had they but such a person's good fortune or accomplishments, then they should be perfectly at ease and lastingly delighted: but they utterly mistake. Every enjoyment palls and deadens quickly: every condition hath its unseen inconveniences and sufferings, as well as its visible advantages; and happiness depends scarcely at all on the preeminence commonly admired; for the noble, the powerful, the rich, the learned, the ingenious, the beautiful, the gay, the voluptuous, are usually to the full as far from it, and by turns own they are, as any of the wretches whom they severally despise. Indeed, when every thing is tried round, we shall experience at last what we had much better see at first, as we easily may, that the cheerful

composure of a reasonable and religious, and therefore contented mind, is the only solid felicity that this world affords; the great blessing of heaven here below, that will enable us to relish the rest if we have them, and to be satisfied if we have them not. What *Solomon* hath said of wealth, he found to be equally true of every thing else beneath the sun: *God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travel, to gather and heap up.—This also is vanity, and vexation of spirit.*

Contentment, therefore, being the gift of God, we should earnestly pray to Him for it; and in order to become objects of his favour, we should frequently and thankfully recollect the many undeserved comforts of our condition, that we may bear the afflictions of it more patiently, reasoning with *Job*, *Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?* Nor should we fail to join with our meditations on his past and present mercies the firm assurance, which both his attributes and his promises furnish, that the same *loving kindness should follow us all the days of our life*, and be exerted, though sometimes for our correction or trial, yet always for our benefit; and so as to make our lot supportable in every variety of our outward circumstances. *Let your conversation therefore be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* Another very important consideration, necessary to be often brought to mind is, that the season both for enjoying the advantages and bearing the inconveniences of life, is short: but the reward of enjoying and bearing each, as we ought, is eternal and inconceivably great.

Together with these reflections, let us exercise a steady care to check every faulty inclination in its earliest rise; for it is chiefly indulging them at first, that makes them

so hard to conquer afterwards : and yet we shall always find the bad consequences of yielding, to outweigh vastly the trouble of resisting, and that to bring our desires, when they are the strongest, down to our condition, is a much easier work than to raise our condition to our desires, which will only grow the more ungovernable the more they are pampered. Further ; whatever share we possess of worldly plenty, let us bestow it on ourselves with decent moderation, and impart of it to others with prudent liberality ; for thus *knowing how to abound*, we shall *know* the better *how to suffer need* if providence calls us to it : and lastly, instead of *setting our affections on any things on earth*, which would be a fatal neglect of the great end that we are made for, let us exalt our views to that blessed place, where *Godliness with contentment will be unspeakable Gain* ; and they who have restrained the inferior principles of their nature by the rules of religion, shall have the highest faculties of their souls *abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and be made to drink of the river of his pleasures.*

Thus then you see, both the meaning and the importance of this last command, which is indeed the guard and security of all the preceding ones : for our actions will never be right habitually, till our desires are so ; or if they could, our Maker demands the whole man, as he surely well may, nor, till that is devoted to him, are we *meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.*

And now, both the first and the second table of the ten commandments having been explained to you, it only remains, that we beg of God *sufficient grace* to keep them ; earnestly intreating him in the words of his church, *Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.*



## ON THE SACRAMENTS.

*The nature and number of the Sacraments.*

THE far greater part of the duties which we owe to God, flow, as it were of themselves, from His nature and attributes, and the several relations to him in which we stand, whether made known to us by reason or scripture. Such are those which have been hitherto explained to you; the ten commandments, and prayer for the grace which our fallen condition requires, in order to keep them. But there are still some other important precepts peculiar to christianity, and deriving their whole obligation from our Saviour's institution of them, concerning which it is highly requisite that our catechism should instruct us before it concludes, and these are the two sacraments.

The word *sacrament*, by virtue of its original in the Latin tongue, signifies any sacred or holy thing or action; and among the heathens was particularly applied to denote, sometimes a pledge deposited in a sacred place;\* sometimes an oath, the most sacred of obligations; and especially that oath of fidelity which the soldiery took to their general. In scripture it is not used at all. By the early writers of the western church it was used to express almost any thing relating to our holy religion; at least any thing that was figurative, and signified somewhat further than at first sight appeared. But afterwards a more confined use of the word prevailed by degrees; and in that stricter sense, which hath long

\* Edem Elem. Jur. Civ. p. 238. Gronov. in Plaut. Rud. 5. 3. 21.

been the common one, and which our catechism follows, the nature of a sacrament comprehends the following particulars.

1. There must be *an outward and visible sign*; the solemn application of some bodily and sensible thing or action, to a meaning and purpose which in its own nature it hath not : In common life, we have many other signs to express our meanings, on occasions of great consequence, besides words, and no wonder then, if in religion we have some of the same kind.

2. In a sacrament, the outward and visible sign must denote *an inward and spiritual grace given unto us* : that is, some favour freely bestowed on us from heaven, by which our inward and spiritual condition, the state of our souls, is made better. Most of the significative actions that we use in religion, express only our duty to God : thus kneeling in prayer is used, to show our reverence towards Him to whom we pray ; And signing a child with the cross after it is baptized, declares our obligation not to be ashamed of the cross of Christ. But a sacrament, besides expressing on our part duty to God, expresses on His part, some grace or favour towards us.

3. In order to entitle any thing to the name of sacrament, a further requisite is, that it be *ordained by Christ Himself*. We may indeed use, on the foot of human authority alone, actions that set forth either our sense of any duty, or our belief in God's grace ; for it is certainly as lawful to express a good meaning by any other proper sign as by words : but then, such marks as these, which we commonly call ceremonies, as they are taken up at pleasure, may be laid aside again at pleasure, and ought to be laid aside whenever they grow too numerous, or abuses are made of them which cannot easily be reformed. and this hath frequently been the case : but sacraments are of perpetual obligation, for they stand on

the authority of Christ, who hath certainly appointed nothing to be for ever observed in His church, but what He saw would be for ever useful. Nor doth every appointment of Christ, though it be of perpetual obligation, deserve the name of a sacrament: but those, and no other, which are,

4. Not only signs of grace, but *means* also, *whereby we receive the same*: None but our blessed Lord could appoint such means; and which of his ordinances should be such and which not, none but Himself could determine. From His word therefore we are to learn it; and then, as we hope to attain the end, we must use the means. But when it is said, that the sacraments are means of grace, we are not to understand, either that the performance of the mere outward action doth, by its own virtue produce a spiritual effect in us; or that God hath annexed any such effect to that alone; but that He will accompany the action with his blessing, provided it be done as it ought; with those qualifications which He requires: And therefore, unless we fulfil the condition, we must not expect the benefit.

Further; calling the sacraments means of grace, doth not signify them to be means by which we merit grace, for nothing but the sufferings of our blessed Saviour can do that for us, but means by which what He hath merited is conveyed to us.

Nor yet are they the only means of conveying grace; for reading and hearing and meditating upon the Word of God, are part of the things, which He hath appointed for this end; and prayer is another part, accompanied with an express promise, that if we *ask we shall receive*; but these, not being such actions as figure out and represent the benefits which they derive to us, though they are means of grace, are not signs of it; and therefore do not come under the notion of sacraments. But

5. A sacrament is not only a sign or representation of some heavenly favour, and a means whereby we receive it, but also *a pledge to assure us thereof*: Not that any thing can give us a greater assurance, in point of reason, of any blessing from God, than his bare promise can do: but that such observances appointed in token of his promises, affect our imaginations with a stronger sense of them, and make a deeper and more lasting, and therefore more useful impression on our minds. For this cause, in all nations of the world representations by actions have ever been used as well as words, upon solemn occasions, especially upon entering into and renewing treaties and covenants with each other, and therefore, in condescension to a practice which, being so universal among men, appears to be founded in the nature of man, God hath graciously added to His covenant also the solemnity of certain outward instructive performances, by which he declares to us, that as surely as our bodies are washed by water and nourished by bread broken, and wine poured forth and received, so surely are our souls purified from sin by the baptism of repentance, and strengthened in all goodness, by partaking of that mercy which the wounding of the body of Christ and the shedding of his blood hath obtained for us. And thus these religious actions, so far as they are performed by God's minister in pursuance of his appointment, are an earnest and pledge on his part, which (as I observed to you) was one ancient signification of the word sacrament; and so far as we join in them they are an obligation, binding like an oath on our part, as shall be hereafter shown you, which was the other primitive meaning of the word.

Having thus explained to you the description of a sacrament given in the catechism, let us now consider what things we have in our religion that answer to it:

for the Papists reckon no less than seven sacraments; and though this number was not named for above 1000 years after Christ, nor fixed by the authority of even their own church till 200 years ago, that is, since the reformation; yet now they accuse us for not agreeing with them in it, but acknowledging only two.

The first of their five is confirmation. And if this be a sacrament, we administer it as well as they, indeed much more agreeably to the original practice, and are therefore entitled, at least, to the same benefit from it. But though Christ did indeed *put his hands on children and bless them*, yet we do not read that He appointed this particular ceremony for a means of conveying grace; and though the apostles did use it after Him, as others had done before Him, yet there is no foundation to ascribe any separate efficacy to the laying on of hands, as distinct from the prayers that accompany it; or to look upon the whole of confirmation, as any thing else than a solemn manner of persons taking upon themselves their baptismal vow, followed by the solemn addresses of the bishop and the congregation that they may ever keep it; in which addresses, laying on of hands is used, partly as a mark of good will to the person for whom the prayers are offered up, and partly also as a sign that the fatherly hand of God is over all who undertake to serve him, yet without any claim of conveying His grace particularly by it, but only with intention of praying for His grace along with it: which prayers however we have so just ground to hope he will hear, that they who neglect this ordinance, though not a sacrament, are greatly wanting both to their interest and their duty.

Another sacrament of the church of *Rome* is penance, which they make to consist of particular confession to the priest of every deadly sin, particular absolution

from him, and such acts of devotion, mortification, or charity as he shall think fit to enjoin. But no one part of this being required in scripture, much less any outward sign of it appointed, or any inward grace annexed to it, there is nothing in the whole that hath any appearance of a sacrament, but too much suspicion of a contrivance to gain an undue influence and power.

A third sacrament of theirs is, extreme unction: but their plea for it is no more than this: *St. James*, at a time when miraculous gifts were common, directed *the elders of the church*, who usually had those gifts, *to anoint the sick with oil*, (*James* v. 14, 15.) as we read the disciples did whilst our Saviour was on earth, (*Mark* vi. 13.) in order to obtain by the *prayer of faith*, (that *faith* which could *remove mountains*) the recovery, if God saw fit, of their bodily health, and the forgiveness of those sins for which their disease was inflicted, if they had committed any such. And upon this, the church of *Rome*, now all such miraculous gifts have ceased, continues notwithstanding, to anoint the sick for a quite different purpose: not at all for the recovery of their health, for they do not use it till they think them very nearly, if not quite, past recovery; nor indeed for the pardon of their sins; for these, they say are pardoned upon confession, which commonly is made before it; but chiefly, as themselves own, to procure composedness and courage in the hour of death: a purpose not only unmentioned by *St. James*, but inconsistent with the purpose of recovery, which he doth mention, and very often impossible to be attained: for they frequently anoint persons after they have become entirely senseless, and yet, in spite of all these things, they will needs have this practice owned for a sacrament, which indeed is now, as they manage it, a mere piece of superstition.

Another thing which they esteem a christian sacra-

ment, is matrimony: though it was ordained, not by Christ, but long before His appearance on earth, in the time of man's innocency, and hath no outward sign appointed in it, as a means and pledge of inward grace. But the whole matter is, that they have happened most ridiculously to mistake their own latin translation of the New Testament, where St. *Paul*, having compared the union between the first married pair, *Adam* and *Eve*, to that between Christ, the second *Adam*, and his spouse the church; and having said that *this is a great mystery; a figure, or comparison, not fully and commonly understood; the old interpreter, whose version they use, for mystery hath put sacrament; which in his days, as I said before, signified any thing in religion that carried a hidden meaning, and they have understood him of what we now call a sacrament, whereas, if every thing that once had that name in the larger sense of the word, were at present to have it in the stricter sense, there would be an hundred sacraments, instead of the seven, which they pretend there are.*

The fifth and last thing, which they wrongly insist on our honouring with this title, is holy orders: but as there are three orders in the church, bishops, priests, and deacons, here would be three sacraments if there were any, but indeed there is none: for the laying on of hands in ordination, is neither appointed nor used to convey or signify any spiritual grace, but only to confer a right of executing such an office in the church of Christ. And though prayers for God's grace and blessing on the person ordained, are indeed very justly and usefully added, and will certainly be heard unless the person be unworthy, yet these prayers on this occasion, no more make what is done a sacrament, than any other prayers for God's grace on any other occasion.

However, as I have already said of confirmation, so

I say now of orders and marriage, if they were sacraments, they would be as much so to us as to the Romanists, whether we called them sacraments or not: and if we used the name ever so erroneously, indeed if we never used it at all, as the Scripture hath never used it, that could do us no harm, provided, under any name, we believe but the things which Christ hath taught, and do but the things which he hath commanded: for on this, and this alone, depends our acceptance and eternal salvation.

## ON THE SACRAMENTS.

*On Baptism.*

HAVING already explained to you the nature of a sacrament, and shown you that five of the seven things which the church of Rome calls by that name, are not entitled to it; there remain only two that are truly such, and these two are plainly sufficient: one for our entrance into the Christian covenant; the other, during our whole continuance in it; *Baptism and the Supper of the Lord*. However, as the word sacrament is not a Scripture one, and hath at different times been differently understood, our Catechism doth not require it to be said absolutely, that the sacraments are *two only*, but *two only as necessary to salvation*: leaving persons at liberty to comprehend more things under the name, if they please, provided they insist not on the necessity of them, and of dignifying them with this title: and even these two, our church very charitably teaches us not to look upon as indispensably, but as *generally necessary*; out of which general necessity, we are to except those particular cases where believers in Christ, either have not the means of performing their duty in respect to the sacraments, or are innocently ignorant of it, or even excusably mistaken about it.

In explaining the Sacrament of *Baptism*, I shall speak first of the *outward and visible sign*, then of the *inward and spiritual grace*.

As to the former: *Baptism* being intended for the sign and means of our purification from sin; water, the proper element for purifying and cleansing, is appointed

to be used in it : there is indeed a sect, sprung up amongst us within a little more than a hundred years, that deny this appointment, and make the Christian Baptism signify only the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon a person ; but our Saviour expressly requires that we be *born of water* as well as *of the spirit*, to enter into the kingdom of God. (*John* iii. 5.) And not only *John* his forerunner *baptized with water*, but his *disciples* also, by his direction, *baptized* in the same manner, even *more than John* : (*John* iv. 1, 2.) when therefore he bade them afterwards *teach all nations, baptizing them*, (*Matt.* xviii. 19.) what baptism could they understand, but that in which he had employed them before ? and accordingly, we find they did understand that : *Philip*, we read, baptized the Samaritans, not with the Holy Ghost, for the apostles went down some time after to do that themselves, (*Acts* viii. 12. 14, &c.) but with water undoubtedly, as we find in the same chapter, he did the eunuch, where the words are, *Here is water : what doth hinder me to be baptized ? And they went down to the water, and he baptized him.* Again, after *Cornelius* and his friends, had received the Holy Ghost, and so were already baptized in that sense, *Peter* asks, *Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we ?* (*Acts* x. 4.) when therefore *John* says, that *He baptized with water, but Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost* ; he means, not that Christians should not be baptized with water, but that they should have the Holy Ghost poured out upon them also, in a degree that *John's* disciples had not : when *St. Peter* says, *The baptism which saveth us, is not the washing away the filth of the flesh*, he means, it is not the mere outward act, unaccompanied by a suitable inward disposition : when *St. Paul* says, that *Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel* ; he means,

that preaching was the principal thing he was to do in person: to baptize, he might appoint others under him, and it seems, commonly did, as *St. Peter* did not baptize *Cornelius* and his friends himself, but *commanded them to be baptized*, (*Acts* x. 48.) and we read in *St. John*, that *Jesus baptized not, but his disciples*.

Water-baptism therefore is appointed: and why the church of Rome should not think water sufficient in baptism, but aim at mending what our Saviour hath directed by mixing oil and balsam with it, and dipping a lighted torch into it, I leave them to explain.

The precise manner in which water shall be applied in baptism, Scripture hath not determined: for the word baptize, means only to wash, whether that be done by plunging a thing under water, or pouring the water upon it: the former of these, burying as it were the person baptized in the water, and raising him out of it again, without question was anciently the more usual method, on account of which, *St. Paul* speaks of baptism as representing both the death and burial and resurrection of Christ, and what is grounded on them, our being *dead and buried to sin*; renouncing it and being acquitted of it, and our rising again to *walk in newness of life*, (*Rom.* vi. 4, 11.—*Col.* ii. 1.) being both obliged and enabled to practice for the future every duty of piety and virtue; but still the other manner of washing, by pouring or sprinkling water, sufficiently expresses the same two things, our being by this ordinance purified from the guilt of sin, and bound and qualified to keep ourselves pure from the defilement of it. Besides, it very naturally represents that *sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ*, (*1 Pet.* i. 2.) to which our salvation is owing; and the use of it seems not only to be foretold by the prophet *Isaiah* speaking of our Saviour, *he shall sprinkle many nations*, (*Isaiah* lii. 15:) that is, many shall receive his

baptism ; and by the prophet *Ezekiel*, then *will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean* : (*Ezek.* xxxvi. 25.) but to be had in view also by the apostle, where he speaks of *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* (*Heb.* x. 22.) And though it was less frequently used in the first ages, it must almost of necessity have been sometimes used ; for instance, when baptism was administered, as we read in the acts, it was, to several thousands at once ; (*Acts* ii. 41.) when it was administered on a sudden in private houses, as we find it in the same book, to the gaoler and all his family the very night in which they were converted ; (*Acts* xvi. 33.) or when sick persons received it, in which last case the present method was always taken, because the other of dipping them might have been dangerous ; and from the same apprehension of danger in these colder countries, pouring the water is allowed, even when the person baptized is in health ; and the particular manner being left at liberty, that is now universally chosen which is looked on as safer, because were there more to be said for the other than there is, *God will have mercy and not sacrifice.* (*Matt.* ix. 13. xiii. 7.)

But washing with water is not the whole outward part of this sacrament, for our Saviour commanded his apostles, not only to *baptize all nations*, but to *baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* : (*Matt.* xviii. 19.) Sometimes indeed the scripture speaks of baptism, as if it were administered only *in the name of the Lord Jesus.* (*Acts* ii. 38. x. 48. xix. 5.) But it fully appears, (*Acts.* xix. 2, 3.) that the name of the Holy Ghost was used at the same time, and therefore that of the Father, we may be sure. Now being baptized in the name of these three, may signify being baptized by virtue of their authority, but the exacter translation is, *into the name* ; and the fuller import of the

expression is, by this solemn action taking upon us their name, (for servants are known by the name of their master) and professing ourselves devoted to the faith, and worship, and obedience of these three, our Creator; our Redeemer; our Sanctifier. In this profession the whole of Christianity is briefly comprehended, and on this foundation therefore the ancient creeds are all built.

The second and principal thing in baptism, *the inward and spiritual grace*, is said in the catechism to be *a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for that being by Nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.* The former part of these words refers to the old custom of baptizing by dipping, just now mentioned, and the meaning of the whole is this: Our first parents having by disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, corrupted their own nature; ours being derived from them, received of necessity an original taint of the same disorder: and therefore, coming into the world under the ill effects of their sin, and being from the time of our entering into it, prone to sin ourselves, we are said to be *born in sin*: And they having also, by the same disobedience forfeited their immortality, we, as descended from them, became mortal of course, and inheriting by way of natural consequence, what they suffered as a mark of God's wrath, we, their children, are said to be *children of wrath*: Not that God, with whatever disapprobation He must view our native depravity, is, or properly speaking can be, angry with us personally for what was not our personal fault: but He might undoubtedly, both refuse us that immortality which our first parents had forfeited, and to which we have no right, and leave us without help, to the poor degree of strength that remained to us in our fallen condition, the effect of which must have been that had we done our best, as we were entitled to no reward from

his justice, so it had been such a nothing, that we could have hoped for little, if any, from his bounty ; and had we not done our best, as no man hath, we had no assurance that even repentance would secure us from punishment. But what in strict justice He might have done, in His infinite goodness, He hath not done : for the first covenant being broken by *Adam*, He hath entered into a new one with mankind through Jesus Christ ; in which he hath promised to free us, both from the mortality which our first parents had brought upon us, by restoring us to life again ; and from the inability, by the powerful assistance of his Holy Spirit. Nay further yet, He hath promised, (and without it the rest would have been of small use) that should we, notwithstanding his assistance fail in our duty when we might have performed it, as we have all failed, and made ourselves by that means, *children of wrath* in the strictest and worst sense ; yet, on most equitable terms, He would still receive us to mercy anew, and thus the Christian covenant delivering us, if we are faithful to it, from every thing we had to fear, and bestowing on us every thing we could hope, brings us into a state so unspeakably different from our former, that it is justly expressed by being dead to that, and born into another. And this new birth being effected by the grace or goodness of God external and internal, we, the children of it, are properly called *the children of grace* : now baptism is not only a sign of this grace, (as indeed it signifies very naturally the washing off both of our original corruption, and our actual guilt) by the appointed way of entering into the covenant that entitles us to such grace, the *means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof*.

Indeed the mere outward act of being baptized, is, as *St. Peter*, in the words already mentioned, very truly expresses it, the mere *putting away of the filth of the*

*flesh* ; unless it be made effectual to save us, as he teaches in the same place it must, by *the answer of a good conscience towards God* : (*Pet. iii. 21.*) that is, by the sincere stipulation and engagement of *repentance, whereby we forsake sin* ; and *faith, whereby we believe the promises of God, made to us in that sacrament.* For it is impossible that He should forgive us our past sins, unless we are sorry for them and resolved to quit them ; and it is as impossible that we should quit them effectually, unless a firm persuasion of his helping and rewarding us excite and support our endeavours. These two things therefore we see our catechism justly mentions as necessary, in answer to the question, *What is required of persons to be baptized?* Both having been explained in their proper place, and therefore I enlarge on neither here.

But hence arises immediately another question : *If these conditions are necessary, why are infants baptized when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?* And as this difficulty appears to some a great one, I shall give a fuller solution of it, than the shortness of a catechism would easily permit. Repentance and faith are requisite, not before they are possible, but when they are possible : repentance is what infants need not as yet, being clear of personal guilt, and happy would it be were they never to need it : Faith, it may be reasonably presumed, by the security given for their Christian education, they will have as soon as they have occasion to exert it ; and in the mean time, baptism may very fitly be administered, because God, on His part, can certainly express by it, both his removing at present the disadvantages which they lie under by the sin of *Adam*, and his removing hereafter, on proper conditions, the disadvantages which they may come to lie under by their own sins : and though they cannot, on their parts, expressly promise to perform these conditions, yet they are not

only bound to perform them, whether they promise it or not, but (which is the point that our catechism insists on) their sureties promise for them, that they shall be made sensible, as soon as may be, that they are so bound, and ratify the engagement in their own persons, which when they do, it then becomes complete. For it is by no means necessary, that a covenant should be executed by both the parties to it at just the same time; and as the Christian covenant is one of the greatest equity and favour, we cannot *doubt*, to speak in the language of our liturgy, *but that God favourably alloweth the charitable work of bringing infants to His Holy baptism: For the promise of the covenant being expressly said to belong to us and to our children (Acts ii. 39.) without any limitation of age, why should they not all, since they are to partake of the promise, partake also of the sign of it? especially since the infants of the Jews were, by a solemn sign entered into their covenant; and the infants of proselytes to the Jews, by this very sign amongst others, of baptism. So that supposing the apostles to imitate either of these examples, as they naturally would, unless forbidden, which they were not, when they baptized (as the scripture, without making any exception, tells us they did) whole families at once; (Acts xvi. 15, 33.) we cannot question but they baptized, as we know the primitive Christians their successors did, little children amongst the rest, concerning whom our Saviour says, that of such is the kingdom of God, and St. Paul says, they are holy, (1 Cor. viii. 14.) which they cannot be reputed without entering into the gospel covenant; and the only appointed way of entering into it is by baptism, which therefore is constantly represented in the New Testament as necessary to salvation.*

Not that such converts in ancient times, as were put to death for their faith before they could be baptized,

lost their reward for want of it; not that such children of believers now as die unbaptized by sudden illness or unexpected accidents, or even by neglect (since it is none of their own neglect) shall forfeit the advantages of baptism; this would be very contrary to that mercy and grace, which abounds through the whole of the gospel dispensation: nay, where the persons themselves do designedly, through mistaken notions, either delay their baptism as the Anabaptists, or omit it entirely as the Quakers, even of these it belongs to Christian charity not to judge hardly, as excluded from the gospel covenant if they die unbaptized, but to leave them to the equitable judgment of God. Both of them indeed err, and the latter especially have, one should think, as little excuse for their error, as well can be: for surely there is no duty of Christianity which stands on a plainer foundation, than that of baptizing with water in the name of the holy Trinity. But still, since they solemnly declare that they believe in Christ, and desire to obey His commandments, and omit water baptism only because they cannot see it is commanded, we ought (if we have cause to think they speak truth) by no means to consider them in the same light with total unbelievers.

But the wilful and the careless despisers of this ordinance, who, admitting it to be of God's appointment, neglect it notwithstanding, these are not to be looked on as within his covenant: and such as, though they do observe it for form's sake, treat it as an empty insignificant ceremony, are very unworthy of the benefits which it was intended to convey. And bad as these things are, little better if not worse, will be the case of those who, acknowledging the solemn engagements into which they have entered by this sacrament, live without care to make them good; for to the only valuable purpose of God's favour and eternal happiness, *He is not a Chris-*

tian, which is one outwardly; neither is that **Baptism** which is outward in the flesh: but he is a **Christian**, who is one inwardly; and **Baptism** is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter: whose praise is not of men, but of God.

## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

## PART I.

As by the Sacrament of Baptism we enter into the Christian covenant, so by that of the Lord's Supper we profess our thankful continuance in it; and therefore the first answer of our catechism concerning this ordinance, tells us it was appointed *for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.* Now the nature and benefits of this sacrifice have been already explained in their proper places; I shall therefore proceed to show, that the Lord's Supper is rightly said here to be *ordained for a remembrance of it, not a repetition, as the church of Rome teaches.*

Indeed every act, both of worship and obedience, is in some sense a sacrifice to God, humbly offered up to Him for his acceptance; and this Sacrament in particular, being a memorial and representation of the sacrifice of Christ solemnly and religiously made, may well enough be called, in a figurative way of speaking, by the same name with what it commemorates and represents: but that he should be really and literally offered up in it, is the directest contradiction that can be, not only to common sense but also to Scripture, which expressly says, that He was not to be *offered often, for then must He often have suffered; but hath appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and after that, forever sat down on the right hand of God: for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* (*Heb. ix. 25, 26.—x. 12, 14.*)

This ordinance then was appointed, not to repeat, but to commemorate the sacrifice of Christ; which though we are required to do, and do it accordingly more or less explicitly in all our acts of devotion, yet we are not required to do it by any visible representation but that of the Lord's Supper, of which therefore our catechism teaches in the second answer, that *the outward part, or sign, is bread and wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received.* And indeed he hath so clearly commanded both to be received, that no reasonable defence in the least can be made, either for the sect usually called Quakers, who omit this sacrament entirely, or for the church of Rome, who deprive the laity of one half of it, the cup, and forbid all but the priest to do, what Christ hath appointed all without exception to do. They plead indeed, that all whom Christ appointed to receive the cup, that is, the apostles, were priests; but their church forbids the priests themselves to receive it, excepting those who perform the service, which the apostles did not perform, but their master. And besides, if the appointment of receiving the cup belongs only to priests, that of receiving the bread too must relate only to priests, for our Saviour hath more expressly directed *all* to drink of the one, than to eat of the other, but they own that his appointment obliges the laity to receive the bread, and therefore it obliges them to receive the cup also, which that they did accordingly, 1 *Cor. xi.* makes as plain as words can make any thing: nor was it refused them for 1200 years after. They plead farther, that administering the holy sacrament is called in Scripture *breaking of bread*, without mentioning the cup at all, and we allow it: but when common feasts are expressed in Scripture by the single phrase of *eating bread*, surely this doth not prove that the guests drank nothing; and if in this religious feast, the like phrase could prove that the laity did

not partake of the cup, it will prove equally that the priests did not partake of it either. They plead in the last place that by receiving the bread, which is the body of Christ, we receive in effect the cup, which is the blood, at the same time; for the blood is contained in the body: but here, besides that our Saviour, who was surely the best judge, appointed both, they quite forget that this Sacrament is a memorial of His blood being shed out of His body, of which, without the cup, there can be no commemoration: or if there could, the cup would be as needless for the clergy as for the laity.

The outward signs therefore which Christ hath commanded to be received, equally received by all Christians, are bread and wine: of these the *Jews* had been accustomed to partake, in a serious and devout manner at all their feasts, after a solemn blessing or thanksgiving to God made over them, for his goodness to men: but especially at the feast of the passover, which our Saviour was celebrating with his disciples when he instituted this holy sacrament: at that feast, in the above-mentioned thanksgiving, they commemorated more at large the mercies of their God, dwelling chiefly however on their deliverance from the bondage of *Egypt*: now this having many particulars resembling that infinitely more important redemption of all mankind from sin and ruin, which our Saviour was then about to accomplish; He very naturally directed his disciples, that their ancient custom should for the future be applied to this greatest of divine blessings, and become the memorial of *Christ their passover sacrificed for them*; (1 Cor. v. 7.) as indeed the bread broken aptly enough represented his body, and the wine poured forth expressively figured out his blood, shed for our salvation. These therefore, as the third answer of our catechism very justly teach-

es, are *the inward part* of this sacrament, or *the thing signified*.

But the Church of *Rome*, instead of being content with saying, that the bread and wine are signs of the body and blood of Christ, insist on it that they are turned into the very substance of his body and blood : which imagined change they therefore call transubstantiation : now were this true, there would be no outward sign left, for they say it is converted into the thing signified, and by consequence there would be no sacrament left, for a sacrament is *an outward sign of an inward grace*.

Besides, if our senses can in any case inform us what any thing is, they inform us that the bread and wine continue bread and wine : and if we cannot trust our senses, when we have full opportunity of using them all, how did the apostles know that our Saviour taught them and performed miracles ? or how do we know any one thing around us ? but this doctrine is equally contrary to all reason too : to believe that our Saviour took his own body, literally speaking, in his own hands, and gave the whole of that one body to every one of his apostles, and that each of them swallowed him down their throats, though all the while he continued sitting at the table before their eyes ; to believe that the very same one individual body, which is now in heaven, is also in many thousands of different places on earth ; in some standing still upon the altar ; in others, carrying along the streets : and so in motion and not in motion at the same time ; to believe that the same body can come from a great distance and meet itself, as the sacramental bread often doth in their processions, and then pass by itself and go away from itself to the same distance again ; is to believe the most absolute impossibilities and contradictions : if such things can be true, nothing can be false : and if such things cannot be true, the Church that

teaches them cannot be infallible, whatever arts of puzzling sophistry they may use to prove either that or any of their doctrines; for no reasonings are ever to be minded against plain common sense.

They must not say this doctrine is a mystery, for there is no mystery, no obscurity in it, but it is as plainly seen to be an error, as any thing else is seen to be a truth: and the more so because it relates, not to an infinite nature, as God, but entirely to what is finite, a bit of bread and a human body: they must not plead, that God can do all things; for that means only that He can do all things that can be done, not that He can do what cannot be done, make a thing be this and not be this, be here and elsewhere at the same time; which is doing and undoing at once, and so in reality doing nothing. They must not alledge scripture for absurdities, that would sooner prove scripture false than scripture can prove them true: but it no where teaches them.

We own that our Saviour says, *This is my body, which is broken; and, This is my blood, which is shed*, but He could not mean literally, for as yet his body was not broken nor his blood shed, nor is either of them in that condition now: and therefore, the bread and wine neither could then nor can now, be turned into them, as such. Besides, our Saviour said at the same time, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood.* (*Luke xxii. 20.—1 Cor. xi. 25.*) Was the substance of the cup then changed into the New Testament? and if not, why are we to think the substance of the bread and wine changed into his body and blood? the apostle says, *the rock that supplied the Israelites with water in the wilderness, was Christ;* (*1 Cor. x. 4.*) that is, represented Him: every body says, such a picture is such a person, meaning the representation of Him: why then may not our Saviour's words mean so too?

The *Romanists* object, that though what represents a thing naturally or by virtue of a preceding institution, may be called by its name, yet such a figure as this, in the words of a new institution, would not be intelligible. But the representation here is natural enough; and though the institution was new, figurative speech was old: And the apostles would certainly rather interpret their Master's words by a very usual figure, than put the most absurd sense upon them that could be. They object further, that if He had not meant literally, He would have said, not, *this*, but *this bread*, is my body:\* but we may better argue, that if He had meant literally, He would have said in the strongest terms that he did so; for there was great need, surely, of such a declaration. But we acknowledge, that the bread and wine are more than a representation of his body and blood; they are the means by which the benefits arising from them are conveyed to us, and have thence a further title to be called by their name; for so the instrument by which a prince forgives an offender is called his pardon, because it conveys his pardon: the delivery of a writing is called giving possession of an estate; and a security for a sum of money, is called the sum itself, and is so in virtue and in effect, though it is not in strictness of speech and reality of substance. Again: our Saviour we own, says in the vi. chapter of *St. John*, that *He is the bread of life; that, his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed: that, whoso eateth the one and drinketh the other, hath eternal life: and that, without doing it, we have no life in us: but this, if understood literally would prove, not that the bread in the sacrament was turned into His flesh, but that His flesh was turned into bread; and therefore it is not to be*

\* *Preuves de la Religion*, Vol. iv. p. 163.

understood literally, as indeed He Himself gives notice : *The flesh profiteth nothing ; the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life :* it is not the gross and literal, but the figurative and spiritual, eating and drinking ; the partaking by a lively faith of an union with me, and being inwardly nourished by the fruits of my offering up my flesh and blood for you, that alone can be of benefit to the soul.

And as this is plainly the sense, in which He says, that *His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed ;* so it is the sense, in which the latter part of the third answer of our catechism is to be understood ; that *the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper :* words intended to show, that our church as truly believes the strongest assertions of Scripture concerning this Sacrament, as the church of Rome doth ; only takes more care to understand them in their right meaning, which is, that though in one sense, all communicants equally partake of what Christ calls His body and blood, that is, the outward signs of them ; yet in a much more important sense, *the faithful only*, the pious and virtuous receiver, eats His flesh and drinks His blood ; shares in the life and strength derived to men from his incarnation and death ; and through faith in Him becomes, by a vital union, one with Him ; *a member*, as St. Paul expresses it, *of His flesh and of His bones :* (*Eph. v. 30.*) certainly not in a literal sense, (which yet the Romanists might as well assert as that we eat his flesh in a literal sense,) but in a figurative and spiritual one. In appearance, the sacrament of Christ's death is given to all alike : but *verily and indeed*, in its beneficial effects, to none besides the faithful. Even to the unworthy communicant He is present, as He is wherever we meet together in His name ; but in a better and most gracious

sense to the worthy soul, becoming by the inward virtue of His spirit, its food and sustenance.

This real presence of Christ in the sacrament His church hath always believed : but the monstrous notion of his bodily presence, was started 700 years after his death, and arose chiefly from the indiscretion of preachers and writers of warm imaginations, who, instead of explaining judiciously the lofty figures of Scripture language, heightened them, and went beyond them, till both it and they had their meaning mistaken most astonishingly : and when once an opinion had taken root, that seemed to exalt the holy sacrament so much, it easily grew and spread, and the more for its wonderful absurdity, in those ignorant and superstitious ages ; till at length, 500 years ago, and 1200 years after our Saviour's birth, it was established for a gospel truth by the pretended authority of the Romish church. And even this had been tolerable in comparison, if they had not added idolatrous practice to erroneous belief : worshipping, on their knees, a bit of bread for the Son of God : nor are they content to do this themselves, but with most unchristian cruelty, curse and murder those who refuse it.

It is true, we also kneel at the Sacrament, as they do, but for a very different purpose ; not to acknowledge *any corporeal presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood* ; as our church, to prevent all possibility of misconstruction expressly declares ; adding, that *His body is in heaven, and not here* : but to worship Him who is every where present, the invisible God. And this posture of kneeling we by no means look upon as in itself necessary, but as a very becoming appointment, and very fit to accompany the prayers and praises, which we offer up at the instant of receiving, and to express that inward spirit of piety and humility, on which our parta-

king worthily of this ordinance, and receiving benefit from it, depend. But the benefits of the holy sacrament and the qualifications for it, shall, God willing, be the subject of two other discourses. In the mean time, *consider what hath been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

## PART II.

THE doctrine of our catechism concerning the Lord's supper hath been already so far explained as to show you, that it *was ordained*, not for the repetition but the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ: that the outward signs in it are bread and wine, both which the Lord hath commanded to be received by all Christians, and both which are accordingly received, and not changed and transubstantiated into the real and natural body and blood of Christ; which however the faithful, and they only, do, under this representation of it, *verily and indeed* receive into a most beneficial union with themselves: that is, do *verily and indeed*, by a spiritual connexion with their incarnate Redeemer and head through faith, partake in this ordinance, of that heavenly favour and grace, which by offering up His body and blood, He hath procured for His true disciples and members.

But of *what benefits* in particular the faithful partake in this sacrament, through the grace and favour of God, our catechism teaches in the fourth answer, to which I now proceed: and which tells us it is, *the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.\** Now both the truth and the manner of this refreshment of our souls will appear, by considering the nature of the sacrament and the declarations of scripture concerning it.

Indeed the due preparation for it, the self examination

required in order to it, and the religious exercises which that examination will of course point out to us, must previously be of great service; as you will see when I come to that head; and the actual participation will add further advantages of unspeakable value.

Considered as an act of obedience to our Saviour's command, *Do this in remembrance of me*, it must be beneficial to us: for all obedience will. Considered as obedience to a command, proceeding principally if not solely from his mere will and pleasure, it contributes to form us into a very needful, a submissive and implicitly dutiful temper of mind: but further, it is the most eminent and distinguished act of Christian worship, consisting of the most devout thankfulness to God, for the greatest blessing which He ever bestowed on man; attended, as it naturally must be, with earnest prayers that the gift may avail us, to our spiritual and eternal good. And it is much more likely to affect us very strongly and usefully, for expressing his bounty and our sense of it, not as our daily devotions do, in words alone, but in the less common and therefore more solemn way, of visible signs and representations; *setting forth evidently before our eyes*, to use St. Paul's language, *Christ crucified amongst us*. This, of necessity, unless we are strangely wanting to ourselves, must raise the warmest affections of love that our hearts are capable of, to him who hath given Himself for us. And as love is the noblest principle of religious behaviour, what tends so powerfully to animate our love, must in proportion tend to perfect us in every branch of duty, according to the just reasoning of the same apostle: *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again*. When our Saviour

said to his disciples, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, He knew the motive was no less engaging than it is reasonable, and therefore He adds very soon after, *If a man love me, he will keep my words*.

But this institution carries in it a yet further tie upon us; being, as our blessed Lord himself declared, *the New Testament in His blood*: (*Luke xxii. 20.*) the memorial and acknowledgment of the second covenant between God and man, which was founded on his death; and requires a sincere faith and obedience on our part, as the condition of grace and mercy on his. *Every one that nameth the name of Christ*, is bound to *depart from iniquity*: but the obligation is redoubled on them who come to His table as friends, and *make a covenant with Him*, by partaking of His sacrifice. (*Psalm l. 5.*) If these live wickedly, it is declaring with the boldest contempt, that they consider *Christ as the minister of sin*; (*Gal. ii. 17.* and *count the blood of the covenant*, wherewith they profess to be sanctified, *an unholy thing*. (*Heb. x. 29.*) Partaking therefore of this holy ordinance is renewing, in the most awful manner, our engagements to the service which we owe, as well as our claims to the favours that God hath promised. It is our sacrament, our oath, to be faithful *soldiers* under the great *Captain of our salvation*; (*2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.*—*Heb. ii. 10.* which surely we cannot take thus, without being efficaciously influenced to the religious observance of it, in every part of a Christian life.

But there is one part especially, and one of the utmost importance, to which this institution peculiarly binds us, that of universal good-will and charity. For commemorating, in so solemn an action, the love of Christ to us all, cannot but move us to that mutual imitation of his love, which just before his appointing this holy sacrament, He so earnestly and affectionately enjoined his

followers, as the distinguishing badge of their profession. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* Then besides; commemorating his love jointly, as the servants of one master and members of one body, partaking of the same covenant of grace and the same hope of everlasting happiness, must, if we have any feeling of what we do, incline us potently to that reciprocal union of hearts, which indeed the very act of communicating suggests and recommends to us. *For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.* (1 Cor. x. 17.)

Another grace, which this commemoration of our Saviour's death peculiarly excites, is humility of soul. We acknowledge by it that we are sinners, and have no claim to pardon or acceptance, but through his sacrifice and his mediation, whose merits we thus plead and set forth before God. And this consideration must surely dispose us very strongly to a thankful observance of his commands, to watchfulness over our own hearts, to mildness towards others. *For we ourselves also have been foolish, disobedient, deceived; and not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Christ Jesus our Saviour.* (Tit. ii. 3, 5, 6.)

And as this sacrament will naturally strengthen us in all these good dispositions, we cannot doubt but God will add his blessing to the use of such proper means, especially being appointed means. For since He hath threatened punishment to unworthy receivers, He will

certainly bestow rewards on worthy ones. Our Saviour hath told us, that *his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed*; Sustenance and refreshment to the souls of men. When He blessed the bread and wine, He undoubtedly prayed, and not in vain, that they might be effectual for the good purposes which He designed should be attained by this holy rite: and St. Paul hath told us, if it needs, more expressly, that *the cup which we bless is the communion, that is, the communication to us of the blood of Christ; and the bread which we break, of the body of Christ*: (1 Cor. x. 16.) that is, of a saving union with Him, and therefore of the benefits procured us by his death, which are, forgiveness of our offences; for he hath said, *This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for the remission of sins*: (Matt. xxvi. 28.) Increase of the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost; for the apostle hath said, plainly speaking of this ordinance, that *we are all made to drink into one spirit*: (1 Cor. xii. 13.) and everlasting life; for *whoso eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, dwelleth in Christ and Christ in him, and he will raise him up at the last day*: (John vi. 54, 56.) Whence a father of the apostolic age, Ignatius, calls the Eucharist *the medicine of immortality; a preservative, that we should not die, but live for ever in Jesus Christ*.\*

But then what hath been already hinted to you must be always carefully observed, that these benefits are to be expected only from partaking worthily of it: for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, St Paul hath told us, is *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, that is, guilty of irreverence towards it, and *eateth and drinking judgment to himself*. Our translation indeed hath it, *damnation to himself*, but there is so great danger of this

\* Ign. ad. Eph. c. 20. See Waterland on the Eucharist, p. 217.

last word being understood here in too strong a sense, that it would be much safer and more exact, to translate it, (as it is often translated elsewhere, and once in a few verses after this passage, and from what follows ought undeniably to be translated here) judgment or condemnation; not to certain punishment in another life, but to such marks of God's displeasure as He sees fit; which will be confined to this world, or extended to the next, as the case requires: for *receiving unworthily* may, according to the kind and degree of it, be either a very great sin or comparatively a small one. But all dangerous kinds and degrees may with ease be avoided, if we only take care to come to the sacrament with proper dispositions, and which will follow of course, to behave at it in a proper manner.

To these dispositions our catechism proceeds, but more is needful to be known concerning them, than can well be laid before you now; therefore I shall conclude at present with desiring you to observe, that no unworthiness but our own, can possibly endanger us or prevent our receiving benefit: doubtless it would both be more pleasing and more edifying, to come to *the table of the Lord*, (1 Cor. x. 21.) in company with such only as are qualified for a place at it; and they who are unqualified ought, when they properly can, to be restrained from it: but we have neither direction nor permission to stay away, because others come who should not, nor can they ever be so effectually excluded, but that *tares* will be mixed *among the wheat*; and attempting to *root them up* may often be more hurtful, than *letting both grow together until the harvest*. (Matt. xiii. 28—31.) Nay, should even the *stewards* and *dispensers of God's mysteries* (1 Cor. iv. 2.) be unholier persons, though it be a grievous temptation to others to *abhor*

*the offering of the Lord, yet that is holy still. They shall bear their iniquity: but notwithstanding, all the promises of all God's ordinances are yea and Amen, sure and certain in Jesus Christ, to as many as worship Him in spirit and in truth. (2 Cor. i. 20.—John iv. 23.)*

## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

## PART III.

WHAT qualifications and dispositions are *required* of those who come to the Lord's supper, the scripture hath not particularly expressed, for they are easily collected from the nature of this ordinance ; but our catechism, in its fifth and last answer concerning it, hath reduced them very justly to three : repentance, faith, and charity.

I. *That we repent us truly of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life.* For as we are by nature prone to sin ; and the youngest and best among us have, in more instances than a few, been guilty of it, the less the better ; so in Christianity, repentance is the foundation of every thing : now the sorrow that we ought to feel for the least sin, must be a very serious one, and for greater offences in proportion deeper, but the vehemence and sensibility of grief will on every occasion, and particularly on this, be extremely different in different persons, and therefore all that God expects is, a sincere, though it may be a calm, concern for every past fault of which we are conscious, and for the multitudes which we have either not observed or forgotten. And this concern must proceed from a sense of duty, and produce the good effects of an humble confession to Him in all cases, and to our fellow-creatures in all cases needful ; of restitution for the injuries that we have done, so far as it is possible ; and of a settled resolution to amend our hearts and lives, wherever it is wanting. More than this we cannot do, and less than this God cannot accept :

for it would be giving us a licence to disobey Him, if He allowed us to come to his table and profess to *have fellowship with him*, while we *walked in darkness*. (1 John i. 6.) Mere infirmities indeed, and undesigned frailties, provided we strive against them with any good degree of honest care, and humble ourselves in the Divine presence for them so far as we are sensible of them, will not provoke God to reject us as unworthy receivers, though in strictness we are all unworthy: for if such failures as these made persons unfit, nobody could be fit: and therefore they will be no excuse for omitting what Christ hath commanded, nor can be any reason why we should not do it with comfort.

But whoever lives in any wilful sin, cannot safely come to the holy Sacrament; nor, which I beg you to observe, can he safely stay away: for, as the hypocrisy of professing amendment falsely at God's table is a great sin, so the profaneness of turning our backs upon it, because we will not amend, is to the full as great a one; and it is the merest folly in the world, to choose either as the safer way; for a wicked person can be safe no way: but let him resolve to quit his wickedness, and when he is thoroughly sure, so far as he can judge from a competent experience, that he hath resolved upon it effectually, then he may as safely receive as he can say his prayers: and such a one should come, not with servile fear as to a hard master, but with willing duty as to a merciful father. Nay, should he afterwards break his resolutions, though doubtless it would be the justest cause of heavy grief, yet it would not prove that he received unworthily, but only that he hath behaved unworthily since he received: and the thing for him to do is, to lament his fault with deeper contrition, renew his good purpose more firmly, pray for help from above with more earnestness, watch over himself with more prudent

care ; then go again to God's altar, thankfully commemorate his pardoning love, and claim anew the benefit of his gracious covenant. Following this course honestly, he will assuredly gain ground, and therefore such as do not gain ground, do not follow it honestly ; but allow themselves to go round in a circle of sinning, then repenting, as they call it, and communicating ; then sinning again : as if every communion did of course wipe off the old score, and so they might begin a new one without scruple, which is the most absurd, the most irreligious, the most fatal imagination, that can be.

II. The next thing required of those who come to the Lord's supper, is *a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death* : and the faith necessary is a settled persuasion, that for the sake of the meritorious obedience and sufferings of our blessed Redeemer, God will pardon true penitents ; together with a comfortable trust, that we, as such, have an interest in his merits. But here again you must observe, that different persons may have very different degrees of this persuasion and trust : some may be *weak in faith* ; may have cause to say with Him in the gospel of St. Mark, *Lord I believe ; help thou mine unbelief* ; and yet their prayers, like His, may be graciously heard : Others may be strong, and *increase*, till they *abound in faith*, and such have great reason to be thankful to God for themselves, but surely they ought never to judge hardly of their brethren, who have not advanced so far. The rule of judging, both in the catechism and the scripture, is not by the positiveness, but the liveliness of our faith ; that is, the fruits of a Christian life which it produces ; for *faith without works is dead* : (James ii. 17.) if we cannot show the evidence of these, the highest confidence will do us no good ; and if we can, we need have no doubts concerning our spiritual condition ; and thought

we have ever so many, provided we have no sufficient reason for them, we may celebrate this holy ordinance very safely. For such weaknesses in our natural temper and spirits are no way inconsistent with having, in our fixed and deliberate judgment, that *full trust in God's mercy*, which the communion-service requires; and we cannot take a more likely method, either to perfect our repentance or to strengthen our faith, than receiving the sacrament frequently.

Our catechism teaches further, that our faith in Christ must be accompanied *with a thankful remembrance of his death*. And surely, if we believe that He died to save us, we must be thankful for it: but then the measure of our thankfulness must be taken from the goodness and constancy of its effects, not from that sensible warmth and fervency, which we cannot, ordinarily speaking, feel so strongly in spiritual things as in temporal; and of which bad persons may at times have very much, and good persons little; for that is the true thankfulness, which produces love: *And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.* (1 John v. 3.)

But there is one commandment, as I have shown you, peculiarly connected with this ordinance, and therefore our catechism specifies it separately, and in express terms, by requiring,

III. That we *be in charity with all men*. For we can have no share in the love of our Creator, our Redeemer, and Sanctifier, unless, in imitation of it, we love one another; and as the goodness of God is universal, ours must be so: Receiving the holy communion was indeed intended to increase the degree of it; but we must have the reality, before we are worthy to receive; and we must show it is real, by *forgiving them who trespass against us*; by assisting, as far as can be reasonably expected, those who need assistance in any kind, by our

heartly prayers for those whom we can help no other way ; by faithfully performing the duties of our several stations and relations in life ; and by condescension, mildness, and humanity towards every person, as occasion offers : all which duties, and particularly that of forgiveness, have been explained to you in their proper places.

These then being the dispositions requisite for receiving the holy sacrament, as indeed they are for obtaining eternal happiness ; we are all greatly concerned to examine ourselves, whether we have them or not ; and should have been concerned to do it, though this ordinance had never been appointed ; but we are now more especially bound to it with a view to this ordinance, both from the nature of it, and from St. *Paul's* positive injunction : *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* (1 *Cor.* xi. 28.)

The principal subjects of our examination are comprehended under the three heads just now mentioned : but as to any particular method to be taken, or time to be spent in it, or in any other further preparation subsequent to it, we have no command, it is left to every one's prudence and voluntary piety : They who live in a constant practice of religion and virtue, are always fit for the sacrament ; and may, if the call be sudden, by reflecting for a few moments sufficiently know that they are fit : Persons who live in any sin, may as easily and quickly know that they are not, and it is only in doubtful cases, that any length of consideration is necessary to satisfy us about this matter. But it must be extremely useful for all persons, not only to be attentive to their ways constantly, but to look back upon them frequently ; much more frequently than almost any one receives the sacrament, and as things which have no certain season fixed for them, are very apt to be neglected ;

we should fix upon this as one certain season, for as particular an inspection into the state of our hearts and lives, as we can well make and can hope to be the better for; joining with it suitable meditations, resolutions, and devotions. But then in the whole of this work we must be careful, neither to hurry over any part thoughtlessly, nor lengthen it wearisomely; and in our examination we must be especially careful, neither to flatter nor yet to affright ourselves; but observe impartially what is right in us, thank God and take the comfort of it; acknowledge what is wrong, beg pardon and amend it: For without amendment, being ever so sorry will avail nothing.

The last thing to be mentioned in relation to this holy sacrament, is our behaviour at it, which ought to be very serious and reverent; such as may show in the most proper manner, that, to use the apostle's words, we *discern* or distinguish *the Lord's body*; look on the action of receiving it, as one of no common nature, but as the religious memorial of our blessed Saviour's dying for us, and by his death establishing with us a covenant of pardon, grace, and everlasting felicity on God's part, and of faith and holiness on ours. With this important consideration, we should endeavour to affect our hearts deeply and tenderly; yet neither to force our minds into immoderate transports, by which we shall only bewilder and lose instead of benefiting ourselves, nor express even what we ought to feel, by any improper singularities of gesture; nor yet be dejected, if we have less feeling, and even less attention to the service, than we have reason to wish. For such things may be, in a great measure at least, natural and unavoidable: or, supposing them faults, they may be and often are, the faults of such persons as notwithstanding are, on the whole, very worthy communicants: They may be for a time, useful means of

keeping us humble and watchful; after that, God may deliver us from them: and should we continue all our lives afflicted with them, it would never hinder our receiving all the necessary benefits of this ordinance.

God grant, that both it and all His other gracious institutions, may contribute effectually to *build us up in our most holy faith* in a suitable practice, that so we may ever *keep ourselves in the love of God*, and on good grounds *look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

## OF MAN'S INABILITY, GOD'S GRACE, AND PRAYER TO HIM FOR IT.

I have now proceeded, in the course of these lectures, to the end of the Commandments; and explained the nature of that repentance, faith and obedience, which were promised for us in our baptism, and which we are bound to exercise, in proportion as we come to understand the obligations incumbent on us. You cannot but see by this time, that the duties which God enjoins us, are not only very important but very extensive; and therefore a consideration will almost unavoidably present itself to your minds in the next place, what abilities we have to perform them. Now this question our Catechism decides without asking it, by a declaration extremely discouraging in appearance; that *we are not able of ourselves, to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him.*

Indeed, had we ever so great abilities, we must have them not of ourselves, but of our maker, from whom all the powers of all creatures are derived. But something further than this is plainly meant here: that there are no powers belonging to human nature in its present state, sufficient for so great a purpose. *The law of God is spiritual; but we are carnal sold under sin.* (Rom vii. 14.) and that such is our condition, will appear by reflecting, first, what it was at our birth; secondly, what we have made it since.

1. As to the first, we all give proofs, greater or less, of an inbred disorder and wrongness in our understandings, will and affections: possibly one proof that some may give of it, may be a backwardness to own it; but

they little consider how severe a sentence they would pass, by denying it on themselves and all mankind: even with our natural bad inclinations for some excuse, we are blameable enough for the ill things that we do; but how much more should we be so, if we did them all without the solicitation of any inward depravity, to plead afterwards in our favour? in point of interest therefore as well as truth, we are concerned to admit an original proneness to evil in our frame, while yet reason plainly teaches at the same time, that whatever God created was originally, in its kind, perfect and good.

To reconcile these two things would have been a great difficulty, had not revelation pointed out the way, by informing us, that *man* was indeed *made upright*, but that the very first of the human race lost their innocence and their happiness together; and tainting by wilful transgression their own nature, tainted by consequence that of their whole posterity. Thus *by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* We find in fact, however difficult it may be to account for it in speculation, that the dispositions of parents both in body and mind, very commonly descend, in some degree, to their children; and therefore it is entirely credible, that so great a change in the minds of our first parents from absolute rectitude of temper to presumptuous wickedness; accompanied with an equal change of body, from an immortal condition to a mortal one, produced perhaps in part, by the physical effects of the forbidden fruit; that these things, I say, should derive their fatal influences to every succeeding generation. For though God will never impute any thing to us, as our personal fault, which is not our doing, yet he may very justly withhold from us those privileges, which he granted to our first parents only on condition of their faultless

obedience, and leave us subject to those inconveniences, which followed of course from their disobedience: as, in multitudes of other cases, we see children in far worse circumstances by the faults of their distant forefathers, than they otherwise would have been; and most evidently it is no more a hardship upon us, to become such as we are by means of *Adam's* transgression, than to suffer what we often do for the transgressions of our other ancestors; or to have been created such as we are, without any one's transgression: which last, all who disbelieve original sin, must affirm to be our case.

But unhappy for us as the failure of the first man was, we should be happy in comparison, if this were all that we had to lament. Great as the native disorder of our frame is, yet either the fall of *Adam* left in it or God restored to it, some degree of disposition to obedience, and of strength against sin: so that though *in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing*, yet *after the inward man, (the mind) we delight in the law of God; (Rom. 22, 23.)* and there are occasions, on which even *the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, (Rom. ii. 14.)* though neither all, nor any, are without fault; and on us Christians, our heavenly Father confers in our baptism the assurance, of much greater strength to obey his commands, than they have. But then, if we consider

2. What we have made our condition since, we shall find, that instead of using well the abilities which we had, and taking the methods which our maker hath appointed for the increase of them, we have often carelessly, and too often wilfully, misemployed the former, and neglected the latter. Now by every instance of such behaviour, we displease God, weaken our right affections, and add new strength to wrong passions: and by habits of such behaviour, corrupting our hearts and

blinding our understandings, we bring ourselves into a much worse condition than that in which we were born, and thus become doubly incapable of doing our duty; this, experience proves but too plainly, though Scripture did not teach as it doth, that *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; that we were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us: that the carnal mind is enmity against God: that without Christ we can do nothing; and that we are not sufficient to think any thing, as of ourselves.*

Yet, notwithstanding this, we feel within us an obligation of conscience to do every thing that is right and good: for that obligation is in its nature unchangeable, and we cannot be made happy otherwise, than by endeavouring to fulfil it; though God, for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, will make fit allowances for our coming short of it. But then we must not hope for such allowances as would really be unfit: our original weakness indeed is not our fault, but our neglect of being relieved from it, and the additions that we have made to it, are: and whatever we might have had the power of doing, if we would, it is no injustice to punish us for not doing, especially when the means of enabling ourselves continue to be offered to us through our lives. Now, in fact, the whole race of mankind I charitably hope and believe, have, by the general grace or favour of God, the means of doing so much at least, as may exempt them from future sufferings: but Christians, by the *special grace* mentioned in this part of the catechism, are qualified to do so much more, as will entitle them, not for their own worthiness, but that of the holy Jesus, to a distinguishing share of future reward.

Now the special grace of the Gospel consists, partly in the outward revelation which it makes to us of divine truths; partly in the inward assistance which it bestows

on us for obeying the divine will. The latter is the point here to be considered.

That God is able, by secret influences on our minds, to dispose us powerfully in favour of what is right, there can be no doubt; for we are able in some degree, to influence one another thus:—that there is need of his doing it, we all have but too much experience; and that therefore we may reasonably hope for it, evidently follows. He interposes continually by His providence, to carry on the course of nature in the material world; is it not then very likely that He should interpose in a case, which, as far as we can judge, is yet more worthy of His interposition; and incline and strengthen His poor creatures to become good and happy, by gracious impressions on their souls, as occasions require? but still, hope and likelihood are not certainty: and God, *whose ways are past finding out*, might have left all men to their own strength, or rather indeed their own weakness. But whatever he doth in relation to others, which is not our concern, he hath clearly promised to us Christians, that *his grace shall be sufficient for us*: His holy Spirit shall enable us effectually to do, every thing which His word requires.

We may *resist* His motions: or we may receive them into our souls, and act in consequence of them. Every one hath power enough to do right; Scripture, as well as reason, shows it: only we have it not resident in us by nature, but bestowed on us continually by our Maker, as we want it. In all good actions that we perform, *the preparation of the heart is from the Lord*; (*Prov. xvi. 1.*) and that *faith*, which is the fountain of all actions truly good, *is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.* (*Eph. ii. 8.*) But *he giveth liberally to all* (*James i. 5.*) who ask him, and therefore no one hath cause of complaint.

It is true, we are seldom able to distinguish this hea-

venly influence from the natural workings of our own minds, as indeed we are often influenced one by another without perceiving it : but the assurance given in Scripture of its being vouchsafed to us, is abundantly sufficient ; to which experience also would add strong confirmation, did we but attend with due seriousness to what passes within our breasts.

Our natural freedom of will is no more impaired by these secret admonitions of our Maker, than by the open persuasions of our fellow creatures : and the advantage of having God's help, far from making it unnecessary to help ourselves, obliges us to it peculiarly : we are therefore to *work out our own salvation*, because *He worketh in us both to will and to do.* (*Phil. ii. 12, 13.*) For it is a great aggravation of every sin, that, in committing it, we *quench* the pious motions excited by *the spirit* (*1 Thes. v. 19.*) of God in our hearts ; and a great incitement to our endeavours of performing every duty, that with such aid we may be sure of success : our own natural strength cannot increase, as temptations and difficulties do, but that which we receive from heaven, can ; and thus it is, that we learn courage and humility at once, by knowing that *we can do all things, but only through Christ which strengtheneth us ;* (*Phil. iv. 13.*) and therefore *not we, but the grace of God, which is with us.* (*1 Cor. xv. 10.*)

This grace therefore being of such importance to us, our catechism, with great reason, directs us *at all times to call for it by diligent prayer* : for our heavenly Father hath not promised, nor can we hope that *He will give the Holy Spirit to them who proudly disdain or negligently omit to ask Him.* (*Luke xi. 13.*) And hence it becomes peculiarly necessary, that we should understand how to pray to Him : a duty mentioned in the former

part of the catechism, but reserved to be explained more fully in this.

God having bestowed on us the knowledge in some measure, of what He is in Himself, and more especially of what he is to us; we are doubtless bound to be suitably affected by it; and to keep alive in our minds with the utmost care, due sentiments of our continual dependence on Him, of reverence and submission to His will, of love and gratitude for His goodness, of humility and sorrow for all our sins against Him, and earnest desire that his mercy and favour may be shown in such manner as He shall think fit, to us and to all our fellow-creatures.

Now, if these sentiments ought to be felt, they ought also to be some way expressed: not only that others may see we have them and be excited to them by our example; but that we ourselves may receive both the comfort and the improvement which must naturally flow, from exercising such valuable affections. And unquestionably the most lively and most respectful manner of exercising them is, that we direct them to Him who is the object of them, and pour out our hearts before Him in suitable acts of homage, thanksgiving, and confession; in humble petitions for ourselves, and intercessions for all mankind: not that God is ignorant, till we inform Him, either of our outward circumstances or the inward temper of our hearts; if He were, our prayers would give Him but very imperfect knowledge of either, for we are ourselves greatly ignorant of both: But the design of prayer is, to bring our own minds into a right frame; and so make ourselves fit for those blessings, for which we are very unfit, while we are too vain or too careless to ask them of God.

The very act of prayer therefore, will do us good if we pray with attention, else it is nothing; and with sincerity

ty, else it is worse than nothing; and the consequences of praying, God hath promised, shall be further good: *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* (Matt. xxi. 22.) Not absolutely *all things whatsoever* we desire; for some of our desires may be on several accounts unfit and some would prove extremely hurtful to us: therefore we ought to consider well what we pray for, and especially in all temporal matters refer ourselves wholly to God's good pleasure. Nor doth He always grant immediately what He designs to grant, and hath given us the fullest right to ask: but delays it perhaps a while to exercise our patience and trust in Him: for which reason our Saviour directs us *always to pray and not to faint.* But whatever is really good, He will undoubtedly, as soon as it is really necessary, give us upon our request; provided further, that with our earnest petitions we join our honest endeavours, for prayer was never designed to serve instead of diligence, but to assist it: and therefore, if in our temporal affairs we are idle or inconsiderate, we must not expect that our prayers will bring us good success; and if, in our spiritual ones, we wilfully or thoughtlessly neglect ourselves; we must not imagine that God will amend us against our wills, or whilst we continue supinely indifferent. But let us do our duty to the best of our power, at the same time that we pray for his blessing; and we may be assured that nothing but an injurious disbelief can prevent our obtaining it, on which account St. James requires, that we *ask in faith, nothing wavering.*

Indeed, without the encouragement given us in scripture, it might well be with some diffidence, and it should still be with the utmost reverence, that *we take upon us to speak unto the Lord, who are but dust and ashes.* (Gen. xviii. 27.) The heathens therefore addressed their prayers to imaginary deities of an inferior rank, as judg-

ing themselves unworthy to approach the supreme One: but our rule is, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.* (*Matt. iv. 10.*) The affected *humility of worshipping even angels*, and therefore much more saints, (who, if really such, are yet *lower than angels* (*Psal. viii 5.*) may, as we are taught, *beguile us of our reward:* (*Col. ii. 11.*) whereas we may come *boldly to the throne of our Maker's grace,* (*Heb. iv. 16.*) though not in our own right, yet through the Mediator whom he hath appointed; and who hath both procured us the privilege and instructed us how to use it, by delivering to us a prayer of his own composition, which might be at once a form for us frequently to repeat, and a pattern for us always to imitate.

That the Lord's prayer was designed as a form, appears from his own words: *After this manner pray ye:* or, translating more literally, *Thus pray ye;* (*Matt. vi. 9.*) and which is yet more expressive, *When ye pray, say our Father,* (*Luke xi. 2.*) &c. Besides, it was given by Him to his disciples on their request, that He would *teach them to pray, as John also taught his disciples,* (*Luke xi. 1.*) which undoubtedly was, as the great Rabbis among the *Jews* commonly taught theirs, by a form. And accordingly this prayer has been considered and used as such, from the earliest ages of christianity down to the present.

Yet our Saviour's design was not, that this should be the only prayer of christians; as appears both from the precepts and the practice of the apostles, as well as from the nature and reason of the thing; but when it is not used as a form, it is however of unspeakable advantage as a model. He proposes it indeed more particularly as an example of shortness; not that we are never to make longer prayers, for He Himself *continued all night in prayer to God;* and we have a much longer, made

by the apostles, in the fourth chapter of the Acts: but his intention was, to teach by this instance, that we are not to affect unmeaning repetitions, or any needless multiplicity of words, as if we *thought that we should be heard for our much speaking*. And not only in this respect, but every other, is our Lord's prayer an admirable institution and direction for praying aright; as will abundantly appear, when the several parts of it come to be distinctly explained. But though such explanation will show both the purport and the excellency of it more fully, yet they are to every eye visible in the main, without any explanation at all; and therefore let us conclude at present with devoutly offering it up to God.

*Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

A SERMON  
ON  
CONFIRMATION.

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ACTS viii. 17.

*Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

THE history to which these words belong, is this: *Philip* the deacon, ordained at the same time with *St. Stephen*, had converted and baptized the people of *Samaritania*; which the apostles at *Jerusalem* hearing, sent down to them *Peter* and *John*, two of their own body, who, by prayer accompanied with imposition of hands, obtained for them a greater degree than they had yet received, of the sacred influences of the *Divine Spirit*: which undoubtedly was done on their signifying, in some manner so as to be understood, their adherence to the engagement into which they had entered at their baptism.

From this and the like instances of the practice of the apostles, is derived, what bishops, their successors, though every way beyond comparison inferior to them, have practised ever since, and which we now call confirmation. Preaching was common to all ranks of ministers; baptizing was performed usually by the lower rank; but, perhaps to maintain a due subordination, it was reserved to the highest, by prayer and laying on

of hands, to communicate further measures of the Holy Ghost. It was indeed peculiar to the apostles, that on their intercession his extraordinary and miraculous gifts were bestowed, which continued in the church no longer than they were needed; nor can we suppose that all were partakers of them, but unquestionably, by their petitions they procured for every sincere convert, a much more valuable, though less remarkable blessing of universal and perpetual necessity, his ordinary and saving graces.

For these therefore, after their example, trusting that God will have regard, not to our unworthiness, but to the purposes of mercy which He hath appointed us to serve, we intercede now, when persons take upon themselves the vow of their baptism. For this good end being now come amongst you, though I doubt not but your ministers have given you proper instructions on the occasion, yet I am desirous of adding somewhat further, which may not only more fully acquaint those who are especially concerned, with the nature of what they are about to do; but remind you all of the obligations which christianity lays upon you: and I cannot perform it better, than by explaining to you the office of confirmation, to which you may turn in your prayer-books, where it stands immediately after the catechism.

There you will see in the first place, a preface directed to be read, in which notice is given, that *for the more edifying of such as receive confirmation*, it shall be administered to none but those *who can answer to the questions of the catechism* preceeding: that so children may come to years of some discretion, and learn what the promise made for them in baptism was, before they are called upon to ratify and confirm it before the church with their own consent, and to engage that they will evermore observe it.

Prayers may be offered up for infants with very good effect: promises may be made in their name by such as are authorised to act for them: especially when the things promised are for their interest, and will be their duty; which is the case of those in baptism. But no persons ought to make promises for themselves, till they reasonably well understand the nature of them, and are capable of forming serious purposes. Therefore, in the present case, being able to say the words of the catechism is by no means enough, without a competent general knowledge of their meaning, and intention of behaving as it requires them; which doubtless they are supposed to have at the same time; and if they have not, making a profession of it is declaring with their mouths, what they feel not in their hearts at the instant, and will much less reflect upon afterwards: it is hoping to please God by the empty outward performance of a religious rite, from which, if they had been withheld till they were duly qualified, their souls might have been affected, and their conduct influenced by it as long as they lived.

Therefore I hope and beg, that neither ministers nor Parents will be too eager for bringing children very early to confirmation; but first teach them carefully, to know their duty sufficiently, and resolve upon the practice of it heartily; then introduce them to this ordinance, which they shall not fail to have opportunities of attending in their neighbourhood from time to time, so long as God continues my life and strength.

But as there are some too young for confirmation, some also may be thought too old, especially if they have received the holy Sacrament without it: now there are not indeed all the same reasons for the confirmation of such, as of others: nor hath the church I believe, determined any thing about their case, as it might be

thought unlikely to happen : but still, since it doth happen too frequently, that persons were not able, or have neglected to apply for this purpose, so whenever they apply, as by doing it they express a desire to *fulfil all righteousness*, (*Matt. iii. 15.*) and may certainly receive benefit, both from the profession and the prayers appointed in the office ; my judgment is, that they should not be rejected, but encouraged.

Only I must entreat you to observe, that when you take thus on yourselves the engagement of leading a Christian life, you are to take it once for all ; and no more to think of ever being confirmed a second time, than of being baptized a second time.

After directing who are to be confirmed, the office goes on to direct how they are to be confirmed : and here, the bishop is to begin with asking every one of those who offer themselves, whether they *do, in the presence of God and of the congregation, renew in their own persons the solemn vow of their baptism ; acknowledging themselves bound to believe and to perform all those things, which their god-fathers and god-mothers then undertook for them.* On which, they are each of them to answer with an audible voice, *I do.*

Now the things promised in our name, were to renounce whatever God hath forbidden, to believe what He hath taught, and to practise what he hath commanded. Nobody can promise for infants absolutely, that they shall do these things ; but only, that they shall be instructed and admonished to do them ; and, it is hoped not in vain : this instruction and admonition, parents are obliged by nature to give ; and if they do it effectually, god-fathers and god-mothers have no further concern than to be heartily glad of it : but if the former fail, the latter must supply the failure, as far as they have opportunity of doing it with any reason-

able prospect of success; for they were intended, not to release the parents from the care of their children, which nothing can; but for a double security in a case of such importance.

If nothing at all had been promised in our names, we had still been bound, as soon as we were capable of it, to believe in God and obey Him; but we are more early and more firmly bound, as not only this hath been promised for us, but care hath been taken to make us sensible of our obligation to perform it: which obligation therefore, persons are called upon, in the question under consideration, to ratify and confirm: and great cause have they to answer, that they do; for doing it is a duty, on which their eternal felicity peculiarly depends, as a little attention to what I am about to say will clearly show you.

Our first parents, even while they were innocent, had no title to happiness or to existance, but from God's notification of his good pleasure; which being conditional, when they fell they lost it, and derived to us a corrupt and mortal nature, entitled to nothing; as both the diseases and the poverty of ancestors often descend to their distant posterity. This bad condition we fail not, from our first use of reason, to make worse in a greater or less degree, by actual transgressions: and so personally deserve the displeasure, instead of favour, of Him who made us; yet we may hope, that, as He is good, He will on our repentance forgive us: but then, as He is also just and wise and the ruler of the world, we could never know with certainty of ourselves, what his justice and wisdom and the honour of his government, might require of Him with respect to sinners: whether He would pardon greater offences at all; and whether He would reward those, whom He might be pleased not to punish: but most happily, the revelation

of his holy word hath cleared up all these doubts of unassisted reason, and offered to the worst of sinners, on the condition of faith in Christ, added to repentance and productive of good works, (for all which He is ready to enable us) a covenant of pardon for sins past, assistance against sin for the future, and eternal life in return for a sincere, though imperfect, and totally undeserving obedience.

The method of entering into this covenant is, being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that is, into the acknowledgment of the mysterious union and joint authority of these three, and of the distinct offices which they have undertaken for our salvation, together with a faithful engagement of paying suitable regard to each of them. In this appointment of baptism, the washing with water aptly signifies, both our promise to preserve ourselves, with the best care we can, pure from the defilement of sin, and God's promise to consider us as free from the guilt of it: baptism then, through his mercy, secures infants from the bad consequences of *Adam's* transgression, giving them a new title to the immortality which he lost; it also secures to persons grown up, the entire forgiveness of their own transgressions, on the terms just mentioned: but then, in order to receive these benefits, we must lay our claim to the covenant which conveys them; we must ratify as soon as we are able, what was promised in our name by others before we were able; and done for us then only on presumption, that we should make it our own deed afterwards: For if we neglect, and appear to renounce our part of the covenant, we have plainly not the least right to God's performing His, but we remain in our sins, and *Christ shall profit us nothing.* (*Gal. v. 2.*)

You see then of what unspeakable importance it is

that we take on ourselves the vow of our baptism, and it is very fit and useful, that we should take it in such form and manner as the office prescribes : It is fit, that when persons have been properly instructed by the care of their parents, friends, and ministers, they should with joyful gratitude acknowledge them to have faithfully performed that kindest duty : It is fit, that before they are admitted by the church of Christ to the holy communion, they should give public assurance to the church of their christian belief and christian purposes. This may also be extremely useful to themselves ; For consider, young persons are just entering into a world of temptations, with no experience, and little knowledge to guard them, and much youthful rashness to expose them : The authority of others over them is beginning to lessen, their own passions to increase, *evil communication* to have great opportunities of *corrupting good manners*, and strong impressions, of one kind or another, will be made on them very soon. What can then be more necessary, or more likely to preserve their innocence, than to form the most deliberate resolutions of acting right, and to declare them in a manner, thus adapted to move them at the time, and be remembered by them afterwards, in the presence of God, of a number of his ministers, and of a large congregation of his people, assembled with more than ordinary solemnity for that very purpose ?

But then, you that are to be confirmed, must either do your own part, or the whole of this preparation will be utterly thrown away upon you : If you make the answer which is directed without sincerity, it is lying to God : if you make it without attention, it is trifling with him. Watch over your hearts therefore, and let them go along with your lips. The two short words, *I do*, are soon said, but they comprehend much in them ; Whoever uses them on this occasion, saith in effect as follows : “ *I do*

“heartily renounce all the temptations of the devil ; all  
“the unlawful pleasures, profits, and honours of the  
“world ; all the immoral gratifications of the flesh. *I do*  
“sincerely believe, and will constantly profess, all the  
“articles of the christian faith. *I do* firmly resolve to  
“keep all God’s commandments all the days of my life ;  
“to love and honour Him ; to pray to Him and praise  
“Him daily in private ; to attend conscientiously on the  
“public worship and instruction which He hath appoint-  
“ed ; to approach his holy table, as soon as I can qualify  
“myself for doing it worthily ; to submit to his blessed  
“will meekly and patiently in all things ; to set Him  
“ever before my eyes, and acknowledge Him in all my  
“ways. *I do* further resolve in the whole course of my  
“behaviour amongst my fellow creatures, to *do justly*,  
“*love mercy*, speak truth, be diligent and useful in my  
“station, dutiful to my superiors, condescending to those  
“beneath me, friendly to my equals ; careful, through  
“all the relations of life, to act as the nature of them re-  
“quires, and conduct myself so to all men, as I should  
“think it reasonable that they should do to me in the  
“like case. Further yet, *I do* resolve, in the govern-  
“ment of myself, to be modest, sober, temperate, mild,  
“humble, contented ; to restrain every passion and ap-  
“petite within due bounds ; and to set my heart chiefly,  
“not on the sensual enjoyments of this transitory world,  
“but the spiritual happiness of the future endless one.  
“Lastly, *I do* resolve, whenever I fail in any of these  
“duties, as I am sensible I have, and must fear I shall,  
“to confess it before God with unfeigned concern, to ap-  
“ply for his promised pardon in the name of His bless-  
“ed Son, to beg the promised assistance of His holy  
“Spirit ; and in that strength, not my own, to strive  
“against my faults, and watch over my steps with re-  
“doubled care.”

Observe then : it is not gloominess and melancholy that religion calls you to ; it is not useless austerity, and abstinence from things lawful and safe ; it is not extravagant flights and raptures ; it is not unmeaning or unedifying forms and ceremonies ; much less is it bitterness against those who differ from you. But the fore-mentioned unquestionable substantial duties, are the things to which you bind yourselves, when you pronounce the awful words, *I do*. Utter them then with the truest seriousness ; and say to yourselves, each of you afterwards, as *Moses* did to the *Jews*, *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, to walk in His ways and keep His statutes, and to hearken to His voice : and the Lord has avouched thee this day to be His ; that thou shouldst keep all His commandments, and be holy unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken.* (*Deut. xxvi. 17, 18, 19.*) It is a certain truth, call it therefore often to mind ; and fix it in your souls, that if breaking a solemn promise to men be a sin ; breaking that, which you make thus deliberately to God, would be unspeakably a greater sin.

But let us now proceed to the next part of the office ; in which, after persons have confirmed and ratified the vow of their baptism, prayers are offered up, that God would confirm and strengthen them in their good purpose ; on both which accounts this appointment is called confirmation.

Scripture teaches, and sad experience proves, that of *ourselves we can do nothing : are not sufficient* for the discharge of our duty, without God's continual aid ; by which He can certainly influence our minds, without hurting our natural freedom of will, and even without our perceiving it ; for we can influence our fellow-creatures so. Nor is it any injustice in Him to require of us what exceeds our ability, since He is ready to supply

the want of it: Indeed, on the contrary, as this method of treating us is excellently fitted both to keep us humble and yet to give us courage, using it is evidently worthy of God; but then, as none can have reason to expect his help but those who earnestly desire it, so he hath promised to *give the holy spirit, only to them that ask Him.* (Luke xi. 13.) And to unite christians more in love to each other, and incline them more to assemble for public worship, our blessed Redeemer hath especially promised, that *where two or three of them are gathered together in His name, He will be in the midst of them.* And further still, to promote a due regard in his people to their teachers and rulers, the sacred writings ascribe a peculiar efficacy to their praying over those who are committed to their charge. Even under the Jewish dispensation, the family of *Aaron* were told, that *them the Lord had separated to minister unto Him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and they shall put my name, saith God, upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.* No wonder then, if under the christian dispensation we read, but just before the text, that the apostles, *when they were come down to Samaria, prayed for the new-baptized converts that they might receive the Holy Ghost; and in the text, that they did receive it accordingly.*

Therefore, pursuant to these great authorities, here is on the present occasion, a number of young disciples, about to run the same common race, met together to pray for themselves and one another; here is a number of elder christians who have experienced the dangers of life, met to pray for those who are just entering into them; here are also God's ministers, purposely come to intercede with Him in their behalf; and surely we may hope, their joint and fervent petitions will avail and be effectual.

They begin as they ought, with acknowledging, and in Scripture words, that *our help is in the name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth: it is not in man to direct his own steps*; but his Creator only can preserve him. Then we go on to pronounce *the name of the Lord blessed henceforth world without end*, for His readiness to bestow on us the grace which we want. And lastly, in confidence of his goodness, we intreat Him to *hear our prayers, and let our cry come unto him*.

After these preparatory ejaculations, and the usual admonition to be attentive, *Let us pray*; comes a longer act of devotion, which first commemorates God's mercy already bestowed, then petitions for an increase of it. The commemoration sets forth, that *He hath regenerated these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost*, that is, entitled them by baptism to the enlivening influences of the spirit, and so, as it were, begotten them again into a state inexpressibly happier than their natural one; a covenant-state, in which God will consider them, whilst they keep their engagements, with peculiar love, as his dear children. It follows, that *He hath given unto them forgiveness of all their sins*; meaning, that He hath given them assurance of it, on the gracious terms of the gospel: But that every one of them hath actually received it, by complying with those terms since he sinned last, though we may charitably hope, we cannot presume to affirm; nor were these words intended to affirm it; as the known doctrine of the church of *England* fully proves. And therefore let no one misunderstand this expression in the office, which hath parallel ones in the new testament. (*Eph. i. 7.—Col. i. 14.*) so as either to censure it, or delude himself with a fatal imagination, that any thing said over him can possibly convey to him a pardon of sins for which he is not truly penitent; we only ac-

knowledge, with due thankfulness, that God hath done his part, but which of the congregation have done theirs their own consciences must tell them.

After this commemoration, we go on to request for the persons before us, that God would *strengthen them* against all temptation, and support them under all affliction by *the Holy Ghost the Comforter*; and *daily increase in them his manifold gifts of grace*; which gifts we proceed to enumerate in seven particulars, taken from the prophet *Isaiah*, (xi. 2.) by whom they are ascribed to our blessed Redeemer: but as *the same mind* ought to be in us as it was in *Christ Jesus*, a petition for them was used in the office of confirmation 1400 years ago if not sooner. The separate meaning of each of the seven, it is neither easy nor needful to determine with certainty; for indeed, if no more was designed than to express very fully and strongly, by various words of nearly the same import, a pious and moral temper of mind, this is a manner of speaking both common and emphatical; but each of them may be taken in a distinct sense of its own: and thus we may beg for these our fellow Christians, *a spirit of wisdom* to aim at the right end, the salvation of their souls; and *of understanding*, to pursue it by right means; *of counsel*, to form good purposes, and of *ghostly* or *spiritual strength*, to execute them; *of useful knowledge* in the doctrines of religion; and *true godliness*, disposing them to a proper use of it; but chiefly, though lastly, we pray that they may be *filled with the spirit of God's holy fear*; with that reverence of Him, as the greatest and purest and best of beings, the rightful proprietor and just Judge of all, which will effectually excite them to whatever they are concerned to believe or do. For the *fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

Having concluded this prayer for them all in general,

the bishop implores the divine protection and grace for each one, or each pair of them, in particular: that as he is already God's professed *child* and *servant*, by the recognition which he hath just made of his baptismal covenant, so *he may continue his forever*, by faithfully keeping it; and far from decaying, *daily increase in His holy spirit*, that is, in the fruits of the spirit, piety and virtue, *more and more*; making greater and quicker advances in them as life goes on, *until he comes to that decisive hour*, when his portion shall be unchangeable in *God's everlasting kingdom*.

And, along with the utterance of these solemn words, he lays his hand on each of their heads, a ceremony used from the earliest ages by religious persons, when they prayed for God's blessing on any one; used by our Saviour, who, when *children were brought to him, that he should put his hands on them, and pray, and bless them, was much displeas'd with those who forbade it*; (*Matt. xix 13. 15.—Mark x. 13. 16.*) used by the apostles, after converts were baptized, as the text plainly shows; reckoned in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, among the *foundations* of the Christian profession; (*Heb. vi. 1, 2.*) constantly practised, and highly esteemed in the church from that time to this; and so far from being a Popish ceremony, that the Papists administer confirmation by other ceremonies of their own devising, and have laid aside this primitive one, which therefore our church very prudently restored; and the custom of it is approved as apostolical, both by *Luther* and *Calvin* and several of their followers, though they rashly abolished it, as having been abused, but I am credibly informed, that at *Geneva* it hath lately been restored.

The laying on of the hand naturally expresses good will and good wishes in the person who doth it; and

in the present case is further intended, as you will find in one of the following prayers, to *certify those* to whom it is done, *of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them*; of which goodness they will continually feel the effects, provided, which must always be understood, that they preserve their title to his care by a proper care of themselves. This, it must be owned, is a truth: and we may as innocently signify it by this sign as by any other, or as by any words to the same purpose: further efficacy we do not ascribe to it; nor would have you look on bishops, as having or claiming a power, in any case, to confer blessings arbitrarily on whom they please; but only as petitioning God for that blessing from above which He alone can give; yet, we justly hope, will give the rather for the prayers of those whom He hath placed over his people, unless your own unworthiness prove an impediment: not that you are to expect, on the performance of this good office, any sudden and sensible change in your hearts, giving you, all at once, a remarkable strength or comfort in piety which you never felt before; but you may reasonably promise yourselves, from going through it with a proper disposition, greater measures, when real occasion requires them, of such divine assistance as will be needful for your support and orderly growth, in every virtue of a Christian life.

And now, the imposition of hands being finished, the bishop and congregation mutually recommend each other to God, and return to such joint and publick devotions as are suitable to the solemnity. The first of these is the Lord's prayer; a form seasonable always, but peculiarly now, as every petition in it will show to every one who considers it. In the next place, more especial supplications are poured forth for the persons particularly concerned, to Him who alone can enable them *both*

*to will and to do what is good ; that, as the hand of his minister hath been laid upon them, so His fatherly hand may ever be over them, and lead them in the only way, the knowledge and obedience of his word, to everlasting life.* After this, a more general prayer is offered up for them and the rest of the congregation together, that God would *vouchsafe*, unworthy as we all are, so *to direct and govern both our hearts and bodies*, our inclinations and actions, (for neither will suffice without the other,) *in the ways of His laws and in the works of His commandments*, that *through his most mighty protection both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul ;* having the former, in his good time, raised up from the dead, and the latter made happy in conjunction with it, to all eternity.

These requests being thus made, it only remains that all be dismissed with a solemn blessing ; which will certainly abide with you, unless by wilful sin or gross negligence you drive it away ; and in that case, you must not hope that your baptism or your confirmation, or the prayers of the bishop or the church or the whole world, will do you any service ; on the contrary, every thing which you might have been the better for, if you had made a good use of it, you will be the worse for if you make a bad one. You do well to renew the covenant of your baptism in confirmation ; but if you break it, you forfeit the benefit of it. You do well to repeat your vows in the sacrament of the Lord's supper ; it is what all Christians are commanded by their dying Saviour, *for the strengthening and refreshing of their souls* : it is what I beg all who are confirmed will remember, and their friends and ministers remind them of ; the sooner they are prepared for it the happier ; and by stopping short, the benefit of what preceded will be lost : but if you are admitted to this privilege also and live wickedly, you

do but *eat and drink your own condemnation* : so that all depends on a thoroughly honest care of your hearts and behaviour in all respects.

Not that, with our best care, we can avoid smaller faults ; And if we intreat pardon for them in our daily prayers, and faithfully strive against them, they will not be imputed to us ; but gross and habitual sins we may avoid, through God's help, and if we fall into them, we fall from our title to salvation at the same time : Yet even then our case is not desperate, and let us not make it so, by thinking it is ; for through the grace of the gospel, we may still repent and amend, and then be forgiven. But I beg you to observe, that as continued health is vastly preferable to the happiest recovery from sickness ; so is innocence to the truest repentance : If we suffer ourselves to transgress our duty ; God knows whether we shall have time to repent : He only knows whether we shall have a heart to do it : at best we shall have lost, and more than lost, the whole time that we have been going back ; whereas we have all need to press forwards as fast as we can ; therefore let the innocent of wilful sin preserve that treasure with the greatest circumspection, and the faulty return from their errors without delay : Let the young enter upon the way of righteousness with hearty resolution, and those of riper age persevere in it to the end. In a word, let us all, of every age, seriously consider, and faithfully practise the obligations of religion, for *the vows of God are still upon us*, how long soever it be since they were first made, either by us, or for us : and it is in vain to forget what He will assuredly remember ; or hope to be safe in neglecting what He expects us to do. But let us use proper diligence, and He will infallibly give us proper assistance, and *confirm us all unto the end, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Now unto him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

THE END.

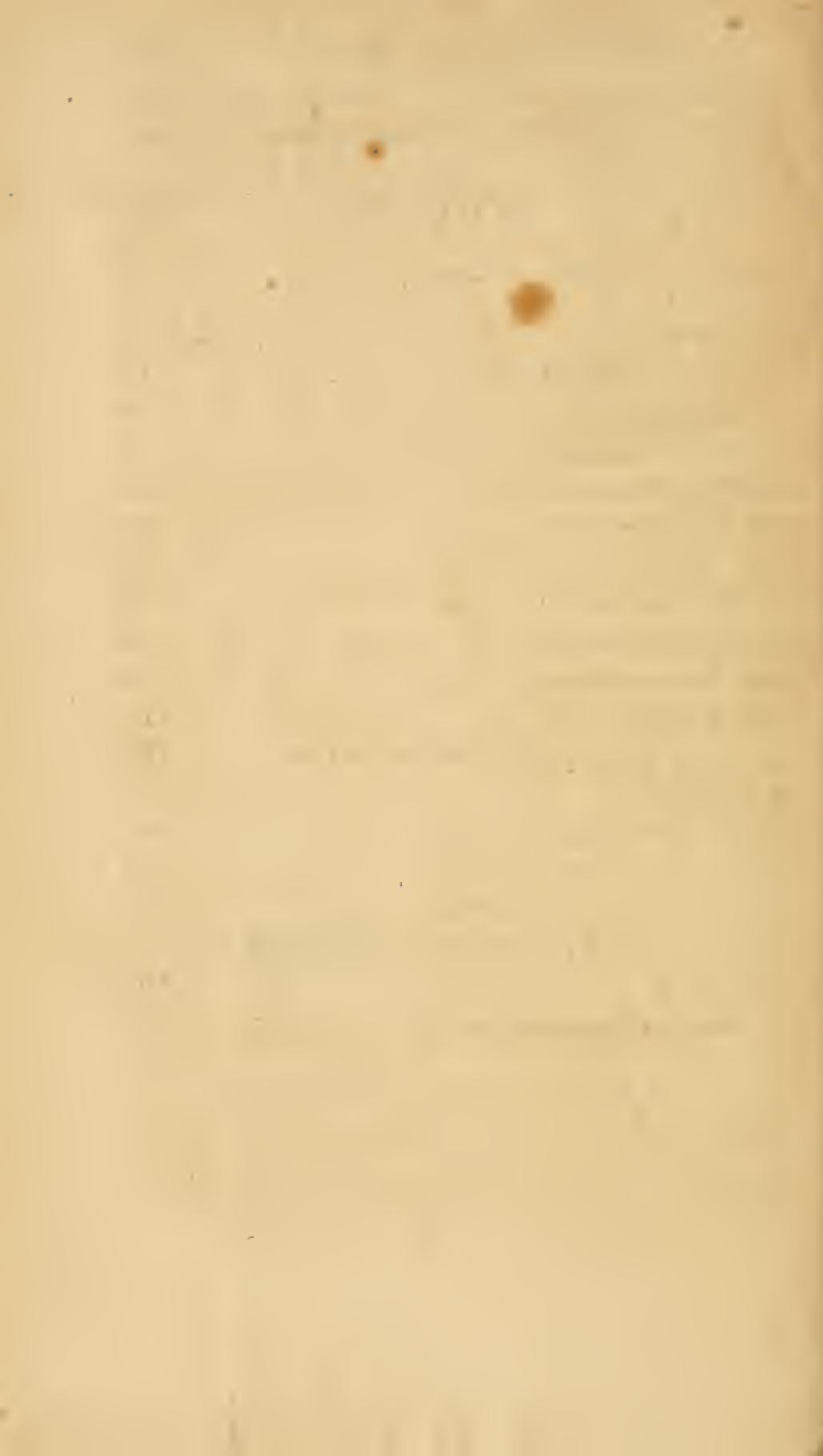
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