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A  
**FAMILY BOOK;**  
CONTAINING  
**DISCOURSES**

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS, BEING  
DOCTRINAL, EVANGELICAL, PRACTICAL,  
AND HISTORICAL:

VIZ.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| I. <i>The Being and Perfections of God.</i>   | VIII. <i>Family Religion and Prayer.</i>   |
| II. <i>The Divine and Mediatorial Character of the Lord Jesus Christ.</i>           | IX. <i>The Religious Education of Children and Servants.</i>   |
| III. <i>The Personality and Operations of the Holy Ghost.</i>                       | X. <i>Filial Piety.</i>  |
| IV. <i>The Variety and efficacious Manner of the Operations of the Holy Spirit.</i> | XI. <i>A Century Discourse, delivered on the 1st of January, 1800; in which are collected some of the more distinguishing Historical Facts, and Providential Events, which took place in each of the last hundred Years.</i> |
| V. <i>The Evidence of the Christian Revelation.</i>                                 |  |
| VI. <i>The Christian Church.</i>  |  |
| VII. <i>The Superexcellency of Religion in general.</i>                             |  |

THE WHOLE CALCULATED TO PROMOTE  
CHRISTIAN PIETY, FAMILY RELIGION, AND  
YOUTHFUL VIRTUE.

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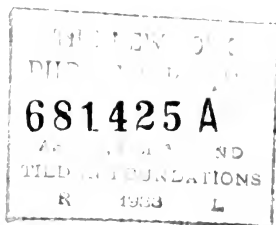
BY ELI FORBES,  
Pastor of the First Church of Christ in Gloucester.

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*THE AUTHOR.*

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# C O N T E N T S.

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## DISCOURSE I.

### On the Being and Perfections of God.

ACTS xvii. 23.—*For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription—To THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.* Page 1.

## DISCOURSE II.

### The Divine, Moral and Mediatorial Character of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxiii. 42.—*What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?* 29.

## DISCOURSE III.

### The Personality and Operations of the HOLY GHOST.

ACTS xix. 2.—*He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? and they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* 67.

## DISCOURSE IV.

### The Variety and efficacious Manner of the Operations of the Holy Spirit.

1 COR. xii. 4, 5, 6.—*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord: and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all.* 96.

## DISCOURSE V.

## The Evidence of the Christian Revelation.

1 THESS. v. 21.—*Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.* 119.

## DISCOURSE VI.

## The Christian Church.

REV. ii. 17.—*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* 161.

## DISCOURSE VII.

## The Superexcellency of Religion in general.

PROV. xii. 26.—*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.* 182.

## DISCOURSE VIII.

## On Family Religion and Prayer.

EPH. vi. 18.—*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* 198.

## DISCOURSE IX.

## The Religious Education of Children and Servants.

EPH. vi. 4.—*And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* 221.

## DISCOURSE X.

## Filial Piety.

COL. iii. 20.—*Children, obey your parents in all things ; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.* 250.

## DISCOURSE XI.

A Century Discourse, delivered on the 1st of January, 1800 ; in which are collected some of the more distinguishing Historical Facts, and Providential events, which took place in each of the last hundred Years.

PSALM lxxvii. 10, 11, 12, 13.—*I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works, of the Lord ; surely I will remember thy works of old. I will meditate also on all thy works, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary : who is so great a God as our God!* 268.



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# Discourse I.

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## On the Being and Perfections of GOD.

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ACTS xvii. 23.

*For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription—To THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*

THE knowledge of the true GOD lies at the foundation of all true religion. Therefore the great Apostle to the gentiles, as he was passing through the city of Athens, (which was the seat of the muses, the centre of the then learned world, and the glory of the Grecian empire) was greatly moved in his spirit, when he saw that, notwithstanding all their boasted knowledge, and refined learning, they were destitute of the first principles of true religion; as the altar which bore that stupid inscription too plainly shewed.

The occasion of this altar being erected, with this inscription, is uncertain. Historians differ in their accounts. Some say it was erected in honour of the true GOD, by the order of Socrates, who had some knowledge of him, and held that his nature was incomprehensible, and his person invisible, and that, therefore, the only inscription proper for this altar was, *To the unknown God; i. e. to the invisible and unsearchable God.* Others say, that the Athenians were so wholly given to idolatry, that they were determin-

ed to have as many altars as there were gods; and, lest there should be some one god of whom they had not heard, nor honoured with an altar, they erected this, and wrote upon it, *To the unknown god*; which would equally serve for any god whom they had not known: so that now they were certain that they had honoured all the gods, known and unknown, with both an altar and sacrifices. Others say, that at a certain time a very destructive pestilence prevailed in the city, and the people with great solemnity built altars, and sacrificed to all the gods they knew, or their ancestors had worshipped, and prayed with great fervency that the plague might be stayed; but to no purpose: and they applied to their wise men and philosophers, to know of them what they should do next, and were directed to build an altar, and dedicate it to a god whom they knew not; for they said that the god who had sent and who continued the pestilence, and who alone could remove it, was surely a god whom they did not know, and whom they had not honoured with an altar and sacrifices; for they had erected altars to all they did know, and sacrificed to them, but the plague was not removed. And it is farther said, that, when they had erected this altar in the main street of the city, and had offered several sheep upon it, that the plague was stayed; and then all the people of Athens were ordered to sacrifice upon this altar; as they concluded that there must be a god of whom they did not know so much as his name, or the particular province over which he presided, who had sent, and now had removed, the pestilence, having accepted their worship and sacrifice: and therefore the only proper inscription for an altar dedicated to an unknown god must be that which was found in Athens—*To the unknown god*.

With this account agree the closing words of our text; for the apostle says, Him whom ye ignorantly worship declare



declare I unto you ; i. e. I take this opportunity to teach you who that God is, who rules in providence, sends and removes the pestilence, whom you ignorantly worship, and to whom you have too superstitiously dedicated this altar. And though I do not imagine that I am at Athens, or that I am addressing heathen idolaters, in enlightened America, yet it is of the greatest importance that we be well established in the fundamentals of our holy religion, especially that the minds of the rising generation should be well informed, and duly impressed with right apprehensions, of the true and living God. I shall in the ensuing discourse endeavour so to inform and impress the mind with a practical sense of the being and perfections of the only living and true God, as may influence to a conduct which shall be well-pleasing to him through Jesus Christ.

In order to which, I shall briefly consider—

I. His distinguishing and incommunicable names.

II. His perfections, both natural and moral.

III. Shew what influence such a serious consideration of his names and perfections should have upon our temper and conduct, as the servants and subjects of the only living and true God.

And while we humbly contemplate this great and blessed Being, may a holy dread fall upon us, and his excellency make us religiously afraid ; being sensible that on so sublime a subject we cannot order our thoughts or expressions aright, by reason of darkness, and are in danger of “darkening counsel by words without knowledge.”

I. The distinguishing and incommunicable names under which the Supreme Being has been pleased to make himself known in the sacred writings, are chiefly these three—GOD, I AM, JEHOVAH.

1. The first, GOD, is used in the plural number, almost throughout the Old Testament, in the original Hebrew. There are a few exceptions, as in Job xii. 4, Psalm xviii. 32. In the first chapter of the Bible his name is, in Hebrew, ELOHIM; and, being plural, we are to understand it as a name which comprehends the Trinity, as we are taught in the New Testament, and expressive of Deity. This name is derived from two words, which signify to *bear witness*, and to *worship*; therefore that he is the object of religious worship, by which we are to bear witness of him, "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of all them who diligently seek him." And with reference to the signification of this name our Saviour repulsed the temptation of Satan, by saying, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." It is also with reference to the signification of this name that magistrates are called gods (*Elohim*) because they who rule well are worthy, and, being representatives of the Supreme Ruler, it is their business and office to conduct the subject, and to bear witness to the truth: so that, whenever we use the word God, we should fix the idea to it of a Divine Being, who is the proper object of religious worship, who testifies to the intelligent world his mind and will, strictly observes their conduct, and impartially determines according to invariable truth; whose perfect knowledge is in the room of ten thousand witnesses, and who has a plurality of persons in one incomprehensible essence.

2. Another incommunicable name, by which GOD has made himself known, is that under which he chose to distinguish and reveal himself to Moses in the burning bush; and that was, I AM THAT I AM. When Moses asked what he should say to the children of Israel, he should tell them that the GOD of their fathers had sent him to them: if they should ask him what was his name, he was answered, out of the burning bush, I AM THAT I AM;

i. e. this is the name of the God of your fathers, who hath sent me unto you: which singular and adorable name signifies, a present, independent, self-sufficient and immutable being.

When GOD had appeared to any of the fathers of Israel in any eminent or extraordinary manner, or on any special occasion, as this was, he usually assumed a name, a name expressive of the design of his appearance; and the name which he had appeared under to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was GOD Almighty; by which he encouraged their faith, and distinguished himself from the impotent idols of the heathen; and therefore Moses thought it probable, that when he should tell the children of Israel that the God of their fathers had appeared unto him, that they would want to know whether he did still appear under that name, as their strong and almighty helper. With this view he humbly inquires of GOD after his distinguishing name, that he might be able to answer the people; and GOD said, I AM THAT I AM: a name that implied all that which was contained in the name under which he had before appeared, and something more; that he was not only the Almighty, but a self-existent, independent, immutable and ever-present God: a name expressive of his nature, and the design of his appearing, and highly proper at this time, when he was about to bring them out of the house of bondage, and from under the hand of tyranny and cruel oppression, "with a high hand, and an out-stretched arm," and by a series of miracles to rescue them from slavery, and to carry them through a barren, howling wilderness, to a land of liberty, peace and plenty, which had for several hundred years been promised to them. And this name is very near in signification to that other adorable name I have to mention in the next place; and that is, JEHOVAH.

3. The venerable name of **JEHOVAH** is the most expressive of the being and perfections of **GOD**, and allowed by all to be peculiar and proper only to the living and true **GOD**; and it is blasphemy to apply it to any other being. It in short signifies, He who was without beginning, is absolutely independent of all created existence, and will continue to be, without any change or alteration, forever and forever. This is agreeable to what we have in *Rev. i. 18*: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, who is, and who was, and who is to come." Therefore under this name he chose to reveal himself to the children of Israel, just before he commissioned Moses and Aaron to work wonders in Egypt; for we find that, after he had revealed himself by the name **I AM**, he appeared again unto Moses, and said unto him, "I am **JEHOVAH**; I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name **JEHOVAH** was I not known unto them: wherefore say unto them, I am the Lord; [*Hebrew, JEHOVAH*] I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians; I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgment, and ye shall know that I am **JEHOVAH**.\*" The meaning is this—'I appeared unto the fathers of this people as their strong God, the proper object of their worship, able to protect and defend them from evil; but I never manifested myself before to be that eternal, immutable, self-existent and independent being, that I am about to do, through the whole series of that dispensation under which for the future I shall take them; a dispensation of surprising providences, and miraculous events, which, as it opens, will more and more prove me to be **JEHOVAH**; an eternal, immutable, self-existent and an absolutely independent being: and I shall prove myself true and faithful by the judgments which

\* Wherever the word **LORD** is found in our American Bible in capitals, it is in the Hebrew *Jehovah*.

which I shall execute on mine and on my people's enemies; and will punctually perform all the promises which I have made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and I will bring you into the land which I swear unto them that I would give it to you for an inheritance. I am JEHOVAH.' And it is with reference to the signification of this wonderful name, that it is so often added to a promise or a threatening, that those to whom the promise is made might have strong consolation, and that those against whom the threatening is denounced might "hear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly," or, by a speedy repentance, prevent the impending blow.

These *three* are the principal names under which the Father of the Universe has been pleased to reveal himself in our Scriptures: there are indeed others; as, the Almighty, the Rock, &c. all of which are implied in one or other of the three, and may more properly be considered as attributes of Deity, than distinguishing names; therefore I shall wave a particular consideration of them, and proceed to say something of the perfections of God, which are both *natural* and *moral*.

The Natural Perfections of God are—

1. His *Eternity*. Of this his name JEHOVAH is very expressive; for that implies (as I have shewn) that he is self-existent, always was, is, and ever will be, the same. The eternity of JEHOVAH is evidently necessary, from the nature and reason of things. To create is to act; nay, it is the exertion of an almighty action; and to suppose that he created himself, is to suppose that he acted, nay, that he exerted an almighty act, before he had any being, or while he was in a state of non-existence; an absolute impossibility in nature. And to suppose that he was made, is to suppose that there is a being superior or prior to him, on whom he was and is dependent: therefore that he is **not** the first, the self-existent and independent God; that

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he is not JEHOVAH. Hence it is evident to every reflecting mind, that he always was, without beginning of days; and, as he is "over all GOD blessed forever more," so he always will be the "Father of Light, without any variableness, or shadow of turning"—is, as the Scriptures call him, the ETERNAL GOD, "who alone has life and immortality."

2. Another natural perfection of the Deity is *Independence*. This indeed is implied in his eternity. He is so far independent on all created existence, that all creatures are dependent on him for their existence, and all the attendant circumstances of being: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all; to whom be glory forever, Amen."

3. *Immutability* is another natural perfection of God; and this is indeed contained in, and results from, the two former. He who had no beginning, and will have no end, he who exists necessarily and independently, must exist immutably. If he changes, it must be a voluntary change, and must be for the better or for the worse. He cannot change for the better, if he is already the *best*; he cannot change for the worse, for that would be weakness or wickedness: when, therefore, it is said in Scripture that he repents, or changes his mind, it is only spoken after the manner of men; and nothing more can be meant by such expressions, but that he accommodates the dispensations of his providence to the state and characters of men: and the variations which appear in his providential dispensations are not in him, but in them who are the subjects of his government; for he is of one mind, and nothing can change him. Immutability is so closely connected with supreme perfection, that all who believe the one, admit the other; and the same reason which has taught the wise and reflecting mind, in every age, to believe that what is immortal cannot die, has likewise taught, that  
what

what is perfect cannot change : therefore God claims it as his prerogative—" I am the Lord, I change not."

4. *Omniscience* is also to be reckoned among the natural perfections of the Deity. And by this we understand that he perfectly knows all things past, present and to come. This follows from his immutability and independency ; for if he is absolutely independent, and all creatures and things are dependent on him, then it is not possible that any creature or thing should exist or happen without his knowledge ; therefore he must know all things. Or, if it was possible that any thing should exist or happen without his knowledge, then it might be possible, nay it might be proper and necessary, that he should change ; for if he was uncertain about any thing, then he could not tell what was best to determine about that thing ; and when he should come to be ascertained of that of which he was before uncertain, it might be proper and necessary to alter his purpose with respect to that thing of which he was now ascertained. Therefore it is absolutely certain that he perfectly knows *all things*—is omniscient in the strictest sense. The sacred Scriptures speak of God's perfect knowledge of things which are least known to finite and limited minds ; the future actions of free and moral agents, who act from different motives, and are governed by different principles. That the future actions of both good and bad men were, and are, still perfectly known to God, is evident from his exactly foretelling when and what they would be, long before they took place ; as, for instance, he knew when the children of Israel should go down into Egypt, and how long they should continue there in a state of bondage and slavery, and therefore foretold it to Abraham. He knew what Pharaoh would do, before he sent Moses to him, and therefore he told Moses, before he sent him, I know that he [Pharaoh] will not let you go ; but I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt,

Egypt, and afterwards he will let you go. He also foreknew, and therefore he foretold, what king Josiah would do, several hundred years before he was born. He perfectly knew, and foretold, what treatment our Saviour would meet with, both from his own disciples and the Jewish rulers, long before he was born of the blessed Virgin : therefore it is plain, both from reason and facts, that God is omniscient, and that “ known unto him are all his works from the beginning unto the end,” though we must confess that “ such knowledge is too wonderful for us : it is high ; we cannot attain unto it.”

5. Another natural perfection of the Deity is *Omnipresence*. By this we understand that he is every where present at one and the same time ; he fills heaven and earth and all places with his presence. The Psalmist, deeply sensible of this, inquires, “ Whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there ; If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me ; if I say, the darkness shall cover me, even the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

And this attribute is a necessary consequence of the other perfections ; for, if all creatures are dependent on him, it is necessary that he should be present in every part of the creation, or those parts where he is not present to uphold, would fall into nothing. If he was not every where present, the harmony of the universe would be broke in upon ; some of God’s faithful servants would be without his protection, and his promise would fail ; for he has said, “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

If God was not omnipresent, he would not be the proper object of religious worship, nor the hearer of prayer ;  
and



and it would be as vain for us to call upon him, as it was for the prophets of Baal to call aloud upon their dumb and senseless idol.

He must be every where present, or the wicked would break in upon some parts of his government, and frustrate the schemes of his providence. In short, he must be every where present, or he could not hear the many millions, in different and distant parts of the universe, who are daily addressing the throne of grace; nor could he govern the world, or be true to his word.

But, by being present every where, we are not to understand that he is in the same sense present in all places as he is in the kingdom of glory; for there, as it were, he keeps his court: there he displays his divine perfections in such a manner that the adoring angels cannot behold his throne without veiled faces. But he is every where present by the exertions of his wisdom, power and faithfulness; by which the universe is upheld in being and order, good angels directed, evil angels restrained, good men defended and comforted, and the wicked reclaimed or punished.

There is another sense in which it may be said that God is omnipresent, viz. all things and all *times* are present to him; he takes in the whole universe with his eye, and discerns as clearly all things, which ever were or ever shall be, as we do the single object which is this minute before our eyes, or the single point of time which is now present; and therefore he has been called by the schoolmen an *Eternal Now*, and his omnipresence has been termed by them his *ubiquity*; for eternity is present with him. Agreeably to this we often find many things spoken of in his word as if they were present or past, which were not nor could be accomplished until many ages to come; as, for instance, the birth, the incarnation and sufferings of Christ are spoken of in scripture as present, though they did

did not take place for a long time after. When the prophet Isaiah spoke of the birth of Christ, he spoke of it in the present tense: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." So, when the sufferings and death of Christ were spoken of by the same prophet, he spoke of them as past: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." And when the sweet Singer of Israel celebrated the triumph of his ascension, he sang of it as already past: "Thou didst ascend on high, thou hast received gifts for men. Thou hast led captivity captive:" which words were particularly applied to the ascension of Christ, and his receiving the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost, and his triumphing over the prince and powers of darkness: which events did not take place for several hundreds of years after they were sung by David as if they had been already past. So the day of final judgment is sometimes spoken of in prophetic style as already come. Enoch prophesied (as related by Jude) saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Thus a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years: he does not calculate time by succession of days, months and years, as we do; but, with one intuitive view, he takes in a boundless eternity, with all the infinite orders of being, and all their various actions, tempers and states; and the most minute attendant circumstance does not escape his notice; for not a sparrow lights on the ground, or perches on a bough, without his knowledge and inspection.

These are all natural and incommunicable attributes of Deity, of which no mere creature can be possessed, and bespeak underived divinity.

We proceed to take into consideration the Moral Perfections, which are natural and communicable attributes of Deity.

1. *Rationality,*

1. *Rationality*, or the power of reasoning. That God is the fountain of reason, and that this distinguishing power is in him in the highest degree of perfection, is self-evident ; for every moral perfection in the creature must be in the Creator in its highest perfection, as in its original. But then we are not to conceive of reason in God from what we perceive in ourselves while we are exercising this power. We lay down certain propositions, and then draw certain conclusions from them ; we connect ideas and sentences, and then determine upon certain truths which arise from that connexion ; and so we come at the certain knowledge of one truth, by reasoning on, or arguing from, others, and arrive by a chain of arguments at the knowledge of certain truths more remote, and less obvious, by arguing from first principles and self-evident propositions. But to God all things are open and plain : he does not come at the knowledge of one truth by arguing from another, or, by combining ideas, and attending to the connexion and relation which subsists between the various parts of the combination, draw the consequence : for he has one clear, intuitive view of all possible things, without the succession of ideas, or following a chain of argumentation ; so that he has reason in perfection, taking in at one view all that the whole intelligent creation can ever arrive at by the closest reasoning, and infinitely beyond what created intellect can reach : and, though God does not reason as we do, yet it is most evident that he has the power in perfection ; as a man who has the clearest ideas, and can, without much labour, argue on any point clearly and forcibly, we say, he is a man of sense, he reasons well, or is a man of strong reason, though he may not proceed in that slow way of argumentation which many others of weaker minds are obliged to do. And therefore God is spoken of in Scripture as having an immediate and perfect view of all his works, from the beginning to the end ; of such perfect and infallible knowledge,

ledge, that it is impossible for him to err, but he always determines according to the immutable nature and reason of things.

2. The next moral perfection of Deity which we shall contemplate is *Goodness*. This is a perfection we always connect with the idea we form of God; but then we must always distinguish between the principle, and the exercise of that principle toward proper objects. The sacred Scriptures make and keep up that distinction:—"O Lord, thou *art* good, and thou *doest* good." The goodness of God in principle is an immutable disposition to acts of benevolence, and the exercise of that principle is the actual bestowment of favours upon their proper objects. The principle is necessary, and goes into the very idea we form of the great First Cause; the exercise of that principle forms a leading trait in all his works; for behold they are all very good. The very nature of God is *goodness* and *benevolence* itself; goodness and benevolence are therefore necessary in the same sense that his existence is necessary. But the exercise of this principle is free and voluntary, and is always the result of his other moral perfections, and under the direction of infinite wisdom, and in strict conformity to eternal reason, justice, and the fitness of things; and the benevolent disposition is not exercised without a good reason for it. We must not conclude, because God is good in principle, necessarily good, that therefore he must necessarily communicate happiness to all his dependent creatures, according to their nature and capacity; but that his communicative goodness, or the acts of benevolence, are free and voluntary, founded in eternal reason, directed by infinite wisdom, adjusted by perfect equity in all its operations. If the communications of the benevolent principle were necessary, as the principle itself, then all creatures, without any regard to their characters, would be equally happy  
according

according to their capacity, and evil of every kind would be excluded from all the works of God; and happiness in reasonable creatures, the subjects of God's moral government, would in no sense be the reward of their virtue. But we see and feel that there is evil in the world, both moral and penal, both sin and pain; and we are assured that every one will be rewarded in the future world according to his works: and this is perfectly right, and the determination of the Divine Goodness. The goodness of God, when moral agents are considered as its objects, is not a disposition to make all equally happy, indiscriminately, at any rate, and by any means: such indiscriminate goodness would not be an excellency becoming a being who is perfectly wise, just and reasonable, as well as good. Goodness in God is undoubtedly a disposition to make the good, the upright, the sincere christian happy; and it is always exercised in such ways, and to such a degree, as will best correspond with the plan of his general government, and most illustrate his other moral perfections. Goodness in God is a principle which in all its operations is invariably directed by moral rectitude, and an eternal aversion to moral evil. Happiness is its object, happiness is its end; but then it must be right happiness, happiness which is the gracious reward of true virtue. Thus God is good in himself, and his goodness extends through the universe. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.—This leads us to consider another of his moral perfections, and that is—

3. *Mercy.* I mention this next, as it is near akin to Goodness, and differs from it only in its objects. The objects of mercy are those who are in some degree miserable, but have no just claim to favour: so that mercy in God is a gracious disposition in him to relieve distress, and to shew favour to those who have rendered themselves unworthy

worthy of it, and who are in some degree miserable. In this sense GOD was merciful when he pitied man, fallen into a state of sin and misery, in which he must have perished without help or hope, but from the mere mercy of GOD. This interposed, and said, "Live; I have found a ransom; I have laid help on one mighty to save:" and this was no other than the beloved SON of GOD, through whose interposition and mediation ample provision was made for the restoration of fallen man to the image and favour of GOD. This was all rich, free, self-moving mercy in GOD: and we may join with Moses, and say, "The Lord thy GOD is a merciful GOD." And indeed the scriptures often speak of GOD as being greatly moved with pity and compassion towards the miserable and distressed; that he was even grieved and afflicted with the miseries and calamities that were fallen upon mankind, especially those which his own covenant-people were suffering; that he was pressed with grief; that his bowels were turned within him: but this is spoken after the manner of men, and we must be careful, when we contemplate the Divine Nature, not to clothe it with the infirmities of human passions. But the mercy of GOD steadily produces the most substantial effects of the tenderest pity and compassion. When GOD proclaims his name from Mount Sinai, it is, the Lord, the Lord GOD, *gracious and merciful*; and when the people murmured and rebelled, and carried their outrage so high that they were upon the point of stoning their rulers and leaders, and the Lord's anger was kindled against them, and he said unto Moses, "How long shall this people provoke me to anger? Let me alone, and I will destroy them;" Moses laid hold on this divine perfection, and said, "Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy: pardon I beseech thee this people, according to the greatness of thy mercy." This branch of the divine  
goodness.

goodness is, as well as power, under the direction of wisdom, and limited by eternal reason and equity, and is exercised in a way and manner, and to a degree, that corresponds with the harmonious display of the other moral perfections of God. Let none presume on the mere mercy of God, and sin that grace may abound. Those who do, must not expect that he who made them will have mercy on them, or that he who formed them will shew them his favour: for he will shew mercy on whom he will shew mercy, but in conformity to his impartial justice.—This leads me, in the next place, to speak—

4. Of the *Justice* of God; another essential moral perfection of Deity. Justice in God is an immutable disposition always to do that which, from the unalterable nature and reason of things, is right; and it is agreed upon by all mankind, that the Judge of the world must be just; and in the administration of distributive justice, especially in conferring rewards and punishments, both in this life and in the next, the Judge of all the earth will certainly do exactly right. This perfection is so essential to the very idea we form of a God, that all who acknowledge his existence, acknowledge his perfect and impartial justice. But the “Lord our God is a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed” in a scale of inflexible justice. Abraham, satisfied of this, acquiesced in that dispensation which marked out the destruction of those infamous and abandoned cities, Sodom and Gomorrah; yet he grounded his plea to exempt the righteous from the general destruction, upon his known and impartial justice: “That be far from thee,” said Abraham, “to slay the righteous with the wicked! for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” In extraordinary cases, when God comes out of his place to punish any flagrant wickedness, a distinction is made, as there was in the destruction of the old world by the deluge. Noah was distinguished and saved, “for thee,” saith God, “have I found  
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*righteous.*”

*righteous.*" In the singular case of the destruction of the cities of the plain by fire, Lot, whose righteous soul was grieved with the abominations of the wicked around him, was exempted, and snatched as a brand out of the burning. And in that extraordinary phenomenon of the earth opening her mouth and swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram, with their rebellious crew, a remarkable distinction was made between the righteous and the wicked: not one who was not concerned in that rebellion received the least injury. But in the common course of Divine Providence, where second causes act agreeable to the established laws of nature, without any miraculous interposition, they produce effects, which often involve the righteous and the wicked, without any distinction; for there is "one event to the righteous and the wicked;" as, for instance, winds, storms, thunder, earthquakes, pestilence, famine, &c. Hence when second causes act freely, according to the fixed laws of nature, there can be no distinction of characters, and the justice of the Supreme Judge remains unimpeached: for as this life is, in order to another, designed as a state of trial, we must not expect that the justice of God will, through the administration of promiscuous providence, always appear to us in that state without a cloud, or that no mystery will attend the execution of God's providential government; "but what we know not now, we may know hereafter;" for now even the saints of God know but in part, and that part is seen through a glass darkly; now we live by faith, not by sight; when this scene closes—when the patience and the forbearance of God has been exercised towards sinners, drawn out to long-suffering, to some longer, to others shorter, as the wisdom and goodness of God shall see fit, or as the nature, reason and fitness of things require—and when the faith, the patience, the resignation and hope of his saints shall be matured for the inheritance in light—then every thing will be adjusted

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and set to rights, and "every one will receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil." Perfect and impartial justice will then be administered, without any respect paid to persons; no hiding or palliating crimes; "for the Lord our God is a great and terrible God, who regardeth not the persons of men:" then the Cæsars and the Alexanders, or proud and oppressive tyrants, who have overthrown kingdoms, who have laid waste countries, deluged the earth with blood, and oppressed millions merely to gratify a sordid lust, will seek to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth, or cry to the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the face of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath shall come. Then will the justice of God break forth as light, and appear before an assembled world perfectly equitable, and strictly impartial; and we may now say, "Just and true are all thy ways, O God, and holy are all thy works."—This leads to the consideration—

5. Of the *Holiness* of God, which is the next moral perfection we shall contemplate. The holiness of God is rather the perfection of all the attributes of Deity, than a distinct and separate attribute in itself; for no other attribute of the divine nature would be a perfection without this; without this, power would be oppression, sovereignty tyranny, wisdom would be subtilty, goodness would be fondness, justice would be cruelty, and truth would be falsehood: therefore the Scriptures speak of the holiness of God as the most consummate excellency of the Divine Nature, a perfect freedom from all sin, vice, moral defect or impurity, and positively and infinitely possessed of the contrary moral perfections; therefore God is said to be "glorious in holiness;" and to sit upon the throne of his holiness; and heaven itself is called the "habitation of his holiness," and "the place where his honour dwelleth;" because there, and there only, ap-  
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pears his holiness without a cloud, in all its glory and perfection, reflecting a glory upon all the other perfections: and, when God swears by his holiness, he is said to swear by himself. And holy angels, and glorified saints, sum up the divine perfections, and cry one to another day and night, *Holy, holy, holy*, is the Lord God Almighty: heaven and earth are full of his glory. And it is evident, from the light of nature and divine revelation, that he possesses this eminency of the divine nature in a manner and to a degree that no other being can; for *he only is holy*; not but that other beings are and may be (in a degree and according to their finite measure) holy, but none in that manner and to that degree that he is holy. It is the dictate of nature, that a God must be perfectly holy. Plato said, "We cannot resemble the gods in any thing, if we do not resemble them in holiness;" and Nebuchadnezzar said, that the spirit of the holy gods was in Daniel. And Scripture ascribes holiness to every thing which belongs to God. "Holy and reverend is his name. His house, his ordinances, his day, his word, his works, and his ways, are all said to be holy; for he is the Holy One of Israel: and Samuel expressly says, that there is none holy as the Lord. And, when God enjoins us to aspire after the highest degree of christian perfection, he says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

6. We next speak of *Wisdom*, another of God's moral perfections. Wisdom is knowledge joined with prudence; and there is in God the most perfect knowledge, joined with the most consummate skill and prudence; he is wise in heart, as well as mighty in strength; he perfectly knows what is best: all his works, from the beginning unto the end, lie fairly before him, and therefore he conducts all things in the best manner, as may most subserve his honour, and the happiness of his rational creatures. He is

is said to be the Only Wise God. This denotes that he is originally and independently so, as no other being is or can be, and that perfect wisdom and design always attend all the operations of his power, providence and grace. Wisdom is a perfection essentially different from cunning, craft or intrigue, and always supposes something good, amiable and engaging. "Wisdom in the Supreme, imports rectitude of nature, justice, benevolence and goodness, carried into execution by the best-adapted means." If we contemplate the works of creation, providence, and redemption, with a serious and devout mind, we shall see such evident marks of consummate wisdom, in and through the whole, as might well fill us with adoration and astonishment, expressed in the words of the Apostle—"O the depth both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!

7. We next speak of the almighty *Power* of God; for omnipotence is one of the moral perfections of the Deity. Power in God is an ability to do every thing which implies perfection; a perfect, active principle, which can do all things with ease, or without labour, and at once in the most perfect manner. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." This almighty, active principle in God is always under the direction of infinite wisdom, and limited by the nature and reason of things. It may be said, that there are some things which Omnipotence cannot do. God cannot deny himself, or make both parts of a palpable contradiction true, or a moral evil good, or a moral good evil; for these are natural impossibilities. It is evident that divine power, which belongs to God, is always under the direction of infinite wisdom, and limited by the other divine perfections, and the nature and reason of things. This is the idea which the Scriptures give us of the power of God. The Psalmist said, "Twice have I heard that power belongeth unto God;" Job said, "I know, O Lord, that thou canst do every thing;" and  
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our Saviour said, "With GOD all things are possible;" which is to be understood with the above limitations—whatever is consistent with divine perfection, and the nature and reason of things. Therefore it follows that GOD can in no sense be the author of sin, or by his almighty power make men wicked, for that would not be the exercise of power, but it would rather prove that there was no power, that is, that there was no such being as an almighty, wise, good and holy being. Therefore let GOD be true, though man should be found false.—This reminds us that we have to mention another perfection; and that is—

8. *Truth*, or the divine *Veracity*. This attribute, when applied to GOD, implies not only veracity, but *Faithfulness*. He is not only absolutely true in all that he says, but faithful to perform all that he has promised or threatened. This is the sense in which the Scripture considers veracity, when applied to GOD; therefore truth and faithfulness are spoken of together, as implying each other: "Thy counsels, O GOD, of old, are faithfulness and truth." And when GOD was about to close up the vision which he had opened upon his servant John, who bore record of the word of GOD, and the testimony of Jesus, he said, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." The words of GOD are perfectly true sayings, and all that is therein predicted shall be exactly fulfilled; the promises of good accomplished, and the threatenings of evil executed. Truth in a speaker implies a strict correspondence between the declarations of his words, the sentiments of his mind, and the reality of things: now this correspondence may not always be found with finite minds, where the speaker may not be chargeable with falsehood, because he may be mistaken with respect to the reality of things, though his words and sentiments may correspond; but with the Eternal and all Comprehensive

five Mind there is a perfect rectitude of will, the perfection of knowledge, and an infallibility of understanding; he therefore ever maintains a strict correspondence between his words, the sentiments of his mind, and the reality of things: as, for instance, when he declares a thing to be so, or not, it is really as he declares; when he commands us to do any thing, it is his will or mind that we should do it; when he forbids us to do any thing, it is his will that we should abstain; when he declares any thing future, that will certainly come to pass exactly in the time and manner he had foretold it. If the declaration is absolute, it will absolutely take place in the time and manner declared; if it is conditional, it will certainly come to pass when the conditions are complied with, for it is his mind, and "he is a God of truth, just and right is he." His faithfulness chiefly respects his promises, and their accomplishment. When he promises a good to certain persons or characters, he adds an obligation of justice to that of his word; for when he promises he confers a right on them to whom the promise is made, though the good promised was all of rich and free grace. Therefore the Apostle observes, that the crown of life would be conferred by God, as the righteous judge, on all the faithful, though that crown was the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, because it was promised through him to all such, by the God of truth, who cannot lie. That this perfection eminently belongs to God, is evident, both from the light of nature, and divine revelation. The very nature and reason of things, or the dictate of the conscious mind, tell us that truth and faithfulness are perfections that belong to all intelligent beings; and the want of them implies not only great imperfections, but great, if not the worst, of crimes; therefore infinitely removed from the all-perfect Deity. Truth and faithfulness are such perfections, that a heathen once said, "If the gods were to become visible, their bodies

bodies would be composed of light, and their souls of truth :” and the Scriptures every where ascribe this perfection in the highest degree to GOD. Samuel said, “ Now O Lord thou art God, and thy words are true and faithful ;” the Psalmist says, “ The paths of the Lord are all mercy and truth ;” Moses says, “ The Lord our God is abundant in goodness and truth.” In one word, it is impossible that it should be otherwise ; his truth is as immutable as his justice, as unalterable as his nature, and as infallible as his wisdom : what he has said has been upon the principles of eternal and unalterable reason ; he will therefore as certainly perform the thing that has gone out of his mouth, as he himself shall exist ; for, if one jot or one tittle should fail, he would cease to be true, and therefore cease to be the true and living God : so that the divine veracity is as it were the bond of all the perfections of the Deity, the strength of the divine government, the support of the universe, the hope and comfort of all the saints. The divine veracity is the *key note* in that sacred anthem sung by the angelic hosts, when united with the assembly of glorified saints. They set to their seals that God is true, and strike up an anthem in celebration of the divine veracity—“ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, O thou King of Saints : who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy.”

Thus I have endeavoured to lead you into some right apprehensions of the true and living God, declaring unto you him whom too many ignorantly worship. I have used not the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but as great plainness of speech as I have been capable of on so sublime a subject. My chief aim has been, to instruct the ignorant, especially the young mind, and those who have not time nor disposition to think seriously and properly of  
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that Being in whom they live and move and have their existence. No doubt there are some, even in this enlightened age, who would be confounded at that plain and short question, *What is God?* not because they are either totally ignorant of him, or are disposed to deny him, but because they have not accustomed themselves to think seriously or properly of him: he is not in all, nor in hardly any, of their thoughts; they do not inquire in earnest, *Where is God my maker?* From the dictates of nature, the voice of reason, and the force of education, they conclude that there is a supreme being, and that he ought to be worshipped by his rational and intelligent creatures, and therefore pay him some acts of homage and worship, in private or public, without perhaps so much as once thinking what kind of being he is, or what sort of worship and homage is due to him. Now the worship of such is much like that paid by the Athenians to the unknown God, and the inscription on their altar would be like theirs. And there are others who know God, but glorify him not as God; who, while they profess with the mouth that there is a God who judgeth in the earth, yet say in their hearts that there is no God. The spirit and language of their conduct is *practical infidelity*.

Now, that I might awaken in some a serious and practical sense of the ever-living JEHOVAH, that they might realize themselves in his presence, and think, and speak, and act, for the future, in a manner worthy of that spiritual, holy, wise, just and good Being whom they have too ignorantly worshipped; and that the profane and presumptuous transgressor might be reclaimed, and reduced to the love of God, and the practice of those things which are pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; I have, in a concise, and I hope in an intelligible, manner, discoursed on the natural and moral perfections of God. And now what improvement shall we make, or what influence should these serious and sublime truths have upon our hearts and lives?

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They should at least engage us, when we address him, to do it in such a manner as is worthy of a being possessed of the most adorable and amiable perfections, proper to command our reverential fear, excite our ardent love, and to produce that sincerity, and that undisssembled uprightness, in which alone he takes pleasure. Let us not rush into his presence as the horse rushes into the battle, or as inconsiderately as a fool goeth to the correction of the stocks; nor should we be satisfied with only uttering over a dull form of words, more like a senseless charm addressed to a dumb idol, than a spiritual sacrifice offered to the ever-living JEHOVAH.

1. Is he not only a being of infinite and unerring reason, but the origin of all intelligence? Let us pay him our grateful acknowledgements, that he made us reasonable creatures—breathed into us the breath of life: for “verily there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gave him understanding.” Let us never act below this noble character, or subject our reason to the tyranny of the passions, prejudices and lusts. Often should we call ourselves to an account, and inquire whether we act a reasonable part, and devote our rational powers to him from whom we received them; yielding our bodies and souls to him as a sort of living sacrifice, which is our most reasonable service.

2. Is he good, good in himself, and good to all—whose tender mercies are over all his works? He made a world, and made man, that he might have objects on whom he might bestow his bounties. Let us then return him our most unfeigned thanks for the benefits of creation; for the bounties of providence, and for the distinguishing blessings of grace; and let his goodness lead us to repentance, and animate us to a life of gratitude and obedience, and dispose us to do good to our brethren of mankind, as we have ability and opportunity; that we may be, and appear



pear to be, the children of that God who does good to the evil and unthankful, and sendeth his rain on the just and unjust.

3. We have heard that he is not only good, but merciful. He pitied our fallen race, took our case, when it had become desperate, into consideration, and, from his self-moving benevolence, and rich and free mercy, laid help on one mighty to save, and in the fulness of time sent his beloved Son into our world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life. O let his mercy, which has interposed between us and ruin, and which has appeared unto all men in his gospel, teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, so that we may not receive this grace of God in vain; and let the bowels of mercy, which moved towards us, fill us with compassion for others in distress, and let us aim to be merciful, as our Father who is in heaven is merciful.

4. He is just; a God of judgment, by whom actions are weighed. This teaches us that we should live righteously, rendering to God the things which are God's, and to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. We should do justice to ourselves—seek, secure and promote our highest interest; and be strictly just to all men, doing to others at all times as we would have others do to us in change of circumstances.

5. He is holy. This we said implies all moral perfection. Let us then venerate this amiable attribute, and stand at a distance from all sin and moral evil, and with a pious caution shun the very appearance of it; never make the bold experiment how near we may approach its dangerous boundaries without being chargeable with positive guilt; but let us seek earnestly the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit, that we may be sanctified wholly, and

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be holy as he who has called us is holy ; that we may be pleasing to him who is always delighted with the resemblance of his own moral image in his intelligent creatures, especially with the resemblance of the divine purity ; that attracts his heart, that fixes his sacred complacency. Of a holy soul he says, “ Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

In one word—Is he wise and powerful, true and faithful? Let the consideration of this excite us to acquiesce in all providential events, calmly confiding in his extensive protection and immutable veracity ; and, conscious of our own weakness, and that it is not in man to direct his way, let us ask wisdom of him who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth none ; and, sensible of our own inability, let us trust in the Lord *JEHOVAH*, in whom is everlasting strength. While we are ready passionately to conclude that all men are liars, let us trust in the *GOD of Truth*, for blessed are all they that put their trust in him. He is a rock, and his way is perfect ; and judgment and truth are the operations of his hand.

It is our duty, honour, interest and happiness, ever to please a *GOD* of such perfections ; and when moral virtue springs from right apprehensions of the great and blessed *GOD*, and an internal conformity to his moral image, then it becomes the fruit of sanctifying grace ; and, having our fruit unto holiness, the end will be eternal life and blessedness.

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## Discourse II.

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### The Divine, Moral and Mediatorial Character of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

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MATTHEW, xxii. 42.

*What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?*

**T**O form right apprehensions of JESUS CHRIST, and to have these apprehensions take hold of the heart, so as properly to influence the life, is essential to that religion which he came to reveal and establish in the world. For want of this, the Jews treated the blessed Jesus with contempt, and rejected both his person and his gospel. They formed very false apprehensions of their promised and expected Messiah. Mistaking the Sacred Oracle, and entertaining wrong notions of true greatness, they concluded that he would come in all the apparent grandeur and external pomp of an earthly prince; that he would erect a political monarchy among them, make Judea the centre of his kingdom, and Jerusalem his royal city, where he would fix his palace, and keep his court. Being prepossessed with these wrong apprehensions, as soon as they beheld the humble form in which Jesus of Nazareth made his first appearance among them, they despised him, and rejected both his person and the messages which he brought; for, when he came to his own [nation] they received him not: but contemptuously inquired,

“Can there come any good thing out of Nazareth?” though he came (except his uncourtly appearance) with demonstrations of his divine original, which proved him to be the true and long-expected Messiah who was to come, and that they need not look out for another. The scribes, pharisees, and sadducees, the ruling party, treated him with scorn, and represented his peculiar doctrines as just matter of ridicule; and, that they might draw the odium of the common people upon him, they artfully endeavoured to entangle him in his talk, and to puzzle him with hard and perplexing questions, several of which we have in our context; as that in the 17th verse—“Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?” This question was put to him by the disciples of the pharisees, with the herodians, men of different sentiments, and in different interests: the pharisees strenuously maintained, that the Jews, being the covenant people of God, ought not to pay tribute to a Gentile prince or lord, and the herodians as warmly plead for Cæsar’s authority; so that, let him answer which way he would, he must either draw upon him popular resentment, as the betrayer of the liberties of a free people, or expose himself to an accusation of sedition or treason against Cæsar. But his answer was such as left his enemies no room to form an accusation against him: “Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and to God the things which are God’s.” Another perplexing question was put to him by the sadducees, about the resurrection of the dead, and a future state, both which they denied. They put the case of a woman who had had seven husbands in this world successively, and then ask whose wife she would be at the resurrection; for they all had an equal claim to her in this life. His answer to this question was such as fully proved the doctrine they denied, and showed that their error as to the resurrection and a future state sprung from gross ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of  
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God; and carried such conviction along with it, as astonished the multitude, and silenced the sadducees. A third question was asked him by a captious lawyer, with the same ill-natured design. This question referred to a dispute which subsisted among the sectaries of that day, about the preference to be given to the ceremonial or the moral law. He asked, "Which is the great commandment of the law?" Our Saviour answered, "This is the first and great command of the law—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and the second is like unto it—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" so making supreme love to God, and impartial love to our neighbour, the basis of christian morality, and the operating principle of universal obedience to all the commandments of God, without giving the preference to any, either moral or positive: which frustrated the malicious design of the crafty querist, and put him to silence. Then our divine Lord in his turn put the serious and interesting question of my text—"What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" They said, "He is the son of David;" which indeed they could not reconcile with David's calling him Lord. I shall humbly attempt an answer to this question, and shew whose son he is, and what we should think of him. That I may do this in as plain, concise and intelligible a manner as I can, I shall endeavour to unfold and display his divine, moral and mediatorial offices and characters. I do not expect to satisfy the curious, or remove every objection; but I hope to lead the young and candid inquirer into the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and to benefit the rising generation, whose edification I have chiefly in view.

I. We shall take a view of his *Divine Character*. And it is evident that he possesses the natural and moral perfections of Deity, and that we should think of him as truly divine; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and in this respect we should

should honour the Son as we honour the Father. As for instance, he is *omnipresent*—a perfection peculiar to Deity, not communicable to any mere creature, how exalted soever he may be: for it is said of God, that he fills all places with his presence: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I should not see him?” saith the Lord: “do I not fill heaven and earth?” i. e. there is no hiding from God, because he fills all the infinite extension of space. So the Psalmist strongly and beautifully interrogates in such a manner as plainly implies the strongest affirmation: “Where shall I go from thy Spirit? whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there; or if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there,” &c. That heaven, earth and hell are full of the divine presence, and every part of the universe lies under the inspecting eye of Jehovah, is a truth which the wiser heathen admitted.\* In the same verse Jesus Christ is said to be present every where. The apostle Paul says, “He filleth all things.” So he promised to be with two or three of his sincere disciples, whenever they should meet for religious worship in his name. He could not fulfil this promise without he is omnipresent, for there may be a thousand of these little assemblies at one and the same time, a thousand miles distant from each other. So he promised to be present with his faithful disciples in the discharge of their duty, to the end of the world; which would be impossible without he is present in all places at one and the same time, and throughout all times, in all places, where he had or ever will have disciples, to the end of the world. He therefore fills all things—is in all places, in heaven, on the earth, in public and private assemblies, in and with every individual, at one and the same time, and at all times; and is therefore omnipresent in a proper and divine sense.

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\* *Omnia plena Jovi.*

JUVEN.

2. Jesus Christ is *eternal* and *immutable*; and eternity and immutability are essential and incommunicable attributes of the Deity. I mention these together, because they imply each other; and I mean to be as concise and plain as possible. It is asserted, that Jesus Christ is “without beginning of days, or end of life:” it is said, he is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last:” it is said, that “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever.” He who is without beginning of days, or end of life, the Alpha and Omega, the same, yesterday, to-day and forever, must be eternal and immutable: but Jesus Christ is said to be so, and is therefore possessed of all those incommunicable attributes of the Deity.

3. Jesus Christ is *omniscient*—another natural and incommunicable attribute essential to the Deity; which implies a full and perfect knowledge of all things past, present, and to come, with all the thoughts, purposes, designs and projections of intelligent and moral agents: and this knowledge is alone the prerogative of God. Solomon justly observes, “Thou, (speaking of God) even thou only, knowest the hearts of the children of men.” This same knowledge the blessed Jesus assumes, and says, “I am he who searcheth the heart.” And Peter, addressing himself to his divine Master, says, “Thou knowest all things.” John says, “He knew what was in man;” and Matthew says, that “he knew their thoughts:” nay, he says himself, that as the Father knew him, so knew he the Father; putting himself in point of knowledge upon a level with the adorable Father. Now it is certain that he who searcheth the heart, he who knows the thoughts of men, and is in them—nay, that he who knows God in the same manner as he is known of God, must be possessed of omniscience in the fullest sense: and it is certain that Jesus was and is possessed of this knowledge in the fullest sense, and therefore must be properly and truly divine—the true God, and Eternal Life,

4. Jesus Christ is *omnipotent*. He assumed this character when he opened his vision upon his ancient and beloved disciple John in the isle of Patmos—when he said, I, who testify these things, am the First and the Last, the Almighty. King David too, when celebrating his conquest, by the power of grace and truth, over the Gentile world, calls him the Most Mighty. And the prophet Isaiah expressly calls him the Mighty God, even when he speaks of him as a child newly born. Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, who had felt his power, and found it to be almighty, (when it struck him to the ground, broke his heart, and disarmed him of all his persecuting rage, even when it was wrought up to the highest pitch of mad fury) expressly calls him the Great God. In the mouth of these three witnesses, David, Isaiah and Paul, the truth, I think, must be established. And now I would repeat the question of the text—“What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” If he is omnipresent, eternal, immutable, omniscient and omnipotent, he cannot be the son of any mortal, or the offspring of any creature; but he must be the son of God; the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; equally partaking of, and possessing, the natural and incommunicable perfections of the Deity; which will appear with greater evidence when we come to consider his works, which demonstrate his just claim to Deity. The works which we shall examine are those of creation, providence, miracles and grace, all which are ascribed to him, as the divine agent.

1. The works of *creation* are ascribed to him: and to create is to bring into real existence what before had no existence; and this is emphatically the work of God. *Creator* is one of the titles by which God maketh himself known: “Hast thou not heard that the Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not?”



not?" So that the *Everlasting God*, *Jehovah* and *Creator*, are synonymous terms, and mean the same Great Builder of the Universe; and he who built all things is God: and this divine work of creation is, in a great variety of passages of Scripture, particularly ascribed to Jesus Christ: as, in the 1st of John's gospel, ver. 3, "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made." Here is a double universality to strengthen the assertion, and shew that these words cannot be taken in any such qualified or limited sense as to make it possible, by any rule of interpretation, to apply them to any creature, how great or powerful soever that creature may be: they plainly assert, and as plainly prove, that Jesus Christ is equal in glory and power with the Father of the Universe, the Creator of all things. Agreeably to this, it is expressly said, that the worlds were made by him, not only visible, but invisible, with all their ranks and orders, which are called principalities and powers, thrones and dominions: by him, it is also said, were created all things which are in heaven and in the earth, and that for him, for his pleasure, they are and were created. Now, so long as words of divine inspiration retain any meaning; so long as we can convey or receive any clear and distinct ideas by the plainest words, and the most express terms, we can make use of, I think we must conclude that the works of creation are equally to be ascribed to Jesus Christ as to God the Father—that he is the creator of all things: and he who createth all things is God.—We pass to consider—

2. The works of *providence*, which are God's works, most holy, wise, powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions; and indeed the works of creation imply those of providence: for he who made all creatures and things can only preserve them in order, and direct them to their proper end. And this work of providence

providence is expressly ascribed to Jesus Christ : for the Apostle says not only that all things were made by him and for him, but that by him all things consist ; i. e. it is by his powerful providence that all things which have been made by him are preserved by him, and are controuled and directed to their various ends and use, in their various orders and motions : it is by his providence that all things are what they are. And, lest it should be understood as though he acted by a delegated power, as God's vicegerent, or deputy-governor, in the kingdom of providence, it is affirmed, that he "upholdeth all things by the word of his power." If he upholds and governs all things, then he must have all providential events in his hands, and under his controul, and must be supreme in the kingdom of providence. And, as a further evidence of his supremacy in providence, he is the constituted Judge of human actions, and will preside on the final day, and assign to men rewards and punishments ; for we are assured, from his own mouth, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men might honour the Son as they honour the Father." Now it is said that we must all give an account of ourselves unto God, and yet it is affirmed, that we must all, small and great, stand before the judgment-seat of Christ : therefore it is plain that Christ is God. And, agreeable to this, when the prophet Zechariah described the judgment day, he said, "The Lord my God shall come, with all his saints with him, and he shall be King over all the earth : " and this same glorious personage, who shall come with all the saints with him, the Apostle says expressly is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it appears, that he who upholds all things by the word of his power ; that he who controuls, governs and directs all things to their several ends, and fixes the final state of all the human race, and is expressly called the *Great God*, the *True God*, and by the Prophet,

phet, the *Lord my God*, and by the Apostle, my *Lord and my God*, must deserve divine honours, and to be acknowledged the Supreme Lord of providence.—I pass in the next place to speak—

3. Of his *miraculous works*. I shall not pretend to give you a complete history of his miracles; for if all that Jesus did and said were written, the whole world would scarcely contain the books, or it would be too voluminous for common use. I shall only collect a few instances, just enough to prove that he had unlimited power over every part of the creation, so that all nature felt his power, and submitted to his authority.

The inanimate part felt his power, and submitted: he cursed the fig tree, and it immediately dried up; he commanded the sea, and it immediately obeyed him without resistance; when the waves ran high, at his rebuke they subsided into a calm: he chid the winds, when they blew a storm, and they were at once hush and silent, inasmuch that all who beheld the miracle were astonished, and said, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him!”\*

The animal world felt and submitted to his government: The unbroke colt behaved in his hands as well as the best managed horse, though by the sacred story it appears highly probable that he had no other bridle than a halter, and no other saddle than the outside garments of his admiring attendants. And the fish too, which are as much beyond human controul as the element they swim in, even these obey his orders; one of them paid his tribute, and thereby owned his jurisdiction over them. The same miraculous power, or greater, did the blessed  
Jesus

\* *The conscious waters felt the pow'r divine,  
Confess'd the GOD, and blusht themselves to wine.*

Jesus exercise over the rational part of the creation. The human body and mind felt his power, and found it to be divine. He gave sight to those who had been born blind; he unstopped the ears of the deaf; he loosened the tongue of the dumb; he restored cripples to the free use of their limbs, who had been lame from their mothers' womb; he rebuked malignant fevers, and they immediately left the diseased person; he cleansed the polluted leper with a word sovereignly spoke—*I will, be thou clean*; he cured the incurable paralytic; he dispossessed evil spirits, and delivered those who had been bound by Satan, reduced them to their reason and senses, and, what is much more wonderful, inspired them with the temper and spirit of the citizens of heaven; for the divine Jesus exerted a force equally miraculous over the mind as he had done over the body; as, for instance, he so intimidated a whole assembly of scribes and pharisees, that he drove them from their counters, which they had sacrilegiously erected in the temple, and from their ungodly gains, unassisted by any human aid, and armed only with a single scourge, and the energy of a short remonstrance—"It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." He flung such terror into a body of Jewish officers, and Roman soldiers, who came to apprehend him in the garden, as that for a moment they were wholly disarmed of all their courage—a terror which blasted all their rage and fury, even though it was wrought up to such a pitch of mad frenzy as to erase all the tender sentiments of humanity; for the sacred text says that they went backward and fell to the ground: and the words which he made use of when he confounded his assailants were in themselves the most gentle and kind—when he saw them advancing in a hostile manner, with swords and staves, he meekly asked, "Whom seek ye?" they said, Jesus of Nazareth. He said, I am he; if ye

“Ye seek me, let these go their way.” So (as one observes) he capitulated for his friends, while he implicitly resigned himself their prisoner: but his words were with power: never man spake like him. The same miraculous power he employed in making disciples, that he did in laying prostrate his enemies. He commanded James, John and Matthew, with an air of meek majesty, to follow him; they all obeyed him, and became his disciples and constant followers: they received the call when they were in the midst of all the ardours of secular life; they quit their worldly views, to follow a despised Master. To Zaccheus, whose curiosity to see Jesus led him so far to forget his rank as to run before the crowd, and to climb a tree, that he might have a better prospect of him in the midst of the surrounding multitudes, he only said, “Come down, for I must abide at thy house:” Zaccheus immediately obeyed, and received him joyfully, not only into his house, but into his heart, where he had wrought a mighty change; from an oppressive publican he became a benevolent saint; and was willing to share his estate with the poor, as an acknowledgment of a much greater favour which he had received from the gracious Saviour of sinners. Thousands besides, who had been the tame slaves of the prince of darkness, were by his almighty word, accompanied by divine grace, freed from darkness, chains and guilt, and made the free citizens of heaven; snatched (as one observes) from the suburbs of hell, and invested with all the privileges of the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty: which is the most illustrious of all the miracles which the blessed Jesus wrought. His miraculous power was not limited by the confines of mortality, but death and hell owned his supremacy: the dead heard his voice, and came forth; for he had power over the grave; demons left their possessions, and stood trembling before him, and asked, with diabolical consternation, “Art thou come to torment us before the time?”

time? we know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God ;” and they dared not injure the most despicable animal without his leave.

And, as an addition to the glory of his divine character, he delivered himself as a God, and spake as never man spake ; he wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own authority ; therefore he said to the sick of the palsy, “ *I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk*”—to the leper, “ *I will, be thou clean*”—to the dead he saith, “ *I say unto thee, Arise*”—and to the buried he cried with a loud voice, “ *Lazarus, come forth.*” When he delivered his messages, he put on an air of divine majesty : he did not use the style of the preceding prophets, who came with a *Thus saith the Lord*, but *Verily, verily, I say unto thee.*

And to all this we may add the united suffrages of all the prophets, the apostles, the saints below, and saints above, who have all subscribed to his divine character ; who have all either expressly called him God, or have ascribed such perfections to him as would be blasphemy in them to do, if he was not God, or truly divine. David called him, My JEHOVAH ; Isaiah, The *mighty God* ; Zechariah called him, JEHOVAH, MY GOD ; Malachi called him JEHOVAH ; St. Paul called him GOD over all, GOD manifest in flesh, and the Great GOD ; Thomas called him his *Lord and his God* ; and the apostle John calls him, expressly, the *true God*, and *Eternal Life* ; And the twenty-four elders, the representatives of the Old and New Testament saints, have summed up and united in their evidence, and expressly address him under that glorious and incommunicable title, *Lord God Almighty.* And now what think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? We must, I think, all with one voice say, Verily he is the son of God, worthy of divine honour and adoration ; and so honour the Son as we honour the Father. And this will

will appear with illustration if we take an impartial view of his moral character. If indeed he is possessed of the natural and incommunicable attributes of Deity, we cannot doubt of his moral character; nor can it be necessary to say much on this, after what has been said of his divine character. Yet, for the benefit of youth, for whom these discourses are principally designed, I would observe—

1. While he appeared in flesh, he fulfilled *all righteousness*. He was holy, harmless, separate from sin. His human nature was the immediate and miraculous production of the Holy Ghost, and therefore immaculately *holy*, free from that contamination which, through the early apostacy, had polluted human nature in general. Therefore the angel, who brought to the Blessed Virgin the news of his miraculous conception, said, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; and the holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God*.” His heart was pure, there was no error in his judgment, no bias on his will, no inordinacy or alienation of affections; for we find that his first delight was in the service of God, in the temple, where, at twelve years old, he was found sitting within the circle of the Jewish doctors, hearing their learned disquisitions, and modestly asking them questions, which discovered such surprising genius, and such uncommon knowledge of divine things, as astonished the venerable bench. And, when he entered upon public life, the two fundamental principles of morality, supreme love to God, and benevolence to men, seemed to be wrought into his very constitution, and actuated his whole life. The Holy Father saw the innate rectitude of his soul, and testified at his baptism, by a voice from heaven—“This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” And, besides his innocency and in-

nate rectitude of soul, he received on that occasion the Holy Spirit, beyond measure ; therefore he was sanctified and became holy to a degree beyond what any limited nature besides ever was or could be. His exalted holiness discovered itself in the most sublime acts of piety and devotion, and an ardent desire to please his Heavenly Father. We often hear of his retiring from a busy crowd, and a noisy world, that he might give vent to the sacred passion of love, in holy converse with him whom he made it the study of his thoughts, and the delightful employment of his life, always to please ; and his will was so entirely wrought into a conformity to the divine will, that he could say at all times, It is my meat and my drink to do the will of my Father who is in heaven ; and in the closing scene could say, O righteous Father, I have glorified thee on earth, and I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do ; and now glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

2. He was just, as well as holy. He was prophesied of under the character of the Just One : “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is *just*, having salvation.” And the apostle Peter, in his spirited discourse, delivered to a very crowded assembly (in Solomon’s porch) joins the epithet *just* to holy, and ascribes them both to Christ in a very emphatical manner. “ Ye have,” said he to the guilty Jews, “ denied the *Holy One* and the *Just*, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.” And even Pilate allowed him to be just and innocent, when he was constrained to pass the sentence of death upon him : “ Take ye him, and crucify him ; as for me, I find no fault in him :” and, having washed his hands before his accusers, he said, “ I am clean (or I am innocent) of the blood of this just man ; see ye to it.” And all his conduct corresponded with.



With his character as the *Just One*. “Render to God the things which are God’s, and to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s,” was a rule which he recommended to others, and strictly adhered to himself. In a word, he was not only the author of that truly celebrated rule of universal equity, “Do to another as you would have another do to you,” but daily illustrated its excellency and extensive nature and usefulness when reduced to practice, by shedding its salutary effects on all whom he had an opportunity to serve, in social life.—This leads me to add—

3. He was *good*, without exception, and without an equal, except Him who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all the works of his hands. He was not only strictly just, but affectionately kind, to all—the good Master—full of benevolence and goodness to all whom he conversed with, or who needed his aid. He was the good Shepherd, who cared for the sheep, and carried the lambs in his arms. Goodness shone eminently in that part of his life which is held out in the sacred writings to public view; this part was spent in teaching the ignorant, relieving distress, and in seeking out opportunities to do good; he took many a weary step for the benefit of mankind, inasmuch that it was his distinguishing character, that he went about doing good. And when multitudes were brought to him, labouring under all manner of sickness and disease, he healed them all, without any other consideration but the pleasure and satisfaction of doing good; therefore his goodness was disinterested, undissembled, pure, divine goodness; for it not only conferred the choicest blessings on the bodies of the distressed, but the richest blessing on their souls: he not only sent them away, who were brought to him blind, dumb, deaf, lame, crooked, sick, &c. blessed with sight, speech, hearing, straightness, free use of their limbs, senses, in health of body and composedness of mind, but with their

their sins pardoned, and their souls adorned, and enriched with divine grace; for, according to his prophetic character, he opened the prison doors to them who were bound, he set the captives to sin and Satan free, and brought them who sat in darkness into marvellous light; for which purpose he preached the glad tidings of gospel grace to all who would hear him. Hence we find him not only in the temple, or in the synagogue, on every sabbath day, but he preached the everlasting gospel on other days, sometimes on board a ship, sometimes on the mountain's top; when, as a flowery author expresses it, "He made the mountain his pulpit, the arched heavens his sounding-board, and invited all who had ears, to hear his instructions, which dropped from his sacred lips as the honey and as the honey comb." He was no bigot; he did not confine his instructions or his acts of kindness to his particular friends, but dealt them out to all descriptions with an impartial hand, and never sent any away unrelieved, who came with a proper temper of mind to receive a benefit; and he said, "He who doth the will of my Father, the same is my mother, my sister and brother." And he closed life—gave up the ghost—in the exercise of the most sublime act of goodness, extended to his very worst enemies; as appears from that dying request for his murderers, enforced by a plea which nothing but divine goodness could suggest. "Father, forgive them," was his prayer; "for they know not what they do," was the plea by which he urged it.

Having considered the leading and more essential branches of the moral character of the Lord Jesus, and shewn that we should always think of him as just, holy and good, we should now proceed to speak of his mediatorial character: but, before we enter upon this, we shall attempt to remove some objections which, with some, may lie against what has been said of his divine and moral character.

I. It may be objected, that the doctrine of Christ's divinity is unintelligible ; for to believe that Christ is God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory, with the Father, implies that there are either two Gods, or that two are one, both which are repugnant to reason and common sense, and therefore not to be received as a truth :—To which we answer—

1. This objection is founded on an entire mistake ; for we are to receive many things for truths which to us in our present state are unintelligible, i. e. above our comprehension ; it is the very business of faith to receive that which is for the present above our reason to comprehend. Whatever is revealed to us, and supported by an evidence we cannot resist, must be believed by us, though we may not be able fully and clearly to conceive how it can correspond with reason ; and if we allow the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be divine revelation, then every doctrine plainly revealed therein must be believed by us ; for our faith in every Scripture doctrine stands not in the wisdom of men, but is supported by the testimony of God : and to believe what God has revealed to us, is to make a good use of our reason, even though what we believe upon divine testimony should be above our reason to comprehend.

2. Were we required to believe only what we clearly understand, and fully comprehend, there would be no virtue at all in faith, nor any use for faith in the whole system of religion ; for it is the very use of faith to consent to and cordially receive what for the present lies beyond the reach of knowledge, but is revealed ; and, as the doctrine of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Scripture doctrine plainly revealed, as I have proved, and that revelation (I take it for granted) you will allow to be from God, we have therefore sufficient reason to believe it to be true ; for it is the highest act of human reason to  
submit

submit to the testimony of God. Let God be true, if every man is a liar.

3. To believe that there are two Gods, is a plain contradiction; for there cannot be two supremes—there cannot be two first causes—nor is this revealed, but denied, in the Scriptures: they say, there is but one only living and true God. But that the adorable Father and his divine son Jesus Christ are one, is a truth as clearly revealed, and as fully asserted, as any doctrine of revelation; therefore there is sufficient reason for us to believe it, though it exceeds the bounds of our narrow and limited understanding clearly to conceive of it.

The union of the Father and the Son is a mystery, we acknowledge, and it is likely it will remain a mystery to finite minds forever; for none by searching can find out God; none can find out the Almighty to perfection: nor is it at all strange that it should be so, for Deity alone can fully understand itself. It is not strange that a worm does not comprehend and understand human nature; and there is some proportion between a man and a worm, but none between the Creator and the creature. When we attempt the comparison we sink below nonentity, less than nothing and vanity. And, though the unity of the persons in the Deity is above our comprehension, yet it is not strange that it should be so, nor does it imply any contradiction; and, since it is clearly and fully revealed in those sacred writings which we allow to be the word of God, it is both our duty, and it is highly reasonable, that we should believe it; for it is a noble act of faith that we should believe things and truths revealed to us from God, though they may appear to us the most unlikely or the most unintelligible; and they who do thus believe, merely upon the testimony of God, when appearances are against it, are said to be “strong in faith, giving glory to God.”

4. It may be objected, that Christ is often spoken of in Scripture as distinct from, and in some places inferior to, the Father, and therefore cannot be the same, or truly divine :—To which we would answer—We own that he is in some places spoken of as distinct from, and in some others as inferior to, the Father : but then it is evident that he is in those places considered in the distinguishing character of mediator, which is distinct from, and inferior to, that of his divine ; for a mediator stands between those parties he mediates for, and is distinct from both : as a necessary qualification of his mediatorship, he must be an impartial *third*, and stand in the same relation to both ; therefore he must be both God and man, and, while he executes his high office, and mediates for God with man, and for man with God, must act in an inferior character, an impartial servant to both : therefore he is sometimes spoken of as the true God, as I have shewn ; sometimes as really man ; and sometimes as inferior to both God and man, impartially serving both in the execution of his mediatorship. God calls him, by his prophet, his servant : “ I will bring forth my *Servant*, the *Branch*.” And when Christ entered upon his work, as the mediator, he owned this inferior relation, and said, “ I do nothing of myself ; my Father is greater than I ;” i. e. he strictly observed the method and rules which were to be observed in reconciling God to man ; he had no separate views of his own, but steadily pursued the grand point, reconciliation, in such ways and by such rules as became an impartial mediator, upon the plan of grace agreed upon in the covenant of redemption. In the character of mediator, he acknowledged himself a servant to man, as well as to God, and said, “ I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many.” And it is with reference to his human nature, which he assumed that he might be an impartial mediator, that he is ever spoken of as a person distinct from and inferior

ferior to God the Father. And his sustaining, and acting in, a distinct character from, or inferior to, that which is properly divine, or peculiar to the Déity, can be no objection against his divinity, or his being essentially united with the adorable Father; for it is very common for one and the same person to assume and act in different and distinct characters. A king may assume and act in the character of a mediator between two other contending monarchs, and so be equally a servant to both, without unkinging himself. King Solomon, when his mother came to see him and to make request to him, while sitting on his throne, as soon as he was informed of it, immediately arose and went out to meet her, and conducted her into the palace, and seated her on his right hand. And was Solomon less a king because he, when on the throne, assumed and acted in the character of a dutiful son to his aged and honoured mother? No, surely. Nor is the blessed Jesus less divine because he condescended to act in the character of an impartial mediator between God and man; for there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man; who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet condescended to assume human nature, and to appear in the form of a servant, that he might be an impartial mediator, faithful in his trust, and able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.—This leads us to speak more directly—

III. Of his mediatorial character. A mediator is a manager between two; one who represents both parties, between whom he mediates; he must therefore be equally concerned for both, and stand equally related to both. And Jesus Christ, being God and man, equally partaking of the entire nature of both, is a proper person to mediate between God and man. And for this divine work he must be qualified, commissioned, chosen, and faithful.

1. He

1. He was well qualified for the work; for, being a divine person, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, he must be equal to the work, and, being human, partaking of all the sinless infirmities of human nature, as well as possessed of all its perfections, he stood equally related to both, and equally concerned to maintain the honour, the rights and privileges of both the parties between whom he mediated. And it was necessary, too, that the person undertaking to make peace between God and man, must be capable of suffering, as well as of doing, the will of God; and therefore he must take on him the entire nature of man—a true body, and a reasonable soul—the complete *human nature*: and this must be so united with the divine, as to make up but one *person*; for a mediator must be but one, and have no interest of his own, separate from the interest of those he mediates for; therefore we read, “There is one mediator between God and man.” This qualification Jesus Christ had, when the Holy Ghost came upon the Blessed Virgin, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, and formed that holy thing in her, the complete human nature. When the divine nature was united to the human nature of Christ, is not revealed, therefore it does not belong to us critically to inquire. Some have supposed that the mysterious union was formed as soon as the human body was complete in the womb of the Virgin; others think it more probable at the birth, when Mary brought forth this first-born, and laid him in a manger, where he had divine honours paid him by the sages of the East. But others say, that, as nothing appeared in him from the time of his birth till his baptism, but what might be expected from sanctified humanity, they had rather think that the union of the two natures was not formed until he received that sacred rite, administered by John; when the heavens seemed to be opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in the visible form of a dove, and

lighted upon him, when it was said, that he received the Spirit without measure; and that this reception was the divine nature, which from that time took a personal possession of the human nature of Christ, and from that time he acted in the singular character of God, man, and mediator. Be these various conjectures as they may, I will not determine which, or whether either of them, is true, but leave every one to judge for himself: it matters not when the union was formed, since it is evident that it was formed at such time as qualified him to be an impartial mediator between God and man—one capable of suffering the penalties due to the sinner, and necessary to retrieve the honour of the violated law: for it behoved him to take upon him flesh and blood, that he might suffer, the just for the unjust, that he might bring many sons and daughters to glory. And, being thus qualified, he received commission to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. This commission implied power to manage all the affairs in the kingdom of providence, to have all the events which may or can touch the heart, or influence men's lives, tempers, or passions, in his hands, that he might make them all subserve the interest of his mediatorial kingdom, or render his mediation more successful: to him therefore were committed the keys of the kingdom of providence, and the reins of God's providential government were put into his hands. Agreeably to the prophetic style, one part of his mediatorial character was, that the government should rest upon his shoulder. And, as he was supreme in providence, so he had both the civil and religious polity under his influence and direction, that he might depose or exalt when and whom he pleased, check and controul, animate and inspire, as he should find that it would best subserve the purposes of his kingdom; that he might suspend or abolish any temporary or positive laws, and enact others in their room, and appoint such ordinances and public religious



Religious institutions as he saw would best serve the noble designs of his providential government; and therefore we are repeatedly assured, that all power was given unto him, both in heaven and in earth. And when he was publicly inaugurated into the sacred office, at his baptism, it is said, that he received the Spirit without measure: it is added, that the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands; and in consequence of this was that celestial mandate uttered with an audible voice, *Hear ye him*. His commission extends to angels, men and devils—through heaven, earth and hell; for principalities and powers, and the rulers of darkness, were made subject to him. He had all the hosts of the infernal pit at his command, to restrain or permit at pleasure; otherwise they would have obstructed his mediation, and rendered all his attempts for a reconciliation abortive: therefore he was commissioned to bear rule over all the foul and fallen spirits; and, though these were the first who openly and violently attacked him, yet they afterwards tamely submitted, and stood trembling before him, and in consternation inquired, What have we to do with thee? We know thee, who thou art. Art thou come to torment us before the time? At another time they submissively asked of him a permit to enter into an herd of swine. Perhaps this tame submission was in part owing to that shameful defeat which the most subtle and powerful of them all met with in the close of the forty days' temptation in the wilderness of Galilee, when it is said, the Devil left him (despairing ever afterwards of gaining any advantage against him) and angels came and ministered unto him. And it seems that they were waiting in expectation of receiving, in addition to the punishment they were suffering for their first rebellion, the full weight of his avenging arm, and suffering all the just demerit of their more recent crimes, for madly opposing him and the beneficent designs of his negotiating a peace between God and envied man.

In his commission was contained a promise of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Blessed Spirit, to awaken the attention, convince the judgment, and change the heart, of the sinner, and to sanctify the believer, and make him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—admitted to the full enjoyment of the happy result of Christ's mediation, when the redeemed will be an addition to his crown of glory, the trophies of his mercy, and the dear pledges of his successful mediation. Without those gracious influences, his mediation would be in vain. Jesus might have come, assumed our nature, obeyed and suffered in our stead—he would have laboured in vain, and spent his strength, his life and blood in vain—for man, corrupt and obstinate man, would, without those blessed influences, have remained irreconcilable, rejecting every proposal of an accommodation. Therefore in that sacred *contract* between the Father and the Son, the preliminaries were settled, and the Holy Spirit promised, who should make the people willing in the day of Christ's power; i. e. while he was executing the offices of his commission, the co-operations of the Blessed Spirit would render his negotiations effectual to salvation. Therefore our blessed Lord, before, he left this world, for the comfort of his disciples and his faithful followers to the end of the world, said, I will not leave you comfortless, I will obtain the promise of my Father, even the Holy Spirit, and send him down unto you, and when he shall come he will teach you all things; which promise was not fully to be accomplished till he should finish his work of humiliation, and return to that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Being thus commissioned, and supported by the promise of the Father of every aid necessary to render his mediation effectual, he cheerfully undertook the work, and generously made the proposals of peace and reconciliation known to men, by his doctrines, which were plain and full; for he taught as one having authority, and  
not

not as the scribes, and warmly urged their compliance by all the motives proper to influence reasonable and generous minds, enforced by his most amiable example.

And, by virtue of the same commission, he empowered and delegated a set of men, whom he had found faithful, to act for him, and in his name to renew the same gracious proposals of peace, when he was gone to his Father's court in heaven, where he would act in another department of his mediatorial office—that of advocate and intercessor; and, for their encouragement, he promised them his assistance and presence, saying, “Lo I am with you always, unto the end of the world; he therefore who despiseth you despiseth me, and he who receiveth you receiveth me,” who send you; i. e. he who rejecteth the proposals of peace and reconciliation made by you in my name, I shall respect as rejecting the proposals made by me; and they who cordially close with the proposals made (according to my gospel, by you in my name) I shall receive, as if they fell in with the same proposals made by me in person: and he who thus receives you receives me, and he who receiveth me receiveth him who sent me, and so is no longer at enmity with God, but reconciled, and interested in all the blessings of the new covenant, and which shall be consummated in eternal life:—Which brings me to what I have to mention in the next place, viz. that—

By his high commission, he had power to dispense eternal life to all them who believe. “We are sure that the witness of God is according to truth, and this is the testimony which God has given of his Son—that he hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” He has commissioned and appointed him to promise, ensure and confer eternal life on all who believe, or comply with the terms of reconciliation, as stated in, and published by, the gospel. He is therefore spoken of in the

sacred writings as the chief Corner-stone, the Elect and Precious, on whom rests all the christian hope of future blessedness. And, to shew what stress is to be laid on him, he is sometimes called the head-stone of the corner, though he had been rejected by them whose office it was to build up his church. And it is affirmed, that those who build on him, or believe in him, shall not be confounded. And his very name implied as much as this. His name *Jesus* was given him by the angel before he was born of his virgin mother, with this professed purpose, that he might be viewed and confided in as one able to save his people from their sins—from the guilt, power and punishment of their sins—and confer upon them complete salvation. And in the same view we often hear him say, “He who believeth on me hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day,” that the whole man, body and soul, may share the blessings of eternal life; and, “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not therefore at this; for the hour cometh, in which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they who have done good, to the resurrection of life.” Nothing is more expressive of his high commission, and unlimited authority to dispense eternal life to all them who believe. And having life in himself, as he is essentially God, who alone hath life and immortality; and having authority from God, as mediator, to execute judgment—to preside as final judge at the last day—and to confer eternal life on all who have accepted of and closed with the terms of reconciliation, and evidenced their sincerity by doing good; bespeaks his high commission, and supreme authority in his mediatorial kingdom. And we have a very striking illustration of his rectoral character and supreme authority, in the representation which he has given us of the last day,

day, in the 25th of Matthew, from the 31st verse, where our contemplations are led forward to that day when we are to look for him, descending from heaven in all his divine and mediatorial glory, attended with the shining orders of angelic hosts, and, having seated himself upon a throne of judgment, giving orders to ministering spirits to assemble the world of mankind before him, when he will with authority sentence or acquit, condemn or save, according as they have or have not closed with the proposals of peace which he or his ambassadors in his name have made to them, and witnessed the sincerity of their faith in, and obedience to, the gospel, by well-directed acts of charity and benevolence; saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world;" and to those of an opposite character, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels." Thus I have shewn you what we are to think of Christ as mediator, qualified for the work, and commissioned to execute it.

I am next to shew, that he has faithfully discharged all the duties of a mediator which belonged to his state of humiliation, and is now continually discharging those which belong to his state of exaltation.

And it is a delightful truth, that he cheerfully submitted to sustain and support, with honour and fidelity, those characters, and to act in those offices, which were necessary to fit and qualify him for executing that work; and that he has faithfully performed all which properly belonged to his state of humiliation, and which we can suppose were necessary to obtain and secure final salvation for sinful men.—And this I shall endeavour to illustrate in a few particulars.

1. He cheerfully undertook the great, the arduous and painful work: When the salvation of men became the  
subject

subject of consultation in heaven, and the inquiry was made "Whom shall we send, or who will go?" it is represented as though the blessed Jesus stepped forward, and said, "Lo I come, for I delight to do thy will, O my God." And for this purpose he became *Immanuel*—assumed our nature into a personal union with the divine nature; for, inasmuch as the children whom he undertook to conduct to glory were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself took part of the same, that he might become capable of yielding that obedience to his Father's law, and of making that atonement to the injured justice of Heaven, which otherwise would have been impossible. The redemption of the soul is precious, and would have ceased forever, had not this propitiatory sacrifice been offered. He therefore assumed a mortal body, that he might have somewhat to offer; he submitted to be made under the law, to which he was under no necessity of nature to be subject; he was obedient to human as well as divine laws; he voluntarily assumed and supported the character of a son, a subject, and a servant, that, by perfectly obeying and patiently suffering, he might work out and bring in an everlasting righteousness, which might justify from all things. He also received the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, which perfected his human nature, which fitted and qualified him, as man, to offer unto God a sacrifice which should make atonement for the sin of man.

And when we consider that this holy and immaculate Lamb of God was slain that he might take away the sin of the world, the blood which proceeded from his human body when it hung on the cross might with propriety be called the blood of God, from that close and intimate union which subsisted between the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. The Apostle therefore charged the elders of the church at Ephesus to "feed the church of God, which he had purchased with his own blood;"

blood;" and the apostle John says, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, and he is become the author and finisher of eternal salvation for us."

To this end I have to observe, that he has done all which we can imagine was necessary for him to do, in the state of humiliation, in order to effect and secure our final salvation. He left his Father's court, he came down to act as the Immanuel on earth, suspended for a while the ineffable glories of his divinity, and took upon him the form of a servant. Being found in fashion as a man, he submitted to the infirmities, inconveniences and sorrows of mortal life, and at last to a painful death; for he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that he might atone to the injured justice of God, and purchase forfeited happiness for man, and furnish him with those endearing motives and considerations, which might powerfully engage him to holy love and obedience—considerations and motives drawn from his unparalleled love and goodness, which constrain to undisssembled love and obedience, more strongly than those which are drawn merely from reason or future rewards: for love is strong as death, and in many instances, especially in days of primitive christianity, it has proved to be stronger; for they counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might win Christ, and finish their course with joy. Many cheerfully resigned life, when they could no longer hold it consistently with their fidelity to their divine Master, and submitted to death in all its most horrid forms, rather than do any thing unworthy the love they bore to their dear Redeemer. This love animated and constrained them to resist unto blood, striving against sin.

Having finished his embassy on earth, and closed the scene of his labours and sufferings, he at length returned to his Father, that he might appear in the presence of God for us; where he resides, making continual intercession for

for us.—This leads us to observe—that he has done, and is continually doing, what belongs to his state of exaltation, and is necessary to effect and secure eternal salvation for all them who believe.

Here we are to view him in a very different character, and as acting chiefly in his priestly office, though he does not suspend his prophetic or kingly offices; for he is yet teaching by his word, by his ministers, and by his Spirit, and is a priest on his throne, ruling in the kingdoms of nature, providence and grace. He is yet invested with all power, both in heaven and in earth, and will reign till he has subdued all things to himself, and obtained a final conquest over his enemies, of the apostate angels or apostate men, and safely conducted all his faithful ones to glory, and settled all the affairs of his mediatorial kingdom; then he shall resign the kingdom unto the Father, and God shall be *All in All*. He shall no longer act in a separate or inferior character to the Father, though he will be forever adored by glorified saints as the Lamb who was slain, and who redeemed them to God out of every nation and tongue and tribe and kingdom on the face of the earth, and made them kings and priests to God. But that part of the work which Christ is carrying on continually in heaven is *intercession*; and this belongs to his mediatorial character. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews assures us, that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth making intercession for them. And, by Christ's making intercession for us, we are to understand, his pleading our cause with his Holy Father: and the apostle John says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This is agreeable to his prophetic character. Isaiah foretold that he should pour out his soul unto death, an offering for sin, and make intercession for transgressors; and this he does, by presenting his human body, with the marks of his



his sufferings upon it. To this the practice of the high priest under the mosaic law had reference, and was typical of it: for the high priest, on the day of expiation, carried the blood of the burnt-offering and the blood of the sin-offering into the holy place, and sprinkled the blood before the Lord there, by this to make atonement. And thus our Lord Jesus Christ carried his human body into heaven, the holy sanctuary above—that very body which was offered up on the cross as a sin-offering—and presents, virtually, the blood which he shed upon the cross, and sprinkles it before the mercy-seat; for, as the Apostle expresses it, in allusion to the practice of the high priest under the dispensation of the levitical law, “Not by the blood of bulls and of goats, but by his own most precious blood, he hath entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” And now the very appearance of the human body of Christ in heaven, with the marks of his sufferings for sin upon it, is a silent but very powerful plea in our favour: and for this purpose he is represented, in the vision to John, as standing in the midst of the throne, shewing himself as the Lamb slain to take away the sin of the world; and this is a language more forcible than words can express. The power of this kind of silent but virtual intercession has been sometimes seen and felt in human courts; as once at Athens, when Æschylus was condemned as a state criminal, his brother, coming into the Areopagus just as the sentence of death was pronounced on him, without saying a word, drew out the stump of his right arm from under his cloak (having lost his right hand in that very action in which he was the principal means of saving his country) and, with a fixed countenance, which denoted a mixture of grief and compassion, presented it to the whole bench; the judges were so struck with a grateful remembrance of his heroism and his irreparable loss, that they, without rising, reversed the sentence they had just before passed,

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and set the prisoner free. Thus does Christ, (says a pious author) our elder brother, silently but powerfully plead for our forfeited lives, by presenting his human body, which was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; and such is the happy consequence, that his Holy Father (to speak after the manner of men) looks on the marks of his suffering, and remembers what he has done, and reverses the sentence which is gone forth against the sinner, and sets him free. The language of such silent intercession is this: "O my Heavenly Father, behold me in the form of exalted humanity, and remember for what purpose I took flesh upon me; remember what I have suffered: thou, Holy Father, wast witness of that awful scene; nor canst thou forget this blood, which was once offered to thee on the the cross, nor how freely it was offered, to do honour to thy holy law, to appease thy incensed wrath, and to ransom man, sinful man, from destruction. Thou hast accepted the ransom, therefore I put in my claim in favour of those for whom I condescended to become flesh, and obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, and share in my joy." This is the language of Christ's intercession in heaven, by his appearing in his exalted humanity. I do not pretend to assert, that in performing this part of the mediatorial office Christ does not make use of words, or verbal addresses, adapted to the heavenly world. What that style is, we know not not now, but we hope to know hereafter. It is certain that our forerunner has entered heaven with his human body, bearing the scars of the wounds he received on the cross; that he retains all which belonged to the glory and perfection of human nature; the proportion of features, and the organs of speech. This appeared when he met his disciples after his resurrection, and bade Thomas, "Reach hither thy

thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." And I do not know why we may not suppose that he makes use of his refined human voice, and his glorified human tongue, with the organs of speech, both in forming and enforcing a plea in favour of his church and people, whom he represents in his Father's court in heaven. He expressly told his disciples, that when he should ascend to his Father he would pray him to send them another comforter, who should abide with them, and teach them all things. However, be this as it may, we are certain that, in whatever manner this intercession is made, it is in the best and most effectual manner—worthy the exalted Redeemer, and effectual to the salvation of sinful men.

When the Blessed Jesus was on earth, we are told that he offered up strong *cries*, with tears; sometimes when he addressed his Heavenly Father it was in the humble form of a bended knee, sometimes prostrate on his face: but now all tears are wiped away; sorrow and abasement are no more. Such humble forms now would be indecent, not being agreeable to his present state of exaltation; therefore he is represented to us as *sitting down* on the right hand of the Divine Majesty while he performs this part of his priestly office. He is now a *priest on his throne*, and his address is princely—Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, and share in my joy.

Therefore, if we would form right apprehensions of Christ's interceding in heaven, it must be, not in that humble form he made use of when in the garden of Gethsemane, but in that dignified attitude to which he is ascended, where he sits, and will sit, till he has made all his enemies his footstool. And, as it is in a manner worthy his high dignity, so it is effectual to procure the blessings he intercedes for.

If he could say with confidence in the days of his humiliation, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always," surely he can promise himself success in his intercessions which he makes in heaven; especially since we know that he asks for nothing repugnant to his Father's will, nor for any thing but what he has purchased with his own blood, and which his Father stands engaged by the covenant of redemption to bestow. Assured of this, the Apostle could, for himself and for all the elect of God, beat the challenge, and exultingly say, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is Christ who died, yea, rather, who is risen again from the dead, who also maketh intercession for us." If we believe in Jesus, and, from sincere intentions, and upright dispositions of heart, aim at pleasing God in all things, our exalted Intercessor will vindicate our character from every misrepresentation, and plead his own righteousness, and the merits of his own sufferings, as a full answer to those charges which cannot be denied: and, though we are such sinful and imperfect creatures that nothing proceeds from us free from the stains of moral pollution, and our best services need forgiveness, rather than merit reward, yet Jesus, the angel who stands before the throne, or sits in the midst of it, offers up the prayers of the saints, with much incense, which renders both their persons and their well-meant services acceptable.

In one word—The intercessions of Christ are effectual to procure all necessary blessings, which he is commissioned to bestow. It is effectual to keep the believer from falling, and ere long to present him without spot in the presence of his Father, with exceeding joy; when his prayers which he offered up while on earth will be completely answered, when all the chosen and faithful shall be one in the Father and in him, and shall be made perfect in one.

Thus

Thus I have finished what I proposed, of the mediatorial character of Jesus Christ, and shewn what apprehensions we should form of him, under this singular character of mediator between God and man—the God-man Christ Jesus.—I close with a few remarks:

When we consider the Lord Jesus under the endearing character of our intercessor, how amiable does he appear! And what an honour is done him in the heavenly world, when God will not accept of the very best services of his saints, unless perfumed by his merits, and presented by him, and yet will accept of the meanest and the vilest sinner for his sake, if truly penitent and believing! How amiable does he appear, that, amidst all the glories of his Father's throne, the acclamations and ascriptions of the heavenly hosts, he does not forget his servants here below, but watches over them with a compassionate eye; guides them by his Spirit, and defends them by his power and providence, and has promised that he will ever have an ear open to hear their cry, and a mouth ready to plead their cause, and to recommend their poor, broken and imperfect services to the acceptance of his Heavenly Father! Well might we be filled with wonder and pleasing astonishment, to behold the blessed Jesus condescending to wear the fallen nature of man, and in that nature obey, suffer and die for us, and then to rise from the dead, and ascend to his Father, and through him to our Father, to his God and our God, and there to appear as our advocate, pleading the cause of sinful men in the court of heaven, ever living, making intercession for us.

But, upon a general view of what you have read, let me ask you, What think you of Christ? whose son is he? Are those divine and incommunicable attributes, of which I have proved him possessed, the property of any mere son of Adam, or of any other created parent? Who among the sons of the mighty can be compared to him,  
who

who is omniscient, eternal, immutable, omnipresent and almighty? Surely it would be a kind of blasphemy, after such irresistible evidence as has been offered of his divine nature, to think him any other than the Son of the Most High God. And, though we are not able to describe his generation, yet let us, in a transport of holy joy and reverence, love and obedience, cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Particularly, when we view the works of creation, providence and grace, all which are ascribed to him, what can we think of him, but that he is an almighty and an all-gracious Saviour, able to save to the utmost all who come unto God by him? He who made worlds, and supports and governs them by his wisdom, power and grace, cannot fail to succour and save those who properly put their trust in him. Surely we may with the utmost safety, like dying Stephen, commit that most important of all interests, the salvation of our immortal spirits, into his hands. Those miraculous works which were wrought by him in the days of his tabernacling in flesh, were not works of a mortal whose breath was in his nostrils, and whose foundation was in the dust. He at whose word the fig-tree dried up—he whose voice the turbulent winds and the boisterous sea obeyed—he for whom the lawless fish paid tribute—he to whom the proud pharisee and the hardy soldier submitted, the one feeling the energy of his remonstrance, and leaving his ungodly gains, and the other, enervated by words smoother than oil, retreating and falling to the ground—in one word, he before whom the infernal spirits, though combined in legions, stood trembling, and at whose command incurable diseases fled, and blooming health and vigour succeeded—cannot be insulted or neglected with impunity.

Therefore I call upon you, O careless and thoughtless sinner, to stop in your bold or heedless career, and answer  
me,

me, or rather your own conscience, upon the evidence you have received, this short question—What think you of Christ? whose son is he? Is he a person to be ridiculed or insulted? Are his doctrines, his laws, or the proposals of peace, as published in his gospel, to be disregarded? Do you know what you do when you disobey this Saviour—when you neglect that salvation which he has wrought out? By opposing his cause you oppose the authority of a king—the authority of a God. You vainly and madly set yourselves against a power which is irresistible; you attempt to frustrate his beneficent designs who called the universe into being, and commands all nature into obedience, and can crush worlds into nothing, and damn his enemies, infinitely easier than we can break a bubble or bite a moth. And this mighty being will ere long descend from heaven with his angels, and summon all the human race before him: where then, O where, will the ungodly and the sinner appear! what will you do in the day thereof (and the great day of his wrath will come) you who have paid him no regard, you who have not given him a fair hearing, nor his gracious proposals a candid or impartial examination—never publicly owned him for your lord and master, nor obeyed his plain, easy and positive commands! Where will you fly, or to which of his saints or angels will you turn! Or what excuse could you make, if your Saviour should even now rend the heavens and come down, and summon you before his awful tribunal! Think, O think seriously, of these things, before the archangel sound the last trumpet, or, which is all one to you, before death executes his commission upon you, and puts it out of your power so much as to hope for salvation.

I must entreat you to sit down and call in your scattered thoughts, and contemplate the personal glories of the blessed Jesus, his divine and amiable character, his beneficent designs, the reasonableness and the pure moralities

ty of his laws, and the generosity of his grace ; and believe in his person, trust in his righteousness, and live in obedience to his gospel, and in conformity to his example.

I close with saying—What we have heard administers comfort, solid, permanent and eternal consolation, to every true believer and sincere follower of Jesus Christ. When they consider in whom they have believed, on whom they have built their eternal hopes, and to whom they have committed their most important interest, or with whom they have lodged the salvation of their immortal souls, they must rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. But, while you rejoice in your almighty and all-gracious Saviour, let it be the highest point of your ambition to live worthy the character of christians—worthy of him whose disciples you are. Keep your eye fixed on him as your polar star, and steer your course through life by his unerring example : let all your expectations centre in him, and derive all your peace and hope from him : and then, when he who is your light shall appear, you shall be like him, and appear with him in glory, and be led to fountains of living waters, and all tears shall be wiped away forever. **AMEN.**





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## Discourse III.

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### The Personality and Operations of the HOLY GHOST.

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A C T ' S . xix . . 2 . .

*He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.*

**P**AUL, the great apostle to the gentiles, in prosecuting the work of the ministry, which he had received, not of men, neither by men, but by immediate revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ, passed through Galatia, Phrygia, and Lesser Asia, and came to the celebrated city Ephesus, where he made some stay. While he was preaching there the gospel of the Blessed God, he found a number of devout persons, in whom appeared none of those miraculous gifts which had been bestowed upon those christians where he had before been; to whom he addressed himself in the words of my text: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost:"—Which question and answer we are to understand thus: 'Have ye received those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, since ye embraced the christian faith, as the gift of tongues, prophecies, healing, &c.?' and they answered, We are such strangers to these things, that we have

have not so much as heard, with any certainty, whether the Holy Ghost has been any where shed forth in such an extraordinary manner, as to distinguish the present or christian dispensation from the mosaic.' Paul seemed to be surpris'd at their answer, and asked into what baptism they had been baptized; they said, into John's, in token of their repentance, and their embracing the new dispensation, under the reign of the Messiah, in whom they believed, and to whom they submitted upon the testimony of John the Baptist. And, as the form of John's baptism was different from that which was afterwards used by the apostles, not being the christian baptism, nor in the name of the Holy Ghost, so they had not been led into any new or particular sentiment about the Holy Ghost, or his operations, different from what had been taught them from the writings of the Old Testament. They received what John testified concerning Jesus, believed in him, and embraced his religion, though they had not had an opportunity of being fully instructed into the peculiar & distinguishing doctrines of christianity, nor of receiving the christian baptism in the apostolic form; and so they had not heard particularly, nor been made themselves the subjects, of those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost which were usually communicated at the administration of the christian baptism by the hands of the apostles. We cannot easily account at this day how these devout profelytes should be such strangers in Israel as not to know these things. . . But it is probable that they lived remote and obscure, and had never been in Judea after they had been instructed and baptized by John or some of his disciples. And now on some occasion they came to Ephesus, where they found the apostle Paul, by whom they were baptized in the apostolic form, and received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; for the historian observes, that they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

From

From the words thus explained, with their connexion with the context, we may infer this general truth—That there may be some sincere christians who may need further instruction in the personality, character and operations of the Holy Ghost.

In the full belief of this general truth, I shall in the ensuing discourse treat of the person, character and operations of the Holy Spirit, called in my text the Holy Ghost, in as plain, clear and concise a manner as I can; in such a manner as I hope may reflect honour on that gospel of which the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and his operations makes so distinguishing a part.

I. I am to treat of the Personality of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is that Divine Spirit who in the triune Deity is distinct in his personality both from the Father and the Son, though of one undivided essence with both. He is almost every where spoken of as a distinct person, in the Sacred Oracles, as proceeding from the Father and the Son. Jesus told his disciples, “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me;” and adds, “The Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.” From these passages it plainly appears that the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Ghost, are one and the same person, distinct both from the Father and the Son: and he is spoken of as proceeding from heaven to earth upon the most gracious errand both from the Father and the Son, but in their name. Agreeably to this the Blessed Saviour comforted his disciples with saying, “It is expedient that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart (or when I depart) I will send him unto you.” It is plain from these passages, and from almost every other in the sacred writings, where-

in the Holy Spirit is directly spoken of, that he is a distinct person, to whom personality is to be ascribed equally as to the Father or the Son. And agreeable to this is that singular passage in i. John, v. 7: "There are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word (or the Son) and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." I close the arguments from Scripture with the doxology of the Apostle in the close of his second epistle to the Corinthians: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you-all. Amen."

II. I am next to speak of his Divine Character. And the Holy Ghost is a divine person, equally possessed of all the natural and moral perfections of the Deity. This is evident also from the Scriptures, where equal honour and divinity are ascribed to him, and an equal regard required of us, as to the Father and the Son.

1. The name God is in the Hebrew plural, [Elohim] and denotes a plurality of persons in one undivided essence. And this is the name whereby God makes himself known, and which comprehends the Trinity, and is in a peculiar manner expressive of Deity: and it is made use of in almost every verse of the first chapter of the Bible, where the sacred Historian has given us a short account of the works of creation, in which the whole Trinity, and each person, is equally concerned. And, that the agency of the Holy Ghost might appear very evident, it is particularly observed, in the 2d verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis, that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The word, translated *moved*, in the original Hebrew signifies, *an exertion of prolific or productive power*, collecting, forming and animating individuals out of a liquid, wild and confused chaos, and is expressive of creative power—an evidence of divinity.

2. The

2. The divinity of the Holy Ghost further appears, from the works of creation being particularly ascribed to him in Scripture. It was by his almighty agency that the wild chaos was productive of innumerable real individual existences; for it is observable, that, when the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, and had exerted his creative and prolific power, that the Deity joined in one voice, saying, "Let there be light, and there was light:" so that in the very first productions in our world, creative power was ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Also when man, the master-piece of this lower creation, was to receive real existence, each of the persons in the Triune Deity was equally concerned in his formation; therefore it was said, "Let us make man"—let us make him after our own image. It follows that the likeness of the three must be the same—the brightness of each others' glory, and the express image of each others' persons. If the image of each person was essentially the same, then each was essentially divine, and equally concerned in the works of creation.

His divinity is not only arguable from the exertion of his agency in the first productions from ancient chaos, but from his agency in the restoration of man to the divine image in which he was first created, but which he lost in the early apostacy. This restoration is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost. And as it is a new creation, or a renovation of primitive form, so it is highly reasonable to suppose a renovation, or a restoration to primitive form, should be effected by the same hand which gave that form. And the Spirit is generally considered in Scripture as the author of this spiritual renovation: for those who are restored to the divine image are said to be created anew in Christ Jesus, after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and these are said to be born of the Spirit. Agreeably to this, the Psalmist, when celebrating the honour of the Creator, sings,

sings, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;" i. e. by the Spirit of Jehovah, who in the New Testament style is called the Holy Ghost.

3. The divine character of the Holy Ghost is vindicated, from other works ascribed to him, which are on all hands acknowledged to be the works of God only: for instance, *inspiration*, which enables men to foretel future events with great exactness, even events the accomplishment of which seemed entirely to depend upon contingent circumstances. These men are said to be inspired of God. Even Nebuchadnezzar allowed that Daniel could not foretel future events, unless the spirit of the holy gods was in him. But we are assured that the whole system of divine revelation was given by inspiration from God, and is profitable; and yet it is said that holy men of old spake, or deliyered their prophecies, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: so that inspiration from God, and a being moved by the Holy Ghost to reveal the mind and will of God, are one and the same thing. Therefore the Holy Ghost is God, a divine person, whose influences and inspirations are the inspirations of God. And, as the Blessed Spirit reveals to men, as he did to the prophets and apostles, the secret things of God, so he does it, not by information, instruction or direction from another, but from his own self-consciousness, being himself *omniscient*, an incommunicable attribute of Deity; and therefore the apostle Paul said, "The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is within him? Even so the Spirit of God knoweth the things of God," with that same conscioufness that the spirit of a man discerns and is conscious of its own existence and operations.

4. Another

4. Another argument in support of the divinity of the Holy Ghost may be drawn from the Apostle's saying, that believers, in whom he dwelt, were for that reason the temple of God: "Know ye not," asked the Apostle, (he speaks of it as a thing well known, and acknowledged by all the children of God) "that ye are the temple of God? for the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." If the Spirit of God dwelling in the heart of believers makes them the temples of God, then the Holy Ghost is God; for it is the God dwelling in them that makes them the temples of God.

5. I think it is an argument in favour of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, that the sin against him is said to be unpardonable. We can hardly conceive that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be pardonable, except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, if the Holy Ghost has not a just claim to divine honours. That a sin against a being who has neither distinct personality, nor any just claim to divinity, should be unpardonable, when all manner of sin and blasphemy committed against God or his divine Son shall be forgiven, is what we cannot comprehend. Besides, the manner in which this sin is spoken of by the evangelists conveys the idea both of personality and divinity: "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Whosoever shall read this verse with an unprejudiced mind, will conclude that the Holy Ghost, the object against whom this sin is committed, is a person distinct from the Son of Man, and possessed equally of a divine character; nay, the heinous and unpardonable nature of this sin implies both personality and divinity in the object against whom the sin is committed. Its unpardonable quality lies in a malicious and voluntary resistance of

divine agency, knowing it at the same time to be divine : therefore the heinous nature and the fatal consequence of this sin proves both the personality and the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

6. Peter charged Ananias with lying to God, when he had only attempted to impose upon the Holy Ghost and on those who were under his influence, by a palpable falsehood. Herein (said the Apostle) thou hast not only lied unto men, and endeavoured to impose upon us, the apostles, and the church under our care, but *thou hast lied unto God*. Now it is certain that the apostle Peter did believe the Holy Ghost to be God, or Ananias's prevaricating in this matter would not be lying to God, in his view, more than any other breach of truth would be.

Thus it appears, from arguments supported by plain passages of Scripture, in express terms, or by infallible consequences drawn from their most obvious sense, that the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost is a doctrine well founded. And indeed the whole tenor of Scripture is, to pay him divine honours. They consider him as the infallible *guide*, whose office is, to lead us into the knowledge of all necessary truth, and to communicate all sorts of religious gifts, and christian graces. It is the Holy Ghost who strengthens the believer against sin and temptations ; it is the Holy Ghost who fortifies and supports the saints under all their trials, sanctifies them wholly, and fits them beforehand to glory. Now it is the current language of Scripture, that he who has wrought us for this selfsame thing is God ; for it is God who worketh all our works in us and for us : therefore the Holy Ghost, who works all this, is God. He is the searcher of hearts, he knows all our wants, and is the supply of all spiritual blessings ; he is therefore omniscient and omnipresent. He subdues stubborn hearts, and forms them to the love of God and the practice of holiness,



ness, and is therefore omnipotent, for this is said to be the exertion of the exceeding greatness of the mighty power of God. It was the Holy Ghost who spoke in the prophets and apostles. It was the Holy Ghost who inspired the primitive christians with those miraculous gifts which enabled them to understand at once the whole system of revealed truth—to discern the hearts of men, and to speak at once clearly and properly in languages and tongues they had never learnt: one of the most surprising miracles and events that was ever heard of in the world, and which will stand, a demonstration of divine power, when time and sublunary things will be forgot.

I close the argument with observing, that, from a full conviction of the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and that undivided honours should be paid to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, it was not unusual for the apostles to close their epistles with this doxology and apostolic benediction—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.\*

Before we pass to speak of the operations of the Holy Ghost, we shall infer a few things from what has been already observed; as—

1. We may infer, That divine honour and homage is due from us men to the Holy Ghost. If he is a divine person, then divine honour and homage is due from us, in whom he condescends to dwell, for the most honourable and beneficent purpose—that he might consecrate us temples of God: for we are bound to render to all their dues—honour to whom honour is due—to give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's—to give unto God the glory due unto

\* For the further illustration of the doctrine, read *Is. lxxiii. 14, Heb. iii. 7—10, connected with Psalm xcvi. 67, 2 Corinthians, iii. 17, 2 Sam. xxiii. 123.* They fully hold up the idea of the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost.

unto his great name. But then, agreeably to the constitution of the covenant of grace, our addresses to Heaven are not to be directly or personally made to the Holy Ghost, but, according to the order established in the gospel, we are to pray for the pardon of sin, the justification of our persons, the sanctification of our natures, and final salvation, to the Father, through the Son, for the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, all which originated in the love of God, and are become the purchase of Christ, and conveyed to the minds of men, through the medium of divine revelation, by the operations and influences of the Holy Ghost, upon a mediatorial plan. Agreeably to this, our Saviour told his disciples, that when the Holy Spirit should come, he would lead them into all truth—he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you:—plainly implying that subordination which the Holy Spirit observes, in his ministrations, to Jesus Christ. And, though the terms in which our Blessed Lord speaks of the subordination of the Holy Spirit may convey to the inattentive mind the idea of inferiority, especially in these words—“He (i. e. the Holy Spirit) when he comes, shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you;” yet, if we attend to the connexion, we shall plainly see that no other inferiority is implied or intended by these last words, than a subordination of operations, agreeable to the order established in the gospel; that he will not act in any separate interest of his own, but as a kind of advocate for Christ with sinful men, proposing and urging his doctrines, carrying conviction of their truth and importance home to the heart, enforced by evangelical and eternal motives.

2. We infer, That it is of importance that we entertain right apprehensions of the Holy Ghost. Let us regard him, especially, as that sacred agent who in his own way  
operates

operates upon the human heart, forming it anew, breaking down the evil and vicious habits, delivering from spiritual darkness and the power of a carnal mind, implanting divine principles in, and renewing the divine image upon, the soul, yet restoring the happy freedom of the mind, and doing honour to human moral agency. Let us adore him as that blessed agent who begets us again to a lively hope by the word of God, and carries on his own work till that which is perfect shall come, when that which is in part shall be done away.

3. We infer, That we ought to make it a very important part of our daily addresses to Heaven, that we may have the Holy Ghost imparted to us, with all those gracious influences which are essential to the well-being of religion: for sure I am, that where these are not, there are none of the comforts, delights, and peculiar advantages, of a religious life. We must be careful that we do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption; either by indulging the inordinate cares of the world, by neglecting duty, accompanying with idle, vain or wicked persons, or by relapsing into sin, and thereby quenching his motions—be sure to cultivate and cherish every good impression: for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.—Having observed these things, as natural inferences from what has been said of the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost, we pass, as was proposed, to speak—

III. Of the *Operations* of the Holy Ghost. And these, I think, may, for the sake of order, be divided into *common*, *saving* and *special*. But, to avoid confusion, we would premise, that the Holy Ghost being a divine person, his operations, in the sacred style, are sometimes called indifferently the operations of God, and the Holy Ghost is sometimes called the Spirit of God, sometimes the Spirit

of Christ, and sometimes the Spirit, by way of eminence. The apostle Paul, addressing himself to the believing Romans, said, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwell in you;" and, "If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his." Here you see that the same person, who is the Holy Ghost, is called the Spirit, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ.

We shall now proceed to speak of the operations of the Holy Spirit, under those three divisions, *common*, *saving*, and *special*.

1. The *common* operations of the Holy Ghost we take to be a kind of an *afflatus Numine*, or a divine inspiration diffused in common through the human race, which lays a powerful restraint upon the lusts of men, fixes a curb upon the corruptions of the human heart, and maintains a conscious distinction between right and wrong, virtue and vice, decent and indecent actions. In consequence of this, all mankind are, in a greater or less degree, under a divine influence, obvious to every attentive mind. This opinion has obtained common consent. The inspired Paul allows that the common actions of men are under controul of a divine influence: "In God," says he, "we live, and move, and have our being;" a truth which he not only allowed himself, but observed that it was the general opinion of mankind; and while at Athens, in support of this opinion, he quoted some of the most celebrated poets of Celicia—Aratus and Cleanthes, whose words he recites—*For we are his offspring*. And, considering the corrupt state of human nature, the strong propensities to evil which are in us, we think it is certain, that all virtuous sentiments and good dispositions which are found in mankind in general, and which produce virtuous actions, are from the common influences of the Holy Ghost; that they are the effects of the divine agency. This is so obvious, that it is acknowledged by the  
 most

most discerning among the heathen philosophers and sages. Seneca said, "Men cannot resemble the gods in goodness, till the gods first form that resemblance; and we cannot come to God till he first come into us; for all virtue in men is by the assistance and agency of the gods:" and another said, "We must pray to the gods to guide our reason, for none of us can act reasonably but by the assistance of the gods:" and a third affirms, that "virtue is not the work of mortals, but the gift of the gods; and if a man was placed in the midst between virtue and vice, he would need the influence of the gods to enable him to choose virtue." Now to the united testimony of these three pagan philosophers we may subjoin that from the christian oracle—"Not that we are of ourselves sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." And indeed it is owing to these divine influences and operations that men are humane, civil, moral, or virtuous; it is these which essentially distinguish fallen men from fallen angels. It is these which render fallen men the proper subjects of salvation: mankind being under these common influences, reason and conscience make strong remonstrances against sin, sinful actions, and evil propensities. And this opposition, in every man's breast, to every species of immorality, though too feeble, yet is the real effect and consequence of the common influences of the Holy Ghost: and men do not sin, nor continue long under conscious guilt, without feeling some remorse, some uneasy reflections, until those common influences are withdrawn: then, and not till then, can we sin without restraint, or with full self-approbation and applause.

As these common influences of the Blessed Spirit assist reason, awaken conscience, and are, in the phrase of inspired wisdom, that candle of the Lord which is light in the soul, a divine light, something more than the mere dic-  
tates

dictates of human reason and nature, left to itself, under the ruins of the apostacy; they direct the mind to that which is good—inspire with a desire to perform that which is good: but how to perform we find not. Yet they greatly assist nature and reason, but are not sufficient to overcome or to withstand the prevalency of indwelling corruption; they keep the mind open, and susceptible of saving operations, and are necessary to render fallen and guilty man the proper subject of them. Therefore it is very dangerous to resist, stifle or quench this coal, kept alive by the common influence of the Holy Ghost. Hence we have that caution of our divine Lord—Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

By these divine operations, common to all mankind, reason is rendered beneficial to man, morality is kept alive in the world, and mankind are continued in a state in which salvation is possible; and so are delivered from, or raised above, the deplorable state of fallen angels. When these are overborne, or withdrawn from the heart, we are quite out of the way of conviction; motives and arguments do not take hold of the mind, which is, in the language of Scripture, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. And though these common influences are sometimes called the law of nature, or the light of reason, yet we take it, that they are distinct from both reason and nature, and that nature and reason are only subjects on which the Spirit operates, and are instruments by which the Spirit works more effectually upon the heart.

These operations are perfectly harmonious with uncorrupted nature, and consonant with right reason; but distinct from, and something above, the mere dictates of nature, under its present corrupt and disordered state, and more powerful than unassisted reason, in her present state of weakness and darkness. So much as this, we think, is evident from the apostle Paul's own words, and what they

they fairly imply. When speaking of those common influences upon the hearts of the gentiles, he says, "For when the gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, they shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences the meanwhile accusing or excusing one another:" which words at least carry so much in them as this—that the gentile nations, though they had not the written law of God revealed to them, yet had such divine impressions made upon their minds as were sufficient to awaken their consciences, to accuse them of guilt when they did that which was contrary to the revealed laws of God, and to excuse or approve of them when they did those things which the law requires. Now those impressions which wrote the law of God upon the hearts of the gentiles, were undoubtedly from the Spirit of God, whose business it is to write the law of God upon the hearts of the children of men, agreeable to the prophecy of Jeremiah when speaking of new covenant blessings to be more plentifully enjoyed under the reign of the Messiah: "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

We come now more directly to speak of the *saving* operations of the Holy Ghost. These we take to be some stronger impressions made upon the intellectual powers of the mind, which alter the disposition, and most powerfully persuade the whole man to choose and pursue the noble purposes of godliness.

In these operations, the understanding is the power which is in general the first impressed; the consequence is, the person is brought seriously to consider with himself. It is allowed by all, that serious consideration is the first step to sound conversion.

The settling of the sentiments, and the balancing of the mind with religious principles, must be the result of sober thought, and serious inquiry; as the Psalmist observes, that the thinking on his ways was previous to the changing of his sentiments: "I thought on my ways," saith he, "and then I turned my feet into thy testimonies; I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." The understanding being deeply impressed, the soul entertains other apprehensions of the Great God: his power and his presence, his purity and patience, his goodness and mercy, strike the mind, arrest the fugitive thoughts, and he considers with himself, "I am not only a creature of God, but I am naked and open before an infinitely pure and ever-present Deity; all the secrets of my soul are fully known to that God who made me and daily supports me: he has ever observed my conduct in every particular of past life: he knows both the folly and plague of my heart, the depravity of my nature, and the treachery of my very inmost soul: for there has not been a word on my tongue, nor a thought in my heart, but lo, O Lord, thou hast known it altogether." The awakened sinner considers also, that this God, in whose presence he has acted so unworthily, so wickedly, is not a man, who is a worm, nor the son of man, who is but a worm, but the omnipotent JEHOVAH, who can with infinite ease make him miserable, or nothing, in a moment, or bring him to the dust of death, or to the flames of hell. And the thought is pressed home, and addresses the heart in the language of the prophet Nathan to David—"Thou art the man"—"thou, a poor feeble worm, hast been daily offending the great God of heaven and earth, making him thy almighty enemy!"

From an impressive sense of the power and presence of the great and blessed God, the Holy Ghost leads the awakened sinner to consider of his purity and patience, and he can no longer treat the immaculate JEHOVAH with  
 irreverence



irreverence and disregard, but reveres him as the *Holy One of Israel*; and he begins to feel himself in the presence of that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and he is ready to cry out, Who can stand before this holy, holy, holy Lord God!—this God who must hate sin in all its forms, and is therefore angry with the wicked every day, and must be very angry with me: Why! O why! have I not before this time felt the strokes of his displeasure!

This leads the concerned sinner to admire the wonderful *patience* of God. He wonders at his own presumption, that he has ever dared to affront such power, to offend such purity, and to abuse such patience; and that, doing this, he is yet among the living to praise God. He looks around on the world, who lie in ignorance and wickedness, and considers what a great part are blaspheming the God of heaven, violating the plainest dictates of reason, and the precepts of morality, and living in an almost entire forgetfulness of the God who made them. He considers himself as one of those who have added to the aggregate sum of moral guilt, and wonders that the great Jehovah bears with the ingratitude and rebellion of his poor, impotent and apostate creatures—that he has not before this time clothed himself with majesty, and made his wrath known by the thunders of his power, and in a moment punished the folly and madness of presumptuous mortals, and crushed the world and its inhabitants into ruin. But, instead of this, he sees the patience of God drawn out to long suffering: for he causes his sun to rise, and his rain to descend, on the evil and on the unthankful, and is kind and gracious, inviting the chief of sinners to the participation of heavenly blessings; which is such a continued demonstration, such a sensible proof, of the boundless goodness and tender mercy of God, as fills him with a sort of venerable delight, and encourages him for the future to repose himself with a cheerful confidence

fidence on such paternal goodness and unceasing kindness. These impressive apprehensions of the power and purity, presence and patience, the goodness and mercy, of God, constrain the awakened sinner to consider him as the God of the spirits of all flesh, who has immediate access to the inmost soul, and that the hearts of all men are in his hand, and that he can manage them as he pleases; working in them both to will and to do his own good pleasure. Therefore, though he feels himself dark, impotent, and polluted, yet he feels that he is at the same time a subject of divine agency, and that all he needs to illuminate his dark mind—that all he wants to cure the disorders of the soul, and to heal every internal disease—to raise him to the nobler forms of divine life, and to final and complete happiness—is, to have, and sensibly to enjoy, the inward, the vital, operative presence of the Divine Spirit—that holy Spirit of God by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And, as he hopes that he feels something of those vital influences already, so he prays that he who has begun the good work in him would carry it on to perfection. The mind being thus formed to entertain right apprehensions of God, the Divine Illuminator calls back the thoughts of the convinced sinner upon himself, in some such reflections as these: I am a creature of this almighty, holy, patient, good and merciful God, intelligent and immortal, capable of obedience and happiness; the law of my Maker is and must be the rule of my conduct; and the honour and felicity of my nature consists in practically knowing, supremely loving, and constantly enjoying the favour of my God. But, alas! I have abused my noble intellectual powers; I have been unmindful of my immortal interest, I have violated the sacred laws of Heaven, and am condemned by my own conscience; for my conscience witnesseth to my face, that I have been so far from making the honour and glory of God my end, and my soul my first concern,

that

that I have lived as without God in the world, and as if my body was immortal, and my soul mortal, and as if the things which are seen were eternal, and the things which are not seen were temporal: I am condemned by all the creatures above, around and below me; all of whom answer the end of their being much better than I: I am condemned by the law of my Creator, who, being the first cause and last end of all things, deserves my first, my best, my all: "I am ashamed, and even confounded, and abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But I see, I plainly see, that neither the deepest self-abasement and abhorrence, the bitterest repentance, nor the most impartial reformation for the future, will atone for the past, nor reverse the sentence which has been already pronounced against me: nor will these humiliations and reformations of themselves mortify and purge out those evil inclinations, vicious habits, and untoward dispositions, which still prevail in me, and which will effectually prevent my future happiness, even though I were delivered from the punishment due to me for sin. Oh! what shall I then do! where, O where shall I fly! Be willing to be miserable I cannot; to free myself from the certain or fearful expectation of it, in existing circumstances, is equally impossible. I have no wisdom to devise, I have no strength to effect, my own salvation. What shall I do! where shall I find a friendly hand able to save me! where shall I find a rock firm enough to build my eternal hopes upon!

The Holy Ghost, by calling up such reflections as these, prepares the convinced sinner to take a more intimate and self-applying view of the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character. He is fully convinced that he cannot stand before the infinitely holy Lord God. He looks out for help, and, under the influences of the enerring Spirit, he looks into the gospel, where he sees as

in a glass the glory of the Lord Jesus—the displays of divine wisdom and grace shining in his face: and he now entertains quite different thoughts and sentiments of this glorious person, who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person—the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The most exalted and endearing apprehensions of the Lord Jesus Christ powerfully strike the mind, and captivate the heart. The judgment being informed, the affections move with ardour spontaneously towards him, as to a person with whom he has the most important, interesting and personal concern. Under a realizing sense of his own miserable state without grace and Christ, while he sees and feels himself under the condemning power of God’s law, under a moral inability to fulfil its requirements, and yet neither able to plead innocence, or to make atonement, the convinced sinner attends to the gospel proposals, and to those distinguishing truths which relate to the person, offices and mediatorial character of the Lord Jesus Christ, as to matters and truths with which the salvation of the soul is connected. He treats them no longer as mere matters of speculation, but as the life of all his hopes; he contemplates the Lord Jesus Christ in those offices and characters which he sustains as mediator, with the warmest gratitude—the true Prophet, the great High Priest, and the supreme and everlasting King, and gracious Saviour of sinners; and concludes, with dreadful certainty, that without he can obtain an interest in his mediation, in the benefits of his atonement, in the merits of his righteousness, and in the efficacy of his intercession, he is utterly and inevitably undone.

The Holy Ghost at this critical moment enlightens the understanding with the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and at the same time opens to the convinced sinner the purity and the extensive nature of the divine law, the weakness of his nature, the corruptions of his own heart, and the  
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imperfection of his best obedience: and under these views he highly approves of the way and method of salvation by grace, through faith, as revealed in the gospel. The heart being thus prepared, it does, as it were of itself, open, melt, close, unite with, and cordially receive, the Lord Jesus, as offered in the gospel, as the most suitable, most amiable, almighty and all-gracious Saviour, worthy of supreme love, and inexpressible complacency; and, while others are devising means to be rich and great, he desires above all things to be found in Christ, interested in his atonement, clothed with his righteousness, filled with his Spirit, and to be found humbly and steadily walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless. He hears the invitations of the gospel with pleasure, and comes at the Saviour's call, and attends to the doctrines, the precepts and the example of his Lord and Master, with an obedient ear, and a complying heart: and, while he receives his Saviour into his heart, and rests his salvation in his hands, he sincerely subscribes to his laws, doctrines and institutions, and casts anchor within the vail, and in the way of well-doing seeks for glory, honour and immortality, in hopes that he shall have the crown of eternal life conferred upon him, as the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ his Lord. And now, being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, he cheerfully bows to his authority, and puts, as it were, both the sword and the sceptre into his hands, and yields up the whole empire of his soul, to be governed by his laws, controuled by his power, sanctified by his Spirit, cherished by his truth and grace, and finally saved by his righteousness. He settles, too, a correspondence with his Saviour, under the influences of the same Spirit, which he purposes shall never be interrupted, and is delighted, and even transported, with the pleasing prospect which opens to his view, and is ready to cry out, "Blessed Jesus! thou art my light, my strength,  
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my joy, and my hope ! thou art such a Saviour as my necessity required ; thou satisfiest all my wants, thou answerest all my wishes, thou art all in all to me ; I cannot live without an interest in thee, without an intercourse with thee, O thou life of my life, thou soul of all my joy !”

3. We shall now take a view of the operations of the Holy Ghost which may be called *special*.

And by the special operations of the Holy Ghost we mean the same which in the Scriptures are called the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, which are constantly necessary to animate the believer to the faithful discharge of duty, to support him under his trials, to arm him against temptation, to subdue the body of sin and death, to sanctify and attemper him to the enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world. These are also called in Scripture the *feelings* of the Spirit, the *earnest* of the Spirit, and the *witness* of the Spirit with out spirits which proves that we are the children of God. By these, and many other phrases of the like nature, the special influences of the Holy Ghost are spoken of in Scripture, and are considered every where as necessary to maintain the christian life : the same Spirit who begins must carry on the good work to perfection. The same Spirit who enkindled, must keep alive, the sacred flame ; “ for it is the Spirit who giveth life.” And every believer is, from his own experience, sensible, or soon will be, that without the Spirit, who giveth life, he can do nothing. We know that the saints, when they are first delivered from the spirit of bondage, and translated into the liberty of the children of God, are ready to think that every resolution which they form for the future, in matters of religion, they shall be able to keep, or carry into full execution ; supposing that all things will appear to them the same that they now do—that divine objects will strike the  
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mind in the same point of view—that the present apprehensions of God, of Christ, the soul, and the eternal world, will always take the same hold of the heart, and equally engage the attention : but a little experience in the christian life will convince them of their mistake, and of the truth of what our Blessed Lord told his disciples, that without him they could do nothing.

These special operations of the Holy Ghost are free and sovereign favours ; not bestowed upon all the children of God equally, nor on any one equally at all times, but as emergencies arise. Sometimes, through these special operations, light has been imparted to the saints in the darkest and most mysterious and perplexing cases, and enabled them to acknowledge with the Psalmist, “ In thy light, O God, I see light.” So when his virtue was put to the trial, by the unequal distribution of Providence, in the power and prosperity of the wicked, and he felt himself plunged into the depths of adversity, and when he attempted to reconcile this with the wisdom and goodness of the divine government, he says, It was too painful for me, and I was ready to conclude that I had cleansed my hands in vain ; but I went into the sanctuary of God, and there understood I their way. He had a more extensive and impartial view of God’s providential government, and was satisfied ; a ray of divine light broke through the dark cloud, and carried its own evidence with it. Sometimes special strength is imparted, to bear with fortitude the burdens of life, which without would be quite insupportable : the apostle Paul could boast, under the heaviest burdens and the severest trials, I can do all things through Christ strengthening me ; and when I am weak—feel most sensibly my own weakness—and burdens and calamities press the hardest, then am I strong, being strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering, with joyfulness.

fulness. So, on other special occasions, special assistances have been communicated, yet in such variety as to time, manner and degree, as plainly shews that they are free and sovereign favours, under the direction and controul of a free Spirit. No one has directed, or being counsellor has taught, him when and where, and to what degree, they shall be conferred. The royal penitent, sensible of the need he stood in of the special aids and assistances of the Holy Ghost, to recover him from his shameful fall, to purge him from his guilt, and restore him to the comforts of religion, and establish him in undecaying piety for the future, prayed, Lord restore unto me the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit. As the special operations of the Holy Ghost are free, various and sovereign, so they are powerful and efficacious, sufficient to bear up and carry the feeblest saint through the heaviest afflictions, and the forest trials, with fortitude, patience and honour; and he will finally come off more than a conqueror, through Jesus Christ, who has loved him, and makes all things work together for good.

And, though these operations are so powerful, yet they are sometimes silent and secret, that the person who is the subject of them scarcely perceives them at the time of their operation; like Jacob at Bethel, or when reclining his head upon a pillow of stone, he says, God is in this place, and I knew it not: so the happy subject may not know that he is favoured with the special influence of the Spirit, but by a reflex act, when perceiving the divine signature. The Spirit witnessing to his own work, proves it to be special and divine; and they are sometimes less perceivable, because they are connatural and regular, accommodated to all the principles of the new nature, disposing the soul to act more vigorously and uniformly upon those principles; working with our Spirits, and by means perfectly corresponding with both the common and saving influences above described; but quite



quite distinct from those blind impulses and irregular ecstasies of an over-heated imagination which are eccentric and wild, reducible to none of those sacred rules by which we are to try the spirit to see if it be of God, or that Holy Spirit of God by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And, though there may be a diversity in these operations, yet they are by the same Spirit, and its administrations tend to the same thing—the edification of the believer, to make him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Having thus spoken of the Holy Ghost, and his various operations, we pass to some improvement.

1. Let us adore this Divine Illuminator of our dark minds, and bless the Father of Lights for the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, by whose common influences the sad effects of the early apostacy are kept under a happy restraint, the moral agency of man is maintained, reason and conscience are able to bear their united testimony against an evil deed, and to make a loud and sometimes successful remonstrance against it; so that mankind retain a sense of right and wrong, moral and immoral actions, upon the principles of common sense; that humanity, civility and morality are kept alive in the world, which make this earth better than hell, and mankind better than fallen angels.

2. Let us bless God that he did not suffer the human race to sink into a state of absolute desperation, by totally withholding the influences of his Blessed Spirit, but graciously diffused his common influences as a kind of general *afflatus*, by which he preserved mankind proper subjects on whom the grace of God might operate, agreeably to his rational nature, to final salvation. But—

3. More especially, let us adore and praise the Divine Sanctifier of our polluted natures, who regenerates us in the spirit of our minds, and be always ready to acquire knowledge

knowledge the operations of his hand, wherever we perceive them, in ourselves or others, and give him the honour which is manifestly his due; not arrogate to ourselves, nor ascribe too much to means or instruments which in any measure it has been in our power to make use of, but say, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy good Spirit, who has wrought in us both to will and to do of thine own pleasure, we ascribe all the honour and all the praise.

4. Let us pray for the Spirit; we have all the encouragement which it is proper we should have, to ask for the gifts of the Holy Ghost; for he was promised to Christ in the covenant of redemption; therefore our Saviour told his disciples, when he was about to leave them, that he would obtain the promise of the Father, even the Holy Ghost, and send him down unto them for their comfort and support. And we are assured that God is as ready to give his Holy Spirit to those who ask for him, as earthly parents are to give bread to a hungry child; therefore ask, that you may receive, and your joy shall be full; for every one who asketh receiveth, and he who seeketh findeth, and to him who knocketh it shall be opened.

5. To prayer we must add our most diligent and serious attendance on the means of grace; those means which have commonly been made use of, in the hands of the Spirit, both to beget and increase grace in the heart; and those means we are to attend upon as means in the hand of the Spirit, having no power and efficacy in themselves; nor are we to imagine that we are entitled to the co-operation of the Spirit of God, because we make use of, or attend seriously upon, them. The Spirit is a free Spirit, sovereign of his own influences; and we do but our duty in our attendance upon the means of grace—we do but attend to our highest interest; and, while in  
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this way we attempt to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, we must remember that it is God who by his Spirit works in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

6. We must not grieve nor quench the Holy Spirit of God. If, while we are in the use of any of the appointed means, we feel any serious impressions made upon the mind, let us be sure to cultivate and improve such impressions; attend to the sacred dictates, and not be diverted by the sollicitations of vain or wicked men; but retire to our closets, converse with our own hearts, and attend and be obedient to what the Spirit saith unto them, though he should speak in his still small voice. Here give me leave to say, if you want human instruction and assistance, you will do well to confer with your minister, and with a few of the most serious, godly and prudent persons of your acquaintance; but open not your case but to skilful physicians. To tell your experiences or the exercises of your mind to every one, will only tend to deceive and mislead you. You may search the Scriptures daily with safety, make them the man of your counsel, and they will prove a light unto your feet, and a lamp unto your paths: make them the companion of your bed-chamber and your closet, and you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord: and in this way you may hope, that he who has begun a good work in you will carry it on, and perfect his own work in you.

7. If we have reason to believe, on scriptural grounds, that the Holy Ghost has wrought a divine and saving change in us, and made us happy subjects of his saving operations, we must not imagine that the work is done, and we have no further use for his sacred agency: we may be assured that all our sufficiency is of God, and that, without the constant supply of the Spirit, all our religion will soon dwindle into a spiritless formality, and  
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It will be as much as we are able to do to maintain the form of godliness, without the power. We shall lose much of the christian temper, and that sweet communion with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, on which depend most of the comforts of religion. They only who walk in the fear of the Lord have the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Form not resolutions in your own strength; for you will find, that, without the aids of the Holy Ghost, your strength will be but weakness: therefore ever maintain a deep sense of your own dependence, and that you will never be able to maintain the divine life without divine assistance. Be not rash to utter vows before God, but learn of the Psalmist modestly to say, If thou Lord wilt be surety for me thy servant, I will keep thy statutes.—We close with a caution:—

We must not trust so much to the aids or assistances of the Divine Spirit, either before or after we have been made the subjects of his saving or special influence, as to neglect any of the means of grace, or delay the performance of any known duty; because those divine aids are not to be expected but in the way of a conscientious attendance on the means of grace; and no duty can be performed acceptably without them. Therefore it is the highest abuse of the doctrine of the necessary aids of the Divine Spirit, to take encouragement from thence to indulge sloth and negligence. For any to say, I will sit still, and give myself no concern, till the Holy Ghost operates powerfully and irresistibly upon my heart, is the very madness of folly; much more egregious than for a farmer to neglect the tillage and cultivation of his ground, because he is convinced that his harvest depends (in concurrence with his own seasonable labour and prudent care) upon the divine blessing. The very consideration that God works, but honours us so far as to make use of our moral agency and natural powers to effect his own purposes, would be enough, one would think, to animate

mate a generous or honest mind to the greatest exertion, diligence and activity, in working out our own salvation : and, if we are admitted to be workers together with God, we are assured that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Nor must we neglect or delay our duty because we think we have not the Spirit, or are not favoured with those divine aids which we think are necessary to render our acts of obedience acceptable. We are not to wait for the moving of the Spirit, but go forth in the name of the Lord, and in the way of duty trust in God for all those gracious communications we may need : and, if we are not straitened in ourselves, we shall not be straitened in God. Many have entered upon duty with little courage, and less strength, who have been carried through with honour, life and joy, and found by happy experience that it is the Spirit who giveth life.

In one word—Ever maintain a strict walk with God, humbly depending upon him for all those sanctifying influences and special aids of his good Spirit that we may need ; and in general we shall find, that as our day is, so shall our strength be ; and in this way we shall renew our strength, and go on from one degree of faith, love, and holy obedience, to another, till we shall appear complete before God, in Zion above.



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## Discourse IV.

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### The Variety and efficacious Manner of the Operations of the HOLY SPIRIT.

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I C O R. xii. 4, 5, 6.

*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit ; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord ; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all.*

**T**HE Apostle in this chapter treats on the great variety of spiritual gifts with which the apostles and primitive christians were endued, for the better establishing the system of christianity upon the sure basis of divine agency, and to shew, that, though there was a great variety of those spiritual gifts, with which they were enriched, yet they were all the effects of the same divine agency. And, though the administration of those gifts was different, as objects, circumstances and situations required, yet that diversity was under the direction of the same Lord, and had a tendency to the same end: and, though the influences of the same Spirit operated differently on persons of different dispositions, tempers and characters, yet it was the same God who rendered those operations effectual to the producing all the genuine principles of true virtue and goodness, in all who were the happy subjects of those heavenly communications. And I believe that there is as great a variety in the operations of the regenerating

nerating Spirit of the gospel under its preaching by the ordinary ministers, and in the enjoyment of the ordinary means of grace in succeeding generations, as there was in the dispensing of those extraordinary and miraculous gifts to the apostles and primitive christians at its first promulgation:—which variety of manner, and efficacy of operation, of the Holy Ghost upon the human heart, (by which it is regenerated, or passes under that transforming moral change called in Scripture a being born again, or a being created anew in Christ Jesus) I shall endeavour to illustrate in the following pages, in as clear and concise a manner as I can.

That there is a variety of operations by the same Spirit, is evident, from the similitude our Saviour made use of when he was treating upon the subject with Nicodemus, in an evening conversation which he had with him at his private lodging, in the presence of his disciples. He plainly told him that such a change was absolutely necessary to prepare subjects for his heavenly kingdom. Jesus said unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” and then adds, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. And as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, so is every one who is born of the Spirit:” which denotes both the variety and sovereignty of those divine operations—that there is a secret in the Spirit’s operation, which is fully known to none but to him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working all our works in us and for us.

I cannot pretend then to descend into all the particulars which may designate a difference of operation, or a diversity of administrations, and which may be only circumstantial and local, but I shall take notice—

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I. Of a diversity of manner in which this moral change has been effected.

II. The variety of means which have been made use of.

III. The difference of time when this change has been wrought.—These three particulars may comprehend all that variety of operations of the Holy Ghost upon the human heart which may be necessary or useful to be known.

I. There is a variety in the manner or method which the Spirit makes use of in producing this moral change in the human heart; and if, by tracing that variety of method, in which I shall be as clear, scriptural and experimental as I can, any one may be better able to determine what their real character or true state may be, I shall be very happy.

1. The method which the Spirit makes use of with persons of different tempers, dispositions and situations in life, is very various, as will appear both from Scripture, experience and observation. Now it is obvious that such a conviction of the exceeding moral evil in sin, and such apprehension of the impending wrath of God for sin, as will excite a genuine repentance of it, and awaken in the guilty mind a solicitude to obtain a pardon, and a freedom from the punishment and dominion of sin, and the wrath to come, is necessary in ordinary cases to prepare the mind to receive cordially the gospel message of salvation by grace through faith: but the degree of this necessary conviction is various; for it is evident that no stronger convictions of sin are absolutely necessary than may be sufficient to make the sinner hate sin as an evil in itself, and willing and desirous to forsake it; and no greater terror from the fear of divine wrath for sin, than what will render the offer of salvation by grace, on the terms of the gospel, acceptable. And yet it is evident that  
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stronger convictions, and greater terror, may in some cases be expedient. The Blessed Spirit sometimes sets the sins of the sinner before his eyes in such a point of light as that they appear to him as a marshalled host of enemies, ready to devour him; every circumstance which attended their commission wears an aspect of terror. He runs back on the privileges he enjoyed and had abused, and the advantages he had been favoured with, but misimproved, and he thinks that no one ever before had sinned at so great a rate, and with such high-handed wickedness, as he has done, and therefore that no terror is like unto his terror. He has such a sense of the demerits of his crimes, and the purity of the divine nature, that he thinks God is determined to consign him over to everlasting punishment; and, as he thinks himself the greatest sinner in the world, so his future punishment will exceed all who have gone before him: so that in the bitterness of his soul he is weary of his life, and he may wish that he had never been born, or that he had been any other creature than what he is: or, however shocking the thought of annihilation may be to beings conscious of the pleasures of existence, he is ready to wish he could immediately lose his existence. And the poor distressed creature may continue for days, weeks and months in this condition, and (as one expresses it) may be so stunned with peals of thunder from mount Sinai, as to be quite deaf to the gentler sounds from mount Zion. When we propose to him the terms of the gospel, the promises of salvation to the chief of sinners, he will not hear a word that any of these were made to him, or were ever designed for him, but that hell and damnation are and will be his eternal portion, and he hears all the curses of God's broken law, and the denunciations of wrath, as levelled at him, and will entertain nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour him. But in all this scene of terror he high-

ly approves of the law of God which condemns him, and will justify God as righteous, even though he should finally consign him over to a punishment equal to the demerit of his crimes; which temper of mind marks his convictions as the effects of divine operations; and, while there is this entire approbation of the law as wise, holy, just and good, it is evident that the Spirit of God is preparing the way, by this severe discipline of the law, to render the free offers of the gospel more welcome; making use of the law as a schoolmaster to bring the convinced sinner to Christ, that he might be justified freely by grace, through faith in him. When this end is obtained, the clouds begin to pass off, and the broken-hearted sinner is made to hear the voice of joy and gladness, so that the bones which had been broken are healed, and he finds joy and comfort in believing.

2. But with others the Spirit varies the mode of his operations, and they have less terror, though, it may be, not less sorrow; their hearts seem to be melted down into a very deep and a most ingenuous sorrow for sin. They are not, as others have been, so much alarmed with fearful apprehensions of impending wrath, as they are affected with the exceeding sinfulness of sin: they can weep day and night for their transgressions, and repent in dust and ashes for their iniquities: and though they do not doubt but that there is provision made for their pardon and salvation if they repent and make their humble and believing application to God through Christ, they cannot be persuaded that they do repent sincerely, or that they do believe in Christ truly. They see so much sin in themselves, so much weakness and corruption in their own hearts, and that the habits of sin are still so strong, that they fear they never shall believe in Christ as they ought to, nor have grace and strength to conquer those vicious habits which they find are so deeply rooted in their hearts. And though they feel a disposition humbly to apply to God, through

through Christ, for pardon and life, and have often made, in the best manner they could, their believing application to Christ, as to the almighty and all-gracious Saviour of sinners, yet they are afraid they have not done it in a right manner, because they do not feel the burden of guilt removed, nor have received any sensible tokens of the divine favour, nor any certain evidences that they are in a pardoned and sanctified state, and so they seek Jesus sorrowing, and weep out their sorrows at the footstool of the throne of grace. But by degrees their sorrows abate, and some divine promise or comforting word comes into the mind, or is impressed upon the memory, as that—  
 Son or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee, and I am pacified towards thee for all which thou hast done, saith the Lord thy God.

3. With respect to others, they may have less sorrow, but not less contrition or humiliation. The mind is impressed with such a transporting view of the wisdom and grace of the gospel plan of salvation, and with the glory and amiableness of the Saviour of men, that the enmity of heart against God and his government, or against the humbling scheme of salvation by grace through faith, is slain at once, so that their hearts are melted down with ingenuous sorrow for sin, and charmed, as it were, into a ready and cordial compliance with the gospel proposals, without being kept long under the pangs and struggles of the new birth. These are subdued by love, conquered by goodness, without having their fears much alarmed, and without being drove by God's fiery law to take sanctuary in the ark of the covenant of God's grace. These, as soon as they are awakened to a serious consideration of their ways, turn their feet into God's statutes; they make haste, and delay not, to close with the offers and invitations of the gospel; as soon as they see themselves in a guilty and ruined state, they discover their help in God: the law of God appears so just, so holy and good,

the person and offices of Christ so amiable and complete, the proposals of salvation by him so reasonable and gracious, that, while they feel an utter detestation of all sin, they entertain the highest esteem for the laws of God and the Redeemer, and are constrained by the love of Christ, with a conscious sincerity, immediately to fall in with and cordially embrace the gracious offers of the gospel; and they are filled with a joy unspeakable and full of glory: that, instead of their being long encompassed with the sorrows of death and the pains of hell, as others have been, their souls are soon delivered from death, their eyes from tears, and a song of praise is put into their mouths, even salvation to God. This seems to have been the case of Saul, who afterwards was the blessed apostle Paul, who was conquered at once by almighty grace, and closed with the proposals of the gospel as soon as made known to him by the preaching of Ananias. This was the case of the jailor, who, as soon as he was awakened to see his danger, and to inquire in earnest what he should do to be saved, immediately complied with the terms of salvation, as soon as they were made known to him by the preaching of the gospel. So we read of some who received the word with joy in the Holy Ghost, on their first hearing it preached to them; i. e. the Holy Spirit accompanied the word which was first preached to them, with such power, that, while it convinced them of sin, and pointed out their danger, it wrought in them obedience to the gospel, and inspired them with a sacred joy in believing.

But here I would enter a caution:—It is evident that many have been under some awakenings, and have soon been filled with joy, from a full persuasion that they were converted, and had experienced a saving change, when it was only a transient impression made upon their passions and affections, which, like the morning cloud and the early dew, soon passes away. Those with whom the

the Spirit takes this last method need take care that they are not deceived, and take external appearance, or a superficial impression, for a real work of grace upon the heart, and so fall under the description of those whom our Saviour meant to represent by those who received seed in stony ground, who heard the word with joy, but, having no root in themselves, fell away. Where this joy, which succeeds a few hours or days of sorrow, is not attended with great modesty and humility, and a fixed resolution to walk worthy of the Lord to all well-pleasing, there is great reason to fear that their supposed change is counterfeit, and that the hope built upon it will fail, and be as the giving up of the ghost.

4. I have to add, that with some the Spirit takes a different method from either of the foregoing; and I take it to be more common, though more gentle, and less discernible, than any we have mentioned: and this is, by letting in, by gentle and more insensible degrees, divine light into the understanding, so as to rectify our apprehensions of God and his moral government; of Jesus Christ, his natural, moral and mediatorial character; of the nature, reality and importance of a future and an eternal world; and from that to awaken the attention, to warm the affections, and to fix the resolution, without making any of those painful or transporting impressions upon the mind as in any of the forementioned methods. It is certain, that though God is sometimes in the earthquake, and sometimes in the fire, and in the rushing wind, yet perhaps he is oftener in the gentle, still small voice, agreeably to the representation of the Prophet. A late learned, pious and spiritual writer observes upon this subject, that the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart are often, and he thinks most commonly, of such a nature as makes it difficult, if possible, to distinguish them from the natural and rational exercises of our intellectual powers; because the temper  
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and sentiments with which the Spirit of God, inspires them who are under his enlightening and sanctifying influences are rational, and perfectly agreeable to what reason in her proper and most perfect exercise would dictate.

Persons with whom the Spirit takes this last and most gentle method are generally begun with while young. They are awakened, and convinced of sin as an evil and bitter thing; their convictions subside, & then return upon them with more force, and then wear off again. Sometimes they are full of concern about their souls, and form new and more fixed resolutions, and begin to entertain a comfortable hope; they think they can discover some lineaments of a work of grace upon their hearts; they think they feel the love of God and goodness; they think they feel a growing aversion to sin and moral guilt, and so much of the constraining influence of the love of Christ, that they can trust in his merits, and can, and do, really lodge their eternal interest in his hands. They take more delight in ordinances, and feel a benevolence of heart which extends to the whole family of mankind, especially to the whole household of faith; they anon grow more remiss and careless, and become so indifferent about the most interesting concerns, that they are ready to give up all hopes that they have experienced any thing like a saving change of heart. This awakens their concern anew, and calls up their attention, and they apply themselves with new vigour to the exercises of devotion, or under afflictions they feel their hearts tenderly touched, or, experiencing some very eminent and signal deliverance from impending danger, they feel their hearts melt into gratitude and thankfulness: these sensations revive their hopes, and they are comfortable again, but not in transports. Persons of this description, though their peace is often interrupted, and they have many doubts and perplexing fears, because, it may be, they cannot give a particular account of their conversion,

conversion, or say at what time they experienced any material or moral change in their temper or disposition, or because they have never had such terror or such joy as others have had—at length commonly arrive, under the dispensations of providence and grace, to as great a steadiness in religion, and to a temper as habitually gracious, as any; and, from an impartial view of their whole conduct, there appear in them as evident marks of the true christian as in those whose passions have been more strongly touched, and whose temper and conduct have been suddenly and more visibly changed; and they themselves may feel as great a consciousness of their undisssembled love to God, as cordial a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as universal a benevolence to mankind, as any who have been regenerated with all the most painful agitations of mind. If so, it is well; they may be assured that, in the Scripture style, they have been born of the Spirit, though his operation upon their hearts may have been like the gentlest breeze, which can hardly be perceived from what quarter it comes, or to what point it tends; for, as the wind bloweth when and where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell from whence it cometh nor whither it goeth, so it is with some, if not with every one, who is born of the Spirit.

II. We proceed to consider the diversity of the operations of the same Spirit, with respect to the *Means* which are made use of to effect this saving change in the human heart. And here indeed there is a great variety; but the more common and ordinary means are, divine ordinances, providences, and the more immediate impressions made upon the mind by the concurrence of a great variety of means, without making any particular use of one more than another.

1. By divine ordinances I mean, principally, prayer, reading of the word of God, and the hearing of it preached.

ed. These have been the common, and in the hands of the Spirit are very powerful, means which are made use of in effecting this moral and saving change, as I hope many of my readers can testify from their own experience. Many have found the word of God powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword: many have found a preached gospel to be the power of God to salvation, being accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, as thousands and ten thousands can testify.

But we need not rest the evidence merely on human testimony: for the Scriptures abound with evidence to this truth, which cannot be disputed. The royal Psalmist could long ago say, in honour of the written word, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes: and we have the testimony of one greater than king David—the Lord from heaven. He said, that the words which he delivered, and which were written that we might believe, *were spirit and life*; i. e. they were not only to be understood in a spiritual sense, but in the hands of the Spirit would beget and cultivate the principles of spiritual life. And it is to be remembered, that he spake this to comfort his disciples under the melancholy prospect of his soon leaving them. He adds, The flesh profiteth nothing—my bodily presence can be of no real advantage to you, without the enlightening, quickening, and sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God: and then he subjoins, When I return unto my Father, I will send down the Holy Spirit upon you, and I will leave my words with you. And it is the Spirit who giveth life to you; for in his hand the words which I speak they are spirit, and they are life. And, that his gospel might be attended with an efficacious blessing, he prayed, in that most fervent and excellent public address which he made



made to his Heavenly Father a little before he suffered, Holy Father, sanctify them through the truth ; thy word is truth : which prayer clothed the written word with a sanctifying influence, through the operations of the Holy Spirit. And the preaching of the word has, through the operation of the Spirit, been a powerful means of convincing and converting sinners to God, and of building up the saints in faith and holiness. The apostle James observes, that the Spirit by his own will begeth them by the word of truth. Lydia's heart was opened while Paul preached to her the gospel at her own house ; and vast multitudes were brought under serious concern by the preaching of Peter, and were led to inquire, with a solicitude becoming the importance of the question, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? But the word preached does not always profit, not being mixed with faith in them who hear it ; which gives occasion often to repeat the complaint of the Apostle—Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed ? or more positively—We have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought and in vain. Yet God has not left his word altogether without witness, but even to this day has made the plain and artless preaching of the word the power of God unto salvation. O that it was more evidently so among us at the present day ! The operation of the Spirit of God upon the human heart is not confined to the best-adapted means, but he makes use of what he pleases, and how and when he pleases : particularly we have to remark—

2. *Providences*, both merciful and afflictive ; these, as means in the hands of the Spirit, work sometimes very powerfully upon the hearts of sinners. As, for instance, mercies ; some great and signal favours, or surprising deliverances from great and impending dangers, have melted down the hardest heart, and begotten sincere and genuine repentance for past sins and base ingratitude,  
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and drawn them by the cords of love, and the bands of a man—reason and gratitude—to forsake their sins, and to consecrate themselves to the Lord, who had loaded them with his benefits.

But I believe more commonly the Spirit of God makes use of afflictive providences to humble the pride, and subdue the passions, of hardened sinners. The sickness of the body has, under the direction of the Spirit, contributed to the restoration of the soul. The stoutest sinner, when thrown upon a bed of sickness and languishment, rendered incapable of the employments or the enjoyments of life, when there is no taste either for the pleasures or amusements of the senses, sometimes openeth his heart to wisdom, and his ear to hear instruction; he considers of his ways, and returns unto the Lord; he makes haste, and delays not to keep his statutes, and obey the gospel.

I know, too often, impressions made upon the mind by affliction pass off like the morning cloud, being made only on the passions and affections, and all religious appearances vanish almost as soon as the burden is removed: but this has not always been the case; there have been lasting and good effects made by the chastisements of the rod; stupid and careless sinners have been made wise to salvation. This was the case of Manasseh, that arch sinner: when he was cast among the thorns, and laid in fetters, then he besought the Lord his God, and obtained grace to repent, and mercy to forgive: and it is not improbable that some of my readers, from experience, may be able to add their own testimony to this truth, and date their own conversion from some very heavy affliction.

Sometimes I have had reason to believe that a special, or what to an inattentive mind might seem to be merely accidental, or some small occurrence in life, has been made use of as a means of accomplishing this moral change

change in the heart of a before inattentive and careless sinner. I cannot adduce instances of this, where there is so great a variety, therefore I shall leave it to those who may recollect the seemingly inconsiderable incidents which have wrought powerfully in them, and brought them, from a careless, inattentive, dissipated state, to a rational, considerate life of christian morality. It will be granted, I suppose, that where Paul has planted, and Apollos watered, without effect, or where the most rational and powerful preaching of the gospel has been attended upon in vain, a word fitly spoken has entered into the inmost soul, and plainly shewn, that, though it was an arrow from a bow drawn at a venture, yet it was from God's quiver, and directed by the Omniscient Spirit to the seat of principles in the human heart. Or, it may be, only the sickness or the death of a near relation, or a dear friend, or the visions of the night, may awaken a lethargic soul, which may end in the fixed habits of piety.

III. I have to add—Sometimes, though I believe it is rare, the Blessed Spirit seems to work without, or with the concurrence of a great variety, of means, without making any particular use of one more than another. If human testimony can be credited, sometimes a text of Scripture, without being lately read or heard, has been so impressed upon the mind as to become like a nail fastened in a sure place, and has engrossed all the thoughts, and called forth all the powers of the mind to attend to what it dictated, and driven sinners from their revels to their knees and to their Saviour. Others, who had been the most abandoned sinners, or the tamest slaves of vice, and who had lost the salutary influence of a religious education, and had outgrown shame itself, have on a sudden been snatched as brands out of the burning, and, by one means or another, or by the concurrence of a great variety of means, without being able to say what had the greatest weight with them, have been brought to themselves, and

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they have returned, with the prodigal, penitently confessing, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee." Perhaps an affecting sense of a present, omniscient Deity, who has been witness to all their crimes, may contribute as much as any thing to the loathing of themselves, and their repenting in dust and ashes before him. Sometimes I have observed, that a deep and affecting sense of the love of the dear Redeemer (without the subjects being able to say what first excited that affecting sense of the constraining love of Christ in them) has melted down the stone into a fountain of penitential tears, and inscribed the divine image on the pliant heart, and inspired them with such an invincible resolution, that they have shone, through the remainder of life, the sons of God, without rebuke, exhibiting a bright assemblage of heroic christian virtues, and been the ornaments both of society and religion. But these instances are very rare, as it is fit they should be, lest some by them should be encouraged to neglect the more common, ordinary and stated means of grace: but that there have been some such instances, in and ever since the days of the apostles, cannot be denied. And it is evident that such cases have their use, as they serve to prove that the Blessed Spirit is the author and the agent, and acts as a sovereign in producing this moral change in the human heart.

I have in the last place to observe, that there is a diversity of operations by the same Spirit, with respect to the *Time* when this necessary change is effected. But, in pursuing this part of my subject, I shall confine my thoughts, and direct yours, to the three common stages of life—infancy, childhood, and mature age of manhood.

1. It must be granted, that sometimes this change is wrought in infancy or childhood, or before the subject is properly a moral agent, or capable of thinking or acting for

for himself. It is certain that there have been some very remarkable instances of early piety. And some children, from what they have said about God and Christ, about their duty and another world, have evidently shewn, that the Holy Spirit has had access to their young hearts, and, as tender twigs, bent them God-ward and heaven-ward. And here I can say, as some of you who are parents can, I have special reason to believe, that there have been some besides Samuel, Obadiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, and young Timothy, who have been made the subjects of sanctifying grace before their understandings arrived to such a state of maturity as to feel the force of an argument, or to digest a system of religion.

Here I will give you the opinion of two very learned and pious divines; I mean Mr. Baxter and Dr. Doddridge. Mr. Baxter said, he verily believed, that if parents would do their duty, preaching would not be the more common and ordinary means of converting souls, but that the greater part would be wrought upon by a religious education in the hands of the Spirit, before they were capable of entering into the reasoning of a sermon: and Dr. Doddridge says, some are wrought upon in their infancy, and he believes most would be, were parents to do their duty; and adds, that he had observed, that God did commonly bless the endeavours of pious mothers for this divine purpose. If none of us have experienced the salutary effect of early and religious instructions from a pious mother, yet young Timothy had abundant reason to be thankful for the religious education which he had received from his pious mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois, who from his youth had taught him to know the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him-wise unto salvation.

2. But the more usual time when this change is wrought in the heart is in youth, before the habits of sin become

become strong, and before the cares and pleasures of the world fall with their full weight upon the heart. This may be supposed from the reason of things, and proved from Scripture and experience. Though it is to be lamented that many youth, either through a careless inattention, or a criminal neglect, of a parents instruction, or through the want of a religious education, or prudent discipline, or through the vanity of their own minds, or the attractive charms of the world, or the infatuating influence of sensual pleasures, follow after vanity till they become vain, and forget the God who made them, and despise the Rock who begat them, and, like the horse who defies the rein, keep up a full career, until they are irrecoverably gone in the paths of the destroyer : thanks be to God, this is not always the case ; many, and I believe by far the greater part, of those who are regenerate, are, by one means or another, brought to consecrate themselves to God while warm with all the vigour of youth, before the evil days are come, or the years draw nigh wherein they have no pleasure. And, having given up themselves to God in an everlasting covenant, they join in full communion with the people of God, and appear as olive plants round about the sacred table ; and so the church, according to the prediction, sees her seed, her sons and her daughters, *fringing*, by the water courses, one saying, I am the Lord's, another calling himself by the name of the Lord Jesus, and another subscribing unto the name of the Lord, and with his own hand firming him by the name of the God of Israel.

But the least likely time of all is in the decline of life. Very few instances, I believe, can be produced of persons who have much passed the meridian, or mature manhood, under the power of sin, estranged to God and godliness, who have ever met with any thing which looked like a divine change wrought in them. They generally wax worse and worse, and live and die monuments of divine wrath.

wrath. Nor need we wonder at it, when we consider the inveterate strength of sinful habits, and the invincible force of contracted prejudices, the weakness of the human mind, the fickleness of aged childhood, and the amazing treasures of guilt which such must have contracted who have long despised and abused the gospel of the grace of God. To make any impressions on such dry bones—on such hard hearts—must be next to a natural impossibility; for can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then they who have been accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. But, to the honour of divine grace, as an evidence of the almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, and as a demonstration of the sovereignty of his operations, some have been born again when they have been old. Sometimes the rock has been smitten, and the waters of genuine repentance have flowed out; sometimes there has been a shaking among the dry bones; and, how strange soever it may seem, even dry bones may live, and stand up both for the defence and for an ornament to religion.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

I. From what you have heard or read, you may learn; that you must not neglect any of those means which God has appointed, or has made use of, and which you have in your hands; as you know not which he will bless, and render effectual to your salvation, or which the Holy Spirit may make use of to accomplish his own work in you. He is sovereign in his operations, and various in his administrations; and he makes what use he pleases of means: and sometimes he apparently works without the use of means, or by the concurrence of a great variety of means, without making any distinguishing use of one more than another: therefore you must not neglect some which you may think the least likely, and attend upon others which you may think more likely, to effect this saving change in the heart; but humbly, steadily and conscientiously

tiously attend on all those you have in your power, in humble hopes, that through the operations of the Blessed Spirit, some will prove effectual to the begetting you again to the lively hope of future glory. Nor must you despise what may appear in your view weak means, or less adapted to work a saving change in you; and so like the rash Naaman refuse the waters of Jordan, though bid by the Prophet to make use of them to cleanse him from his leprosy, because he thought that the waters of Damascus were as likely to effect a cure as those of Jordan. If he had obstinately continued in his error, he would have returned with the leprosy full upon him; but being persuaded by his wiser servants, he in obedience to the Prophet's direction bathed himself in the river Jordan, and was made clean. So you must not choose the means, but in obedience to divine direction you must attend the means you have, and look up to the Almighty and All-Gracious Agent to render them effectual to your restoration and final salvation.

2. You must not make your own experience a standard for others, nor the experience of others a standard for your own; for there is a diversity of operation by the same Spirit, who worketh all in all in such ways and manner as he may think proper. Some of an humble and desponding mind are much perplexed and discouraged, and are ready to call in question the sincerity or the reality of any change wrought in them at any time, because they cannot come up to the standard of others; especially when they hear those who are of an assuming or censorious turn of mind boast of their light, joy and assurance, and peremptorily condemn all whose experiences do not exactly correspond with their own; making their experiences like Procrustes's iron bed, to the length of which he cut all who were too long, and stretched all who were too short. Others have been much perplexed, and in desponding fears, because they could not assign a particular



particular time when the work was wrought in them; for some of their fellow christians will assure them, that the change is so evident that they cannot be insensible of the time when it is wrought; that they can have no certain marks of a real change of heart, if they cannot assign the time when it took place, though they exhibit much of a filial temper, and externally appear the children of God, without rebuke. As well may they deny that the wind blows, though they may hear the sound thereof, and feel its refreshing breeze, because they cannot tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.

Let us all be cautious that we do not censure those who have evidently the marks of God's children upon them, because they cannot ascertain the particular time when, or the manner how, they became regenerate in the temper of their mind: and let the humble and doubtful soul be encouraged, though the change in his temper has not been so sensible as it has been in some others. Yet, if you feel your heart God-ward, and his love reigning there; if you feel a cordial love towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and have by faith lodged the salvation of your soul in his hand; if you feel an approbation of, and a delight in, the law of God, after the inner man; if you can, and do, take delight in the word, worship and ordinances of God, and feel an unfeigned and prevailing love to the whole family of mankind, a growing hatred to sin, and an aspiring after greater degrees of holiness; you may at least maintain a very comfortable hope that you are born of the Spirit, though you may not be able to say when or how.

3. You should attend your duty conscientiously, and ardently desire the co-operations of the Blessed Spirit with those means which you do enjoy, be they in your apprehension small or great, likely or unlikely, remembering that God has promised his Holy Spirit to them who ask:

ask : and, if you feel your minds impressed at any time by attending on the common and more ordinary means, either by the reading or hearing of the word of God read or preached, or by some affecting providence, either merciful or afflictive—or, if your hearts are sensibly touched and warmed with the spontaneous reflections on the most interesting subjects, without being able to say what has contributed most in touching the heart, or in exciting those serious reflections—thank God, and take courage, and be sure to cultivate those serious impressions, by meditation, prayer, and converse with the pious and the most approved christians of your acquaintance, and especially with your minister : open your hearts freely to him, and desire him to deal plainly and faithfully with you, that you may be found in the faith, and approved of God.

Guard against every thing which may have a tendency to break the bruised reed, or to quench the smoking flax—all unnecessary worldly cares, vain company, useless and dangerous amusements—and attend seriously on the devotions of the family, the closet, and the house of God, and revere the dictates of conscience, with a religious, not with a superstitious eye ; observe the providence of God, and which way the divine finger points. By these exercises and reflections you will be animated to duty, and acquire a stronger habit of virtue, and, if I may be allowed the expression, you will lie more open to the variegated gales of the Spirit, and be much more confirmed in a state of rational christianity.

4. Let those of us who are parents often carry our children to God in the arms of our faith and prayer, and fervently beg of him the enlightening, renewing and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit upon their young and pliant hearts, that they may be renewed in the Spirit of the mind, before the corrupt principles of our fallen nature

nature grow into strong and fixed habits of vice. We must begin to instruct them very early in the knowledge of God, their Heavenly Father, and of Jesus Christ, whom aright to know is life eternal. We must try to give them, early, some right apprehensions of their Redeemer—how much he loved our sinful race, and what kind notice he took of little children, and that he said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. And we must endeavour to raise in them some growing desires to know the will of God, and how they shall please him—shew them, by some striking instances, what is like to be the end of a life of sin and folly, and what will be the happy portion of them who love, fear and serve God from their childhood. Young Timothy knew the holy Scriptures from his youth, which made him a good man, and wise to salvation.

5. We must let youth know, in general, that now is the best time to become virtuous; for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation—the most likely time in which they may be renewed, and interested in the blessings of the gospel. If they should let this favourable opportunity slip unimproved, and continue on in the ways of sin and folly, under the power of native corruptions, beyond the meridian of life, there will be at best a bare probability that they will become regenerate in the decline of life.

Therefore, my dear youth, for whom principally I have in the last stage of life penned these pages, and sent them abroad, suffer me to call upon you to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. The days are hastening on when you may call and not be heard, but your feet may stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, God may cause darkness, and turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

To conclude—Let all those who have already got in to the decline of life, and are shrouded with the evening of old age, give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. My brethren, the time is far spent; the night is at hand. It is high time for us to search and see whether we are not yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. And, though we should find, upon the strictest examination, the too evident marks of unregeneracy upon us, yet we must not utterly despair: the Blessed Spirit is sovereign and various in his operations. He may breathe upon dry bones, and cause them to live, and stand up the ornaments of human nature, and advocates for religion. He has done it for some, and may do it for others. He may do it for us. But verily the case is doubtful, but not desperate. We must immediately lay aside every weight, and the sin which easily besets us, put away all unnecessary cares, and apply to the one thing which is absolutely needful. Life is more than meat, the body is more than raiment; but the soul and its salvation is the most important of all things: for what shall we give in exchange for the soul!

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## Discourse V.

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On the Evidence of the Christian Revelation.

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1. THESS. v. 21.

*Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.*

OUR Apostle closes this his first epistle to the Thessalonians with a charming mixture of piety, zeal and tenderness, and pours out the fulness of his heart in a truly laconic style, and crowds into a few short verses almost the whole circle of christian duty, enforced by weighty arguments, and the most benevolent wish, that the very God of Peace would sanctify them wholly. He is far from assuming the air of an infallible dictator ; for, with all the plenitude of inspiration, he subjected all that he had said to their free, impartial and candid examination, that they should try and prove all things, and hold fast that which was good ; which would be acting worthy the dignity of reasonable beings, and free moral agents, who must give an account of themselves to God : and what upon a fair and full examination they found to be good—truths and facts with which their highest honour and interest were connected—he exhorts them to hold fast, to adhere closely to them, found their faith upon them, and regulate their practice by them.

It is as evident that man was made for religion, as that he was made for society. It seems to be a dictate of nature.

ture. We may traverse the globe, and find men without laws, arts, houses or clothes, but not without religion : they will have their gods, their priests, their altars and their sacrifices, and something which they call religion ; and they believe that their religion comes from the gods, and that it is both true and divine ; and they express it by a word which in our language signifies *God's news*. And certainly that system of religion which unites those two objects, the glory of God, and the happiness of man, in one capital point, stands the fairest chance of coming from God, of any which has been adopted by mankind. And such (for the present we shall take for granted) is the Christian Religion. But, as God does not demand of us an implicit faith, nor blind obedience, but allows and requires us, as in our text, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good ; we shall therefore inquire as impartially as we can into the truth and importance of the christian religion ; and, if we find it upon examination good, both true and divine, we may rationally adhere to it as the one thing needful.

And, that we may not be lost in the cloud of witnesses with which we are encompassed, we shall pretty nearly observe the following method :

It is natural for mankind to expect, at some certain period, a revelation from God, which would furnish us with a system of religion.

The christian revelation is from God, and furnishes us with a system of religion well adapted to the fallen state of man, and is therefore that good thing to which we shall do well closely to adhere, agreeably to the direction of our text.

I. We shall undertake to prove that the revelation which founds the christian religion is from God, both true and divine, and therefore good. We undertake this with pleasure, because we think it both an easy and

a delightful task. And the inquiry, if properly made, must be attended with the happiest consequences. The more we examine into the truth, the reasonableness and the fitness of the christian religion, the more evidently it will appear to be from God—that good thing which must be closely adhered to. And though we hope there are but few in these United States, of the present generation, who call in question the truth, the reasonableness and authenticity of our holy religion, yet, from the present appearance, and the rapid progress the principles of infidelity are making in Europe, we have reason to fear, that another century will produce many *here* who will deny the Lord who bought them, and will contemn and treat his religion as only a cunningly devised fable, whom our children may be called to resist steadfastly in the faith. And what we have to say on this subject respects the future as well as the present generation: and our prayer to God is, that the steadfastness of the present and the rising generations in the christian faith and practice may prove all which can be said on the subject to be superfluous.

What we shall first attempt to prove is, that, considering our dependent state, we had reason to expect a revelation from God, sufficient to found our faith upon, and to direct our practice. For it is evident that man in a state of innocence needed such a revelation. Such was his connexion and dependence, that he could not be his own infallible guide in all matters which respected his duty, his safety and happiness. If his reason was sufficiently clear to guide him in the matter of his duty, so far as it consisted in the internal and external practice of moral virtue, yet his reason and common sense could not guide him in matters merely positive, which depended entirely on the will of the Institutor, and which could not be known but by revelation from him: and some positive institutions are necessary to complete every system of religion.

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How many of those positive institutions would have been necessary to complete a system of religion adapted to a state of innocency, we know not: one certainly there was (according to Moses) that which prohibited the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is evident, too, that man in a state of innocency needed a revelation from his Creator in matters which related to the preservation of his health, and the securing and promoting of his safety and happiness in this world. It is evident that his reason, however clear and strong, could not infallibly guide him in the choice of his food, or into what would afford him the best nutriment for the body. In a world of sense, where there was such a vast variety, some of which was good and nutritious, other very improper and pernicious, he must have some better guide than human reason in her best estate, to pass with safety through a short life of sense. Though man was dignified with powers of reason, above all the lower creation, yet it is evident he was not to be directed by animal instinct, or sagacity of sense, as merely animal creatures were, for which purpose they were endowed with quick, instinctive faculties, far beyond man. Therefore it is highly probable, at least, that if man had continued in a state of innocency, he would have been favoured from time to time with a revelation from Heaven. But if we take a view of man in his present lapsed state, the probability of a divine revelation is much greater; as the need of such a revelation is much increased by the fall.

If God had, from the beginning, entertained thoughts of pity concerning man, and was disposed to relieve and restore him to the divine favour, upon a plan of grace in the hands of a mediator, (as appeared from his not carrying his threatening into immediate and full execution, and his promise that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head) he certainly would, at some certain period, and in some **clear and intelligent manner**, have  
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made known those purposes of grace; and this must be by revelation. Therefore a divine revelation is highly probable in itself; and, considering the dependent state of man, and his present lapsed state, we have the highest reason to expect one; as it is impossible for us, or any man, under all the advantages and improvements in natural or human knowledge, to say on what terms an offended God will receive and save his guilty creature man, without a revelation.

And this probability grows stronger, when we consider how infinitely easy it is with God, and how perfectly agreeable to his spiritual nature, to reveal his mind and will to his intelligent creatures: for, as he must perfectly know both the capacities and wants of his creatures, so he must have easy and immediate access to the conscious mind, either by immediate impulse, or by the influences of his Spirit, or by the administrations of angels, or by whatever way else he is pleased to make his will known. And that he would do this, may be argued from his own benevolence, and his most gracious nature, which dispose him to shew favour where he can consistently with his other perfections; and also from the ample and abundant provisions which he has made for our bodies ever since the curse took place: for he giveth unto us all things, necessary for our comfortable support, richly to enjoy: and this, by a natural and necessary consequence, leads us to conclude that he would not leave us destitute of those provisions necessary for the soul. He has not only added his blessing to the earth, which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, so that it bringeth forth for them by whom it is dressed; but he has provided means to heal those disordered and sickly bodies which became mortal by the original lapse: so that we have physic as well as food: and he extends his care to all the works of his hands. May we not then conclude, with certainty, that he would provide for the wants and maladies of the im-  
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mortal soul, and furnish us with the means of spiritual health, and immortal vigour? We may safely argue from the less to the greater *hæc*. If he has taken such care of the body, he will take care of the mind, the nobler and better part of our natures. He has taught us to take more care of the soul than of the body, and to labour principally for that meat which endureth unto eternal life: and we are taught to argue upon the same principles, that, because God takes care of oxen and sparrows, we must not distrust his providence; for we are of more value, and stand higher in his esteem, than brutes and fowls. So we think we may fairly argue, that, because God takes care of the body, he will take care of the soul, and make such a clear, full and ample revelation of his mind and will, as will found our faith, and regulate our practice.

Another argument of the probability of such a revelation may be drawn from the universal desire of one. The desire seems to be *innate*, and that we shall have one seems to be the dictate of nature; and we cannot suppose that the great Former of the human mind would impress upon it desires which he never did design to satisfy: we therefore see all mankind looking out for revelations. The most barbarous have their gods, their oracles, and their responses from which they think they have the will of the gods made known to them, and which they profess to follow as the rule of life. This desire being so universal, we may rationally suppose that it was impressed upon the human heart in its first formation, which not being erased by the original lapse, it remains there an argument that God designed to bless the world, fallen into sin and darkness, with a clear, full and sufficient revelation of his mind to man, which, if properly attended to, would teach him the way to life perfectly. And this desire, being ardent and universal, is happily adapted to prepare the mind to receive and attend to such a revelation when made.

made. From all which it plainly appears, that there is the utmost reason to expect, and that we may conclude with the greatest moral certainty, that, at some time or other, God would reveal himself, with his mind and will, to man, in such a clear and full manner as would form a system of religion exactly adapted to the present fallen state of man—a revelation which would afford sufficient light in every essential branch of duty. And such a revelation as this we think we have in our Bibles, especially in the New Testament, which we shall attempt to prove is from God—a *divine revelation*.

The arguments in support of the divinity of the christian revelation are very copious ; but we shall be as plain and concise as we can and do justice to our subject.

1. We shall endeavour to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the writings of the New Testament.

And we think we may with the utmost safety lay it down as a matter of fact, that there was a set of men in the world who were called christians, near eighteen hundred years ago : of this we are as certain as we are of any transaction or event which took place before our day, or the present age ; for the highest evidence we can have of any fact said to be done in any past age is, the united record of those persons who lived in that day, and were eye and ear witnesses, and fully capable of relating and judging of the facts said to be done. And we have not only the united historical records of the christians themselves of the truth of facts, with an account of the treatment they met with from an unbelieving and an ungrateful world, with its consequences ; but we have the united historical records of the same things from the enemies of christianity, who give a particular and circumstantial account of the christian doctrines, and how they proceeded against them as heretics : which writings, coming from the enemies of the christians, prove as certainly that there

were men who were called christians, as the finding English letters, words and sentences inscribed on the bark of a tree, in some desolate island, would prove that some person who understood the English language and writing had been there. Having therefore the highest evidence which the nature of the thing will admit, we cannot reasonably ask for more. With equal certainty it follows, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived and died before any of his followers were called christians, and from whom they received that name : for, if there had not been a person who was called Christ, there would have been no foundation for the calling any sect of men at that day christians. And that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who was born, lived and died under the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, near eighteen hundred years ago, we have the joint testimony of friends and enemies : and, though they differ in the account they give of him, yet they all exactly agree *that he was*—that he was born at Bethlehem—brought up at Nazareth,—that he founded the christian religion—and that he was crucified at Jerusalem as a state criminal. So that we have all the evidences that it is possible that we should have, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, that he was born at the time, in the place and manner, those writings of the New Testament say that he was ; that he preached doctrines, and wrought miracles in confirmation of them ; and, in short, that he died at the time and in the manner which those records assert that he did. And indeed the whole historical accounts, which both the friends and enemies of Christ have given of these facts, agree with the writings of the New Testament ; nay, his most inveterate enemies do allow that he was, that he preached in Judea, wrought miracles, that he died, and rose again from the dead, according to the Scriptures. Even Julian the apostate has allowed all this.

We are led from hence to assert, that there were books written at that time by the professed friends and followers of Christ, which contain the memoirs of his life, doctrines and death, the most authentic of which were written by four of his professed followers, and were known by the names Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And this appears, not only from the writings of the christian fathers in the first century—who have all borne their testimony to the truth and genuineness of those books, called the four evangelists, and written by those four men, as appears from their writings which are yet extant—but we have the united testimony of the enemies and persecutors of the christians, to the genuineness of these writings. They warmly disputed with the christian fathers about them, but never denied their existence or genuineness : and these disputes about the four evangelists, between the friends and enemies of Christ, remain unto this day, a living demonstration, which cannot be withstood, that there were persons of such names, who wrote those books called the four evangelists, and that they are authentic and genuine—no spurious or cunningly devised fables of a later date. The principal of those writers against the four evangelists were Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles and Julian, who were answered by Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Gregory Nazianzen, and Cyril ; in which long and warm disputes the genuineness or authenticity of these books was never called in question, but the things contained in them were disputed : nor do we remember that this part of the New Testament, as to its genuineness, was ever disputed by any in the two first centuries. And we may add, that, as counterfeits imply and always prove the existence of true coin, so the spurious gospels which afterwards made their appearance, and which were soon detected and rejected by the christian church, prove beyond dispute the truth and genuineness of those which have stood the test of many centuries, and remain, the living

living oracles of God, or the record which God has given of his Son, the true prophet who came from God. And the same may be said of all the other writings which compose the New Testament. Christianity had her enemies from the beginning, as might be expected. They were opposed to the doctrines and sentiments contained in the epistles of Paul, Peter, James and John; but in their disputes with the christian fathers they allowed them to have an equal claim to truth and authenticity with the writings of the four evangelists. And Eusebius, a very early and impartial writer, says expressly, that the Four Evangelists, the Acts of the Apostles, and all the epistles which now compose the New Testament, were universally received by the christian church as inspired writings, and regarded as such. But, as there are no writings in the world of equally interesting importance, if true, as those of the New Testament, so there is no history or system of religion which has met with such violent opposition, nor the authors with such cruel persecution, for avowing and supporting them; and yet there are no histories or writings which carry such evidence of truth, and marks of their genuineness and authenticity; for, besides the having all the evidence which is thought sufficient to prove the truth and genuineness of any history, these have the addition of the united testimony of all the enemies of christianity in their favour, though they did not mean so, nor their hearts think so; which testimony reflects a light in favour of this sacred writing, strong and clear in proportion to the numbers and violence by which their authors and writings were persecuted and opposed.

Having proved, beyond all reasonable dispute, that there were books written by the four evangelists and the apostles, the friends and immediate followers of Jesus Christ, containing the memoirs of his life, doctrines and death, and that these writings complete the system of his religion, called Christianity; we pass directly to prove, that

that these very writings which compose the New Testament have been preserved and handed down to us uncorrupted, and are the very same, without any material or essential alteration, which were originally written by the said four evangelists and apostles.

And we will venture to say, that it is absolutely certain that the writings of the New Testament, as we now have them, are the same with those ancient records which passed under the same name, and that they have been transmitted down to us without any material or essential alteration: for it is absolutely impossible, in the nature and reason of things, that any corruption or material alteration should take place in them, without being very soon discovered; for we all know that these books were written by different hands, and for the benefit of mankind, and contain matters, if true, of the last importance to the whole human race. They were therefore soon spread abroad into distant parts, and translated into different languages, for the instruction of those who did not understand the language in which they were originally written; and they were put into the hands of christians of different sentiments about the non-essential matters in religion; so that it is certain, if any one person, or party, or nation, had or should corrupt or alter any essential doctrine or article, such corruption or alteration would very soon be discovered by another person, party or nation; and this discovery would furnish the enemies of christianity with a good reason to object against the whole; and they would not have failed to make use of such an argument to object against the genuineness of the sacred writings: which objection has never been made, because they have never had any thing on which they could ground it.

But will any one say, that it may be all were agreed what, and when, and where, to alter? This is impossible; for to suppose that all the many millions who have received

ceived these books as the word of God, and standard of divine truth, living in far distant countries, speaking different languages, and maintaining different sentiments, about many things contained in these writings, should all agree to make the alteration, at the same time, in the same place and manner, is the greatest absurdity that can be conceived, and, all things considered, a moral impossibility. But, on the other hand, that these books should suffer some small alterations, in many immaterial points, is almost absolutely certain; for, as they have undergone so many translations into different languages, languages too which would not bear a literal translation verbatim, some of which were so barbarous as not to have words by which the distinguishing doctrines of christianity could be expressed, which defect the translator was obliged to supply with words of the original language, or, by making use of metaphors taken from well-known customs in use among the nation for whom the translation was designed, to convey the idea where words were wanting to express it; considering also that these writings were to pass through so many different presses, and to be prepared by christians of different denominations and sentiments; considering all these things, it is almost impossible but that they should suffer some alteration in the less or non-essential articles, which they have undoubtedly done, as might be shewn in a variety of instances. These small defects, and different readings, the enemies of christianity have observed, and made the most they could of them; but this attempt, as others of the like nature, has rather added to the weight of evidence in favour of the genuineness and authenticity of these inspired writings, and more abundantly proved them living oracles of the unchangeable God.

And, as there has not been any corruption or material alteration made in any of the original copies, or in any of their translations, transcriptions or impressions, so we have



have the pleasure to add, that the translation into the English language, as we now have it in our hands, is a good translation, and agreeable with the original in all material and essential points, as most who are regularly introduced into the gospel ministry can testify. And here I cannot but observe, that it would not be safe in ordinary cases to commit the gospel ministry to persons who are not able to read the Bible in the original, especially the New Testament, or who are not able from their own personal knowledge to say whether our translation is agreeable to the original, or not. But, if we who are in the ministry were not able to do this, and the translators were disposed to impose upon the ignorant and unlearned by a wrong translation, yet it would be very difficult, if possible, for us or them to do it without being immediately detected, and exposed to popular resentment: for, so long as there are learned men in the world, and a diversity of opinions among them, if any man or set of men were perfidious enough to make any material alteration in our translation, those who were of a different way of thinking would immediately discover the fraud, and expose such interpreters to shame, and draw upon them public odium. There always have been dissensions in the church about less essential matters, and some about the weightier things of the law and the gospel too, and each sect or party have always been very fond of having the Scriptures on their side, to support their opinions in which they differed from their brethren; so, that if any one party or sect should have gone about to corrupt or materially to alter our translation from the original, to make it speak more in favour of their own particular opinions, such mistranslation or corruption would have been immediately discovered by those whom they opposed, by appealing to the original; who, if from no other principle than that of party-zeal, would not have let slip so fair an opportunity to expose the fraudulent deed

to general disgrace, and the opinions, in favour of which such measures had been taken, to the odium of every honest inquirer : so that it is plain, if any man should attempt to give us a corrupt or wrong translation of the Scriptures, he would not be able to do it without being immediately discovered, so long as there is or shall be a learned ministry or learned men in the world, or any diversity of sentiments among professors. It appears, to demonstration—That there was a set of men near eighteen hundred years ago, who were called christians—that there was before that time a person who was born at Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, that he was brought up at Nazareth, who was called Jesus Christ, who preached publicly certain doctrines, and wrought very surprising miracles in confirmation of them—that four men, who were his friends and followers, wrote the memoirs of his life, doctrines and death, who gave a very particular historical account of his miracles, and the manner and prodigies which attended his death. These writers were called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Besides these there were others who were his constant followers, called his disciples or apostles. These have given us a complete system of his religion, in several epistles addressed to particular christian churches, to persons of eminence and influence ; and others of a more catholic or general style. These writings of the four evangelists and the apostles compose our New Testament, and, as we have proved, have been preserved pure, and handed down to us without any corruption or material alteration. And we have these uncorrupted writings translated into our own language in so faithful a manner that we can assert with truth that the New Testament, as we now have it, is the authentic and genuine writing of the evangelists and the apostles of Jesus Christ ; and all who received them as such, and made them the foundation of their faith, and the rule of their conduct, were, after him their  
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Lord and Master, by divine appointment, called christians. They, with us, esteemed these writings the true sayings of God; and as they did, so do we, set to our seal that these sacred writings are the living oracles of the God of truth, if these inspired authors were the true servants of God. If there is any fraud or deception in these writings, it must be in the original authors themselves; for we have proved to demonstration that a corruption could not take place in any period of later date. For that these authors were honest men, fully capable of judging of the facts on which they grounded their testimony, and incapable of wicked artifice and deception, we think will abundantly appear by a general and impartial survey of their character and situation. And it is certain that they were fully capable of judging as to the facts on which they grounded the truth of their testimony; as, for instance, they were capable of judging whether there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who was conversant among them—whether he wrought miracles before them—whether he fell into the hands of his enemies, and was crucified by them—whether he arose from the dead, and did perform certain animal operations before them, such as eating, drinking, walking, conversing, &c.—whether they actually saw him with their own eyes, heard him speak, with their own ears, and did handle him with their own hands. However illiterate these ancient historians may have been, they were certainly capable of forming an adequate judgment on these facts; therefore some regard ought to be paid to their united testimony. And certainly they were persons of natural good sense, and at the time of writing those documents they appeared to be of a composed mind. Let any unprejudiced person read the New Testament with attention, he will, we are persuaded, find not only evident marks of a sound mind, but of great integrity, simplicity and benevolence, quite sufficient to exclude or remove all suspicion of fraud, de-

ception or collusion in any of those writings. The very manner in which they relate their wonderful story carries a conviction of its truth, and claims credit with every candid hearer. They relate it with a minute detail of circumstances, which is never the practice, as it would not be safe or prudent, for false and designing men. They tell their story in the most natural, easy and simple manner, just as plain, honest men would recount facts which they certainly knew to be true, without the embellishments of art, false colouring, or needless asseverations, leaving the facts to speak for themselves.

Again—Their integrity appears, from that honest freedom with which they mention those circumstances which might have exposed both their Master and themselves to contempt. They do not conceal the place nor obscurity of their Master's birth, nor the meanness of his education, nor the indigence of his outward circumstances—not having where to lay his head. They do not hesitate at all to own that he was accused of blasphemy and sedition, of breaking the sabbath, and of having a confederacy with Satan, or a combination with the powers of darkness. They frankly own that he was rejected by the rulers of his own nation; that he was tried at, and condemned by, their supreme court, and executed as one of the vilest of malefactors. And, as to themselves, they claimed no honourable descent, but freely confessed the meanness of their former employments, the scandals of their former lives, their old prejudices, their follies and their faults: they freely own their slowness of apprehension, their unbelief, their rash zeal, their cowardice, their ambition, and their foolish contentions: so that they did not seem to be at all solicitous for their own reputation, or for that of their Master, but only that they might represent matters of fact just as they were, whether it made for or against them.

It is most certain, too, that in all their writings there may be found the most evident traces of not only an honest, but a pious, benevolent and generous, disposition. Now that persons of such an excellent character, honest, plain and benevolent, who breathed nothing in their whole deportment but exalted sentiments of philanthropy and devotion, should be guilty of the most notorious and complicated wickedness, without ever being detected, though they were repeatedly brought to the severest trials, before governors and kings, must exceed all belief: but no evidence ever yet appeared either against their morals or their testimony. If their testimony was false, they must know it to be so, and persisting in it, they must be the most abandoned wretches in the universe: for knowingly to palm a cheat upon the world, in which not only the temporal but the eternal interest of mankind was implicated, must be a crime without a name, unless a compound of impiety, perjury and cruelty can give it one. Herein they would have borne false witness for God, and deceived mankind in their most important interests, persuading them to build their eternal hopes upon one whom they knew to be a vile impostor, who had justly suffered for his own crimes. Their crime must be enormous in the first instance of deception; but what must it swell to when all the innocent blood which has been since shed in the cause of christianity is taken into the account! But besides, it cannot be supposed that twelve or fourteen men can be found in all the earth who shall unite in, and carry on, so black a confederacy against all mankind through life, without detection. It is impossible: yes, we will venture to say, that, considering the weakness and the fickleness of human nature, and that those ancient historians were sometimes separated from each other at great distances, under different temptations, and in very different circumstances, till death; it is morally impossible that so many should be so united, and so  
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consistent with each other, in so vile and impious a scheme, as not to betray the cause, and discover the deception; especially considering that one had the perfidy to betray his Master, and would, we may be sure, have betrayed the whole cheat, if there had been any. But, far from this, though Satan possessed his heart, yet it was not hardy enough to stand by his perfidiousness, but he repented, and fell by his own hand, a sacrifice to the remorse of his own conscience, and so added the testimony of his own blood to the innocency of his injured Master, whom he had basely betrayed, to the integrity of his fellow-disciples whom he had deserted, and to the truth of that cause which he had disgraced, and went to his *own place*. But, as what will give weight to the arguments in favour of their integrity, and that they have given us a true and honest relation of facts, we may add, they could be under no temptation, to palm a cheat upon the world, or to publish a false testimony. They could not promise themselves honour or profit; but, with the least grain of prudence, or common sense, or discernment, they must have foreseen that infamy and ruin must have been the consequence. The foundation of their scheme was, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified on Mount Calvary, at Jerusalem, was the Son of God, the Saviour of Men, and the Lord of Life and Glory. Now to charge the murder of this Man, Christ Jesus—(which, allowing their testimony to be true, was the most horrid act the sun ever saw, therefore he veiled his face)—to charge this blackest of all crimes upon the priests, the princes and rulers of their own nation, what could they expect? nothing short of this—that those rulers would immediately improve all their art and power to confute their testimony, and destroy their persons. Accordingly, one of them was presently stoned, and the rest were imprisoned, persecuted, and scattered abroad into strange cities, and distant lands, where they could not reasonably expect better treatment:

ment: for, with barbarians and gentle nations, their business was, to persuade them to abandon the gods of their ancestors, and to accept of, and confide in, an unknown person, who had died by the hand of justice, in his own land, as a malefactor and a slave; could they, upon the principles of reason and common sense, expect to succeed in so arduous a work, on the supposition that they bore false witness for God? We think they could not; for will a nation soon change her gods? No. They could reasonably expect nothing better than to be treated as fools and madmen, to be persecuted by the rulers, insulted by the populace as blasphemers of the gods, seducers of the people, and disturbers of public peace and harmony, and hooted out of every corner of the earth to which they might flee for shelter, and that they and their cause would soon sink into perpetual oblivion. But this was not the case, for it is evident that the disciples of Jesus did gain credit, which nothing but the truth and importance of their doctrines could support. It is a truth which cannot be denied, that christianity did succeed in a most wonderful and surprising manner; for not only the history of the New Testament, (which we have proved to be authentic) but Josephus, Clemens, Romanus, Pliny, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Eusebius, and many others, who were unfriendly to christianity, have testified, that such was the rapid progress of christianity, that myriads of the Jews believed the report of the gospel, and flocked to the apostles of Jesus, crying out, Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? and thousands, mostly Jews, were initiated into the christian profession by the rite of baptism, and added to the christian church, in one day; and that within half a century there were christian churches planted, not only at Jerusalem, and throughout the land of Judea, but at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Thessalonica, Philippi, Laodicea, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Crete, Pontus,

Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, and in many other places ; infomuch that the Apoftle could fay, that he had preached the gofpel with fuccefs from Jerufalem round about to Illyricum, in confequence of which the gentiles were brought into obedience to the gofpel, both in word and deed. In the next age, Pliny faid, that he found almoft all the heathen temples deserted : and Tertullian boasted that all the places for public religious affemblies were filled with devout christians, worshipping God in the name of Chrift ; except the heathen temples, which were generally neglected ; and fo numerous were the christian profefiors, that if they fhould withdraw, cities, provinces, and even whole countries, would in a manner be depopulated. And Juftin Martyr, in his difpute with Tryphon the Jew, obferved, that there was no nation, Jews, Greeks or barbarians, not excepting the clans of wandering Arabs, who had not received the doctrines of the gofpel, and learnt from thence to address prayers and thanksgivings to God, the common Father and Maker of all, in the name of Jefus Chrift, who was crucified. Now, to what can this rapid fpread of the gofpel, this wonderful fuccefs which attended the firft preachers of it, be attributed, but to the power of truth, and the hand of the Lord, which was with them to defend, fupport and fucceed them ? Though the number was very great who were early profelyted to the christian religion, yet we muft fuppofe that they were all fatisfied as to the truth of thofe facts on which it was grounded ; otherwife there could be no imaginable reason given why they fhould believe it, and build all their future hopes upon it. The apoftles were not armed with terror, to affright men into the belief of their doctrines or hiftory ; they had no gold to bribe them, nor eloquence to enchant them ; they were not profound philofophers, nor polite orators ; and they had not the princes and potentates of the earth for their patrons. If they might have terrified or perfuaded  
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some into the profession of their faith, by such means only they never could have convinced men of the truth and importance of the christian doctrines. And, though the lusts and corruptions of the human heart, the errors and superstitions of mankind, were combined to effect the overthrow of the christian religion—the wit and learning of the age immediately employed to overbear and ridicule it—the princes and the rulers drew the sword for its destruction, armed with terrors and death—yet we see it has triumphed over all opposition, and, like the stone, (in Daniel's vision) cut out of the mountain without hands, it has broken to pieces or removed whatever stood in its way, till it is become as a great mountain itself, and almost filled the earth.

It is vain to object, that christianity was only received by, and spread among, the lower class of mankind. If the apostles had put the final issue of the cause they were pleading, upon the strength of laboured arguments, refined reasonings, or metaphysical distinctions, by which the populace might have been entangled, lost and deceived, there would have been some cause or room for such an objection. But the truth is, they rested the whole cause upon plain facts, of which the common people were as capable of judging, as the learned and philosophic reasoner. But the objection is not altogether founded in truth. Indeed there were not many *wise men* after the flesh, not many *mighty*, nor many *noble*, found on the list of those who first embraced the gospel, or yielded to the force of evidence by which it was supported. Yet there was a goodly number who boldly came forward and bore their united testimony to the truth and importance of the christian religion, who were of the first class of civilians. There were several members of the Jewish Sanhedrim—Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea; there were several officers of the Roman army—Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, Cornelius, the centurion of  
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the Italian band, and Lifias, tribune and first magistrate under the governor; Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Paphos, Dionysius, the Areopagite, president of the supreme court at Athens, a person of great dignity; and there were honourable domestics of Cæsar's household: we might name Julius, captain of the guards, who had the charge of Paul and the other prisoners from Cæsarea to Rome, with many others, who were in the upper class of mankind. But, if there had been none of this grade who from the beginning had embraced christianity, it would only have proved what our Saviour said was an evidence of the truth of his mission—The poor have the gospel preached unto them, and blessed is he who shall not be offended in me: implying, that men of this class were more likely to receive the plain and simple truths of the gospel than the rich, the great, and the men of the world. But the fact is, the gospel did succeed, in a very remarkable and wonderful manner, with all characters, orders and denominations of men; and, when we consider that it was by special commission from heaven, and that it carried its own evidence with it, we may reasonably expect that it would prevail; for great is the truth, and it will prevail.

And it is evident that the authors of the New Testament were commissioned from heaven, and wrote under divine inspiration. And among the authors of the New Testament we may reckon the Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was not himself one of the sacred penmen, yet he is truly the divine author, and the evangelists and apostles were but his amanuenses, and wrote under his direction, and the inspirations of his infallible Spirit. But it is evident that the Blessed Jesus was commissioned from heaven in his mediatorial character, and was full of the Holy Ghost; and had the highest claim to divinity and infallibility; for the sacred historian says, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God, by miracles  
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and wonders and signs, which God did by him, as ye yourselves also know. And it is equally certain, that the evangelists and apostles were commissioned from heaven, and were divinely inspired; for they were able to work real and uncontroled miracles, in attestation of their commission, and in confirmation of the doctrines which they preached. And this may be proved from the sacred history of the New Testament. And, as we have proved those writings to be ancient and authentic, we claim equal regard to them in point of evidence as to any other ancient credible and well-supported history, and no more. And these ancient records say, that when the Lord Jesus chose his twelve apostles to be his constant attendants, and his future special messengers, he in the beginning of the third year of his public ministry commissioned them to preach the gospel, and endowed them to work all kinds of miracles; for it is said that he called them unto him, and gave them power against all unclean spirits, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases among the people. And he said unto them, Go ye forth and preach the gospel, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, and raise the dead. Freely have you received, freely give. The same commission, accompanied with similar powers, he gave to seventy others, a few months after; when it was remarked; that he sent them forth to preach the gospel by pairs—two and two; and he said unto them, Go your way; behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves; and into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you; and heal the sick who are therein, and preach, saying, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. Behold I give unto you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing by any means shall hurt you. These eighty-two persons, with the apostle Paul, who was afterwards

wards joined, include the whole number of those inspired authors under whose patronage and direction the New Testament was compiled. Now, as all these were commissioned, endowed with the power of working miracles, and sent forth to preach the gospel, so they all did work real miracles in confirmation of the gospel which they preached, though the particular miracles each one wrought, on what occasion, and the effect, are not distinctly recorded. If all which Jesus said and did, with all which was said and done by these eighty-two inspired messengers, had been written, the whole world would scarcely have contained the books. But in general we have an account of the success of their first mission: when the seventy had made their circuit, they returned to their Master, and informed him that the very devils were subject to them through his name: q. d. We have been enabled not only to cure all manner of diseases, in a miraculous manner, according to the power thou wast pleased to invest us with when we received our commission to preach the gospel, but even demons, evil and foul spirits, whom we found possessing the bodies and actuating the minds of many poor, wretched creatures of the human race, were subject to us, armed with thy commission, and were obliged, at our command in thy name, to quit their possessions.

And of the twelve apostles it is in general recorded, that by their hands many signs and wonders were wrought among the people, insomuch that they brought forth the sick, and laid them upon beds in the streets; yea, they brought forth a multitude of sick, and those vexed with unclean spirits, and every one of them was healed by the hands of the apostles. And, though St. Paul did not receive his commission and sacred investiture when the others did, but by a very extraordinary revelation and inspiration, after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet he was not behind the chief of the apostles in miraculous works;

works; nay, Luke asserts, that God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them, upon the diseased or vexed persons being touched by those clothes which were brought from Paul's body, or after being used or worn by him. And, besides those authentic records which affirm that all the apostles, both the seventy and the twelve, were invested with this power, all the historians near that date, and who have preserved any memoirs of the apostles' writings, doctrines and lives, have agreed that they all had power to work miracles, and wherever they went, preaching the gospel, they actually did work real and wondrous miracles in confirmations of the doctrines they preached, and that their miracles were of the same kind with their doctrines—*beneficent*, extended to the distressed, or wrought upon miserable objects.

A real, undoubted miracle of a benevolent kind, wrought by a person of unblemished character, in favour of doctrines of the same kind, such as the gospel doctrines are, carry with them an irresistible evidence, and prove beyond dispute that the person is divinely inspired who is invested with such powers, and is thereby eminently fitted to discharge the duties of his mission. We grant, pretended miracles, or the appearance of real miracles, wrought by persons of bad or suspicious characters, and said to be wrought to gain a favourite point of small or personal importance, not of a general, benevolent nature, are not sufficient either to prove the person claiming such power to be under a divine influence, or that the doctrine he delivers under the umbrage of such miraculous power is divine inspiration. And how far wicked and designing men may be permitted, under the influence of an evil spirit, to impose upon the ignorant, by lying wonders or apparently supernatural operations, we do not know; or  
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how far craft, or what is done by legerdemain, or sleight of hand, may deceive unwary minds, by counterfeiting a real miracle, is as hard to say. Miracles of this sort are found to abound greatly among the superstitious rubbish of the church of Rome, who have carried this craft or diabolical influence so far, that if it were possible they would have deceived the very elect.

But the miracles wrought in support of the gospel revelation are quite of another sort, and supported by very different evidence. The character of the persons, the nature of the miracles, and the tendency of the doctrines in support of which they have been wrought, should be always taken into the account, in order to determine the weight of evidence. Therefore our Saviour said, There is no man who can do a miracle in my name, who shall speak lightly or evil of me.

Therefore when we consider the apostles, once poor fishermen of Galilee, but of unblemished characters, in a moment, on the day of pentecost, enabled, according to the promise of their Master, to speak, with the greatest readiness and propriety, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Coptic, Persian, and a great variety of other languages, the first rudiments of which they had never learnt, and also to perform all kinds of miracles, of the most beneficent nature, in confirmation of a system of religion, the leading views of which concentrate the glory of God and the salvation of men, we think every one must be struck with these plain but divinely powerful arguments, and conclude that those men were the true servants of God, and divinely inspired by him. It was an argument which the Blessed Jesus thought of weight sufficient to justify his claim, and to silence the malice and bigotry of the Jews: therefore he said, The works which I do, they testify of me, that the Father hath sent me. The argument was sufficient to force a conviction upon Pharaoh, already hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and confounded the  
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magical art in his wife men, and brought the magi to confess that Moses's claim to divine inspiration was just; and when they saw the incontestible miracles which he wrought before them so far superior to what they by the art of magic, or satannic influence, could work, they said, *This is the finger of God.* The same argument determined the dispute between the prophets of Baal and the prophet Elijah, and produced a conviction in favour of the inspiration of Elijah, which the idolaters could not withstand. In one word; the same argument determined the inspiration of Paul, when certain Jews, exorcists, men of abandoned characters, attempted to eject a demon by making a profane use of the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached, and thereby intended to dishonour that sacred name by pressing it into the service of conjuration: but they failed in the daring attempt, for the man, in whom the evil spirit was, leaped upon them, and the demon, speaking in the man, said, *Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?* and he overcame them, so that they hardly escaped, naked and wounded, spectacles of scorn and derision to all who beheld them. But when the miracles wrought by Paul so far exceeded those wretched attempts by the sons of Sceva, a general conviction was produced in favour of Paul and his inspiration. The consequence was, that those who used those wicked arts confessed their evil deeds, and burnt the books with them; and the word of the Lord, preached by Paul, prevailed over all the works of darkness.

Another argument in favour of the inspiration of the apostles is, that they were endowed with a rich variety of spiritual gifts, which wonderfully fitted and enabled them to deliver the whole counsel of God, and which raised them above the weakness of human nature, in the faithful discharge of the duties of their mission. And these spiritual gifts have been reckoned up, and ranged in their proper order, by the apostle Paul, in his first epistle

to the Corinthians, 12th chapter, from the 8th verse. To one, says he, is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another prophecies, to another the discerning of spirits, to another diverse kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues, and that wonderful gift, which seems peculiar to the apostles, the dispensing the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to others by the laying on of their hands. And though we may not, at this distance of time, fully comprehend the nature, the extent and usefulness, of these very extraordinary gifts, yet we cannot but see that they were all admirably adapted to serve the purposes of inspiration, and became a rich and necessary furniture, and wonderfully qualified them, as inspired teachers, to propagate with success the gospel of the Son of God. Now, allowing the apostles to be possessed of these extraordinary gifts, and that they had power to impart them to others, as cases might require, (as they most certainly had) and that they used these gifts, not for ostentation and shew, but for the noble purpose of spreading divine knowledge among those who sat in the shady regions of death, for disseminating the principles of the most sublime virtue, and for training up subjects for a state of purity and happiness in the kingdom of glory; allowing all this to be true, we appeal to the conscience of every honest man to say whether these men were not divinely inspired, or whether those writings which are transmitted to us from them, and which compose the New Testament, are not the true sayings of God. But this will appear in a still more striking point of light, if possible, when we come to consider the *internal evidence* of the inspiration of the New Testament. By the internal evidence of a divine revelation, we mean that kind of evidence which arises from the nature and tendency of those doctrines and declarations which are contained in that revelation.

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And it is most obvious, that the important and essential doctrines of natural religion are established and confirmed by the gospel revelation; particularly, the being and perfections of God—his universal providence, and moral government—a state of future existence, and of rewards and punishments in an invisible world: these are doctrines which are agreeable to the light of nature, and which both reason and conscience inculcate as important and interesting, founded in nature, and result from the eternal and immutable reason of things. These very doctrines are set in a clearer light by the gospel, being illustrated and established by the New Testament revelation; which is at least one presumptive evidence of an internal nature, that it is from God, as the contrary doctrines would prove that it was not from him: for we cannot suppose that God would inspire men to reveal a system of religion, the leading doctrines of which should deny his own perfections, and contradict the laws of nature, and the reason of man; nor could we receive such a revelation as from him, so long as we retain the natural idea of his being and perfections, providence and government, or have the use of our own reason and conscience, by which we are enabled to judge of doctrines, and weigh the arguments by which they are to be defended.

Jesus Christ declared that he came into the world to shew us the Father, and to reveal him, and to give us right apprehensions of him; and he complained that the Jews did not know the Father nor him—had no just and practical sense of his being, presence, purity, providence or grace; that they were grossly ignorant of himself, the characters he was to sustain, the nature of his kingdom, and the gracious designs of his mission; though to know God, and him whom he had sent, was eternal life. And the apostle Paul, when he stood in the midst of the court of the Areopagites, said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive

ceive that in all things you are too superstitious : the God whom you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. So that I think we may venture to say, that the doctrines and sentiments revealed in the New Testament, rightly understood, are agreeable to, and directly tend to illustrate, establish and enforce, the principles and doctrines of natural religion, from motives and considerations best adapted to act upon reasonable and ingenuous minds.

Another internal evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament is, that all the most important duties which relate to God, our neighbour and ourselves, are described plainly, inculcated seriously, and urged warmly, with the spirit of love and condescension, as every candid reader must acknowledge. It seemed to be the first concern of the Supreme Revealer to clear the moral law from the corrupt glosses which the doctors and pharisees had put upon it, and to set it in its most natural and convincing point of light, that it might touch the heart, and influence the life. This Divine Teacher founds moral virtue upon supreme love to God, and impartial love to our neighbour : therefore when he was asked by a captious lawyer, Which is the great commandment of the law ? he answered, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ; this is the first and the great commandment : and the second is like unto it—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two hang both the law and the prophets. And, having descended a little more particularly into the moral duties we owe to God and our neighbour, he sums them up by saying, Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect : engaging his hearers to practice moral virtue in the most perfect manner human nature is capable of, from the noble and sublime principles of supreme love to God, and impartial benevolence to mankind, enforced by this powerful consideration, that God was the common Father of the universe, and reconcilable to men through the merits

merits of his Son. And thus he drew them to obedience with the cords of love, and the bands of a man. But, lest self-love, prejudice and partiality should darken the mind, mislead, or make the path of duty, in some instances, intricate, in relative and social life, or where interest, misapprehended, might bribe the judgment, he laid down that excellent rule of equity and love, the propriety and force of which every candid and honest mind must feel—As you would that others should do to you, do you even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. A more consummate rule of genuine morality there cannot be, or more useful in civil, social and commercial life. His apostles preached the same doctrines, inculcated the same rules, and urged the same things, and from similar motives; for their doctrines were all according to godliness. They constantly maintained that love was the fulfilling of the law, and that the most sublime acts of religion externally were mere emptiness and sound, and in the sight of God of little worth, when they did not originate in love, and operate according to its dictates. They particularly inculcated relative duties, regulating the conduct of parents towards their children, and of children towards their parents—of masters towards their servants, and of servants towards their masters—of magistrates towards their subjects, and subjects towards their rulers; joining with those moral precepts and rules of social life an amiable and a bright assemblage of christian virtues—faith, patience, resignation, meekness, humility, forbearance and forgiveness, against which there is no law, nor can there be any objection. Nor is the gospel revelation less careful to enforce the duties we owe to ourselves; sobriety, temperance and self-denial. Though the gospel revelation does not flatter our unruly passions, nor indulge our inordinate appetites, or carnal sensuality, but lays a restraint upon disorderly passions, and puts the reins of government into the hands of reason and faith,

yet it indulges us with all the enjoyments of the senses which lie within the sacred bounds of reason and nature; it indulges us with all which is consistent with supreme love to God, and a sincere submission to his Son; all therefore that a wise and good man can desire. And, that we may be kept within those sacred bounds of temperance and sobriety, the gospel revelation unveils to us the glories of the heavenly world, and brings those brighter objects full to view, that we may not be captivated with the fascinating objects of sense; and under these bright and animating views it bids us to set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth, which are seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal. Nay, the whole writings of the New Testament uniformly teach all men, every where, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our God, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another internal evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament is, that it reveals and enjoins a system of religion which is in its nature and constitution spiritual. Its positive institutions are few and easy, of an obvious, spiritual use and design. We have already observed, that some positive institutions are necessary to complete any system of religion. The system of religion revealed in the New Testament hath but three—baptism, the Lord's supper, and the christian sabbath—each easy to be observed, and well adapted to impress the mind with the truth, importance and spirituality of the christian religion, and serving as an associated bond of union. These form the threefold cord by which we are bound to God and one another—solemn public vows, personal contract, and ingenuous gratitude. It is evident from hence that christianity was never designed to make a show in the world by the glitter of external ornaments, or a parade

in carnal ordinances : it never was designed to enrich or aggrandize its author or its professors, or to make a splendid worldly appearance ; as its ordinances are few, plain and simple, calculated chiefly for spiritual use, to improve in the spiritual and divine life.

Another internal evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament is, that it contains doctrines, precepts and promises peculiarly adapted to the present fallen state of human nature. The New Testament alone reveals great and glorious truths which lay hid from ages past, but are made manifest by the gospel, and with the knowledge of which man's final salvation stands connected. Though some of them are not yet wholly divested of all mystery, yet so much light is thrown upon all of them as is sufficient to found our faith, and to regulate our conduct : as, for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity ; that there are three who bear record in heaven ; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and that these three are one Undivided Essence, or United Deity—the union of the human and divine natures in the one incarnate Redeemer—the enlightening, the quickening, the sanctifying and the comforting influences of the Blessed Spirit—the reconciling of mercy and justice in the recovery of fallen man ; how God can be just, and yet justify the sinner who believeth in Jesus—the immortality of grace, as an incorruptible seed—the resurrection of the body, and future rewards and punishments. Besides these, there is a rich variety of truths which result from them, which relate to Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character, and the peculiar offices which the Holy Spirit sustains, in beginning, carrying on and perfecting a work of grace in the human heart, in illuminating, directing and supporting the faint through this vale of tears to glory ; truths sublime in themselves, and which strike the mind in a very powerful manner, and call forth both the natural and gracious principles of gratitude, the noblest sources of genuine,  
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uniform and acceptable obedience. These are the main doctrines and subjects of the New Testament, which are hardly, if at all, discernible by the light of nature, or unassisted reason. This wisdom is from above: the earth saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not in me: God alone knoweth the way thereof, and he alone understandeth the place thereof; and therefore a revelation of these truths must be from him, and those persons who first published them to the world must have been inspired by him. This revelation came not by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The magi of the East, the sages of heathen Rome or Greece, or the religious philosophers of modern times, may admire the wisdom, the power and the goodness of God in the works of creation and providence, and call our attention to the book of nature for instruction; but no one, nor all of them together, can tell us that which it is of the most importance for us to know—the one thing which is needful, on which are suspended all our present comfort, and future hopes. No page in their voluminous writings, nor in the book of nature, can inform us whether God will certainly forgive sin, or what kind of sins he will forgive, or how many, or how often, or on what conditions; but the gospel revelation fully and clearly informs us that we have redemption through the blood of Christ—the remission of sin, according to the riches of his grace.

In one word, the scope and tendency of the New Testament revelation is, to carry on one united and compact design, to glorify God, and to save a guilty world, in the way that gives us the most exalted idea of the wisdom, the goodness and the grace of God, and the most humbling apprehensions of our fallen and guilty state—a scheme which exalts the divine purity, and lays open all the malignity and pollution of the human heart—a scheme which strikes directly at the root of human pride, so that  
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the loftiness of man is brought low, and the haughtiness of man is humbled, and the Lord alone is exalted, in the salvation of sinful men. Therefore it is a mediatorial plan, exactly suited to our fallen state; no cunningly devised fable, but a wonderful scheme of wisdom and grace, laid by the Father of men and angels, who perfectly knows our frame, and what our wants are, and the ways and means by which we, fallen into sin and darkness, may be enlightened, reclaimed, and restored to a state of purity and happiness, and whereby his own honour might be secured and advanced.

We might now close the argument, but there are a few *external evidences* of the truth, importance and divine authenticity of the New Testament inspiration, which offer themselves to our consideration, and which have not yet been fully investigated, which may throw some further light on the subject, or add weight to what has been already offered, and therefore in the close cannot well be omitted: as, for instance, the persons who first preached and published the gospel revelation sustained such characters, and were in such circumstances, as we had just reason to expect that persons charged with a revelation from heaven would be; viz. persons of eminent piety, and in low worldly circumstances. We can hardly suppose that God would favour and honour a vicious man with any very extraordinary discoveries of his will, or make him the main instrument of publishing a revelation to others, the evident design of which was, to make men wise, virtuous and happy. That God would not employ men of vicious characters, destitute of piety and goodness, in so benevolent and pious a design as the revelation of a holy religion, is a truth which mankind are agreed in. The pharisees spoke the sense of mankind, when they said to the man who had been born blind, and was miraculously restored to his sight, Give God the praise; as for the man who pretends to have wrought the miracle,

he is a sinner, and is not of God, for he keepeth not the sabbath. The conclusion is just, if he was a sinner, and kept not the sabbath; but the hypothesis was false: he was not a sinner, and he kept the sabbath, and spent it in acts of charity and devotion, which plainly shewed that he understood its original institution—that the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. And the evangelists and apostles, the first promulgators of the gospel, were eminent for their piety and benevolence, as their enemies themselves were obliged to allow: for, though they were narrowly watched, strictly examined, severely threatened, unjustly imprisoned, and cruelly punished, yet no impiety or immorality was ever proved upon them: the worst crime that was fairly proved upon them was, that they publicly preached the glorious gospel of the blessed God freely: and Pilate, Julian and Porphyry bore their testimony, with a thousand others who were inimical to christianity, that Jesus and his followers were devout, just, benevolent and good.

The mean and low circumstances in which Jesus Christ and his ambassadors made their appearance in the world, though it was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, yet added strength to the external evidence of the truth of their mission: for they, having few connexions with the world, and little or no secular interest, could not be suspected of planning either for princely grandeur, or lucrative emoluments in church or state: and having no worldly incumbrance to detain them, they were the better fitted to carry the gospel to all nations. And there was nothing in their connexion or outward appearance to excite fear, or alarm any of the turbulent passions of mankind, but on the other hand much, very much, to awaken the compassion of all, and raise a general curiosity to hear what persons in such indigent circumstances could have to say in vindication of their high claim.



If Jesus Christ had appeared, as the Jews expected that their Messiah would, in the character of a temporal prince, and had armed himself with the civil sword, and used it in making proselytes to his religion, as Mahomet has done; or if he and they had made use of their miraculous power either to enrich or aggrandize themselves, or to gratify a sensual appetite, or to punish those who would not receive their persons or their doctrines, christianity would have lost much of its glory and external evidence, and have sunk to a level with other impostures. When it pleased God to reveal the words of eternal life to a perishing world, he saw fit to commit the rich treasure to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might appear to be of God.

Another external evidence of the truth and authenticity of the christian religion is, the surprising manner in which it has been propagated in the world. If we should take in all existing circumstances which attended the first promulgation of the gospel, we must acknowledge that it is wonderful and surprising that *truth* itself should meet with the success which the gospel has done, with all those disadvantages which the first promulgation of the gospel laboured under. The first preachers of the gospel had to contend with the power and policy, the superstition and bigotry, of the world: but they triumphed over all opposition, and the gospel in their hands made such a rapid spread, as plainly demonstrated a very extraordinary interposition of Providence in its favour; so that, in the language of the prophet, not only one of a family, and two of a city, were taken and brought to Zion—incorporated into the christian church—but, so did the Lord hasten it in his time, that a little one became a thousand, and a small one became a strong nation. And, as the apostles were remarkably successful themselves, so the divine seed which they sowed sprung up in the next age, and bore a very ample harvest; insomuch that one of their histori-

ans complained, that the heathen temples, which used to be thronged with devout worshippers, were now nearly deserted; and, if the christians should withdraw themselves, whole cities and provinces would be almost depopulated. How can we account for this, but by acknowledging that the hand of the Lord was with the first preachers of the gospel, and that therefore such multitudes believed, and turned unto the Lord from their vain idols, to serve the living and the true God. Such a small fountain could not have spread itself into such a mighty river, which, like old Jordan, overflowed all its banks, and covered a great part of the face of the earth, if it had not issued from the sanctuary of God, and been directed by his almighty hand. Had this new system of religion foothed men's vices, strengthened their prejudices, promoted their secular interests, and cherished their pride and ambition, we might have accounted for its rapid spread, as we have for the spread of false religions in the world; but this we know was not the case. Or, had the first preachers of christianity been profound philosophers, polite orators, and sagacious politicians; or had the ruling princes or the mighty potentates of the earth at first declared themselves its patrons, and armed their legions in its defence; multitudes might have been terrified into a profession, though no one had been rationally convinced of its truth and importance; but, without some such advantages, which we are certain that christianity never had in its first progress, we cannot suppose that a new system of religion could so prevail in the world, without the special protection of Heaven.

If it were necessary, we might add, as another external evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament, and the authenticity of the christian religion, the fulfilment of several express prophecies uttered by Jesus Christ. He expressly foretold the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem by the Romans, which

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came to pass exactly as he had foretold, and at the time when he had predicted, with all the attendant circumstances, as related by Josephus, and others no ways friendly to christianity. He also foretold his own death, what kind of death he should die, the time he should continue in a state of death, the time when he should rise from the dead, where he would first appear to his disciples, meet with them, and bless them, and dispense to them the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, and that after forty days he would ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God: all which took place exactly according to the prediction, and, being public acts, or things which were not done in a corner, a cloud of witnesses have testified the reality of the facts; and scarcely was there any one who was so great a stranger in Jerusalem, as not to know those things.

In one word; the present state of the Jews is a continued accomplishment of the prophecies of Christ concerning them: and it is not much short of a continued miracle, that, notwithstanding the destruction they met with from the Romans when their city and temple were taken and burnt, and their dispersion afterwards among all nations, persecuted by some, despised by all, hated and ill-treated by many, yet that they remain a very numerous people, tenacious of their religion, though their ancestors were prone to idolatry; and therefore still remain the depositories of their own ancient records, on which depends so much of the evidence of christianity. And their remaining a distinct people, though dispersed among all nations, without being connected with any, leaves room for the accomplishment of those other prophecies of the New Testament which relate to their future restoration, when the fulness of the gentiles shall be gathered in, when all Israel shall be saved.

Thus we have taken a view of the principal arguments made use of in support of the truth and importance of christianity;

christianity ; and they amount to this—That christianity is in theory a probable thing, and therefore credible ; and, considering the benevolent nature of God, and the fallen state of mankind, we had reason to expect, or at least to hope, that a revelation from heaven would be made of the will of God to man, which would be sufficient to found his faith, and direct his conduct, and teach him the way to life eternal ; and we declare it as a fact, that we have such a revelation in the New Testament, and we may receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. Let us cordially receive it, sincerely conform to it, and build our future hopes upon it. It is the rock of our salvation. Some may boast of the religion of nature, and despise a revealed religion as unnecessary ; but they are much mistaken. Adam in innocency needed a revelation to form a system of religion. But man fallen into a state of moral depravity, sin and darkness, stood in much greater need of a revelation from the beneficent Father of Lights ; and such an one we have, which teaches us the way to life perfectly ; a revelation supported by arguments which the reason of man cannot resist, nor the wickedness of man obscure. Men of corrupt minds may cavil, but they cannot deny one single fact on which rests the system. Therefore close with the whole scheme of the gospel, and act it out in life, and approve yourselves sincere christians ; be more confirmed in your faith ; and, by the warmth and steadiness of your devotions, the benevolence of your temper, the dignity of your conduct, and the integrity of your whole deportment, let the world know that in the way of well-doing you are seeking for glory, honour and immortality. And while you possess the true spirit of the gospel, pity and pray for them who despise and reject it. Such undoubtedly there are, even in our enlightened age and nation. Let us lift up a humble and a compassionate cry to the God of all grace : peradventure he will give repentance to the ac-  
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knowledgment of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are now led captive by him at his pleasure. And, while we pity mahometans and heathens, we have much more reason to deplore the case of those who live in Emanuel's land, the valley of vision, but by their carelessness, obstinacy and infidelity turn it into the valley of the shadow of death. But a more melancholy reflection than this is, that a nation who had boasted that they were the bulwark of the catholic church of Christ, should become the avowed enemies to the throne of Jesus, and zealously employ every measure in their power to exterminate his holy religion from the earth. They have publicly denied the God who made them, and Jesus who has redeemed them, and placed on the throne of God and the Redeemer fictitious deities, under the names of reason, nature, philosophy, liberty, equality, and disinterested moral virtue. These they adore, and pull down the altars of papacy that they may establish a system of philosophical idolatry on the dangerous ground of impiety and atheism. Will not God be avenged on such a nation as this? and what will they do in the day thereof?

We infer the reasonableness and propriety of impartially examining into the evidence of the christian religion. It is a duty we owe to God, to the cause and interest of Jesus Christ, and to the peace and comfort of our own souls. The marks of truth and divinity are so obvious, that, if they are attended to with candour and impartiality, I am persuaded that they will strike the eye which is single so forcibly as to carry conviction home to the heart, and, through the concurring influences of the Spirit of Truth, make them, not almost, but altogether, christians.

In fine, the christian revelation is, in its own nature, practical; and, if we receive Jesus Christ as the founder of our holy religion, so we must walk in him: for the  
grace

grace of God, which appears in the gospel, teacheth all men, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present world, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.



DISCOURSE

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## Discourse VI.

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### The Christian Church.

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R E V. ii. 7.

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

**W**E often read in the Scriptures of a Church—the church of God—the church of Christ—of a church at Corinth, at Ephesus, Galatia, Rome, and even in Cæsar's house : and in the Revelations of St. John we read of seven churches in Asia. In our text we are commanded by the great Head of the church to hear and observe what the Spirit saith unto the churches. That we may do this it is necessary to know whom we are to understand by the Spirit, and what by the churches. By the Spirit we are undoubtedly to understand, the Holy Spirit of God—the third person in the sacred Trinity—the Spirit of inspiration, by whose influences, and under whose direction, the vision opened upon St. John in his banishment : therefore it is said, that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day when he received these orders to attend to what the Spirit had to say unto the churches. And by the church or churches, in the writings of the New Testament, we are generally to understand, the christian church, which is a select number of christians, agreeing together to profess their faith in Christ, and to

worship the living and true God through him. These were, before, generally idolaters, carried away unto dumb idols ; but when they received the gospel which was sent unto them, they renounced idolatry, and agreed to worship God ; to observe the institutions of christianity—baptism and the Lord's supper—as prescribed in the gospel. These were called a church, selected from the rest of the world, agreeing in the essential doctrines of the gospel, and engaging to walk in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ blameless : they are said to be sanctified in Christ, consecrated to him, and, uniting with him by faith, are considered as members of him, and called to be saints. And, though we may not conclude from thence that they were all certainly gracious persons, they were called to be so ; it was their profession and public character ; and all those who agreed in the essential doctrines of the gospel, professed their faith in Christ, and lived agreeably to their profession, gave sufficient grounds of charity to believe that they were really true saints. All these, in the Apostle's day, were called brethren, christians, disciples, or saints. When any number of these united together, and agreed to worship God in one place, and there to attend upon the christian ordinances, they were called a church, or the church of God in such a place ; and they were called holy, in the same sense that the sabbath, the temple, the Jewish priests and nation, were called so. Moses said to them, *Ye are all a holy nation ; i. e. consecrated to God, and in covenant with him ; under every obligation to live to his honour, and to be devoted to his service.* Saints, in most places in Scripture, stand opposed, not to unsound believers, or more formal hypocrites, but to heathens, to idolaters, and to those who were not in covenant with God : a credible profession of the christian faith denominated them saints. The apostles sometimes described the christian church by those who in every place called on the name of the Lord

Jesus,



Jesus, their Lord and ours. The christian Indians on this continent were called, by the heathen tribes, the praying Indians : so the primitive christians were described, by their heathen neighbours, as praying to God through Christ, and as keeping a fast to Christ, and as being united one to another in love.

We shall, in further pursuing the subject, shew something more of the nature of a primitive christian church—the end of its incorporation—the necessary qualifications of its members—and then inquire what the Spirit saith to the churches.

I. The primitive christian church has always been distinguished as consisting of visible and invisible members ; and perhaps this is the only distinction that is necessary to be made ; and Jesus Christ is the head of both. The whole Jewish nation were of the visible church ; for it appears that they were called out of the world of idolaters ; and God entered into covenant with them and their children, under the visible and external rite of circumcision ; and they publicly professed themselves the people of God : and their receiving the seal of that covenant made them the visible church of God. When that people had corrupted the doctrines of their religion which they received of God, through the ministration of angels and of Moses, and had become very lax and irregular in their practice, teaching for doctrines the traditions of men, God sent his Son to correct their errors, to reform their practice, and to rescue his church from that ruin to which they were fast tending ; and, by the administrations of his Son, and the ministrations of his Spirit, he established it upon a broader and more sure basis for the future. This church, which before stood upon the prophets, now rested upon the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; and was therefore called *Christian*. Before, it was limited to one nation ; now Je-  
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Jesus Christ directed his disciples to act upon a larger scale in disseminating the doctrines of the church, and regulating its practice: he told them that they should no longer be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and therefore extended their commission to all the world, saying, Go ye forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, teaching all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and bid them do whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world: so that from this time the visible church became catholic. The church being spread through wide-extended regions, among foreign and distant nations, it soon became impossible for those who received the doctrines and conformed to the maxims of christianity to assemble in one place; they therefore formed particular assemblies in different places for the same general purpose—the worshipping of the same true God through Jesus Christ, attending upon the institutions of christianity, and administering and receiving the seals of the covenant. Now these distinct and select assemblies are called churches, in the plural number, but in reality they are one visible catholic church; all its members uniting in their belief of the same essential doctrines of the gospel; all agreeing to walk by the same rule, and to adopt in general the same form of government, under one and the same head, Jesus Christ, King of Zion—all professing the same faith, attending upon the same ordinances, mutually engaging to watch over one another in love, and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace; for there is but one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in them all.

That this unity may be the better preserved, each incorporate body has, as the bond of their union, a covenant, expressing the essential doctrines of the gospel, their

faith.

faith in, and obedience to, Christ, their resolution to walk worthy of him, and their mutual engagements to watch over one another in love, provoking one another to love and good-works. This leads us to shew—

II. The end and design of their incorporation: and this is in general for their better edification; that all the members of the christian visible church may enjoy those means which are best adapted to their growth in grace: for Christ's kingdom is not of this world, local and political, but moral and spiritual; seated in the hearts of his subjects; and it is by the use of means, and the ministrations of the Spirit, that they are here to be trained up into a meetness for the kingdom of glory. Knowledge, holiness and love are three main qualifications for that kingdom: for without knowledge the heart cannot be good; without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and without love there can be no enjoyment. And, as Christ Jesus gave himself for his church, that he might redeem her from all iniquity, and sanctify her wholly, and present her to his Father a glorious church, without spot or blemish, he obtained the promise of the Father of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and sent them down upon his church. These were both internal and external; and among the external were apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for this professed purpose—that the body of Christ, the church, might be edified in love, till all her members come, in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, receiveth an increase, edifying itself in love.

Thus the church was enriched with the ascension gifts of her exalted Head; selected from the heathen and ungodly world, chosen in Christ, incorporated into one  
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visible body, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love ; and, for their better edification, and greater convenience, are incorporated into distinct assemblies, under one general bond of union ; that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, and, being rooted and grounded in love, they may be able to comprehend, with all who form the whole body of the invisible church, what is the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge ; that each member may be filled with all the fulness of God.

III. We are in the next place to shew what are the necessary qualifications of church members : and this inquiry involves in it two questions, which ought to be answered, viz.

1. What may or ought a church to require of a candidate who offers himself for admission into it ?

2. What must a candidate for admission find in himself to be satisfied that it is his immediate duty to join the church ?

These questions, in our apprehension, are easily answered.

1. What may or ought a church to require of a candidate for admission ?

Answer. The same which the apostles required of common christians in their day, when viewed as candidates for admission into the christian church ; and that was, a knowledge of the christian doctrines, and a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and obedience to him.

When the apostles received their ample commission to spread the gospel, and to carry christainity through the earth, they were first to teach them its doctrines, and then to call upon them to believe and to obey the gospel ; those, therefore, who were to be admitted into the  
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christian church must rightly understand the plain and essential doctrines of christianity, and be so fully convinced of the true character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the truth and importance of his religion, as to embrace it as theirs, and make it the rule of their conduct, and the foundation of their future hopes. These were then publicly to profess their faith in Christ, and their obedience to him: and, upon this profession, they were admitted into the christian church, and to all its ordinances and privileges, as members in full communion. Those who were received into the church on the day of pentecost received the word preached by the apostles *gladly*, i. e. they received the doctrines which they had taught them not only as truths, but as truths of personal and eternal concern to them; and therefore believed; and, publicly professing their faith in Christ, and the doctrines of his gospel, were admitted into the church, to the number of three thousand in one day. So also the eunuch was first taught by Philip to understand what he had read out of the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Christ, and the truth of the gospel: then he professed his faith in Christ, and was baptized, and added to the visible church, though not yet admitted to any particular incorporate body. And Lydia first attended to the things spoken by Paul, and her heart was opened, so that she cordially received the christian doctrines, professed her faith in them, and was admitted into the church, and baptized at Macedonia. The people of Samaria were convinced of, and received, the truth of the gospel doctrines preached unto them by Philip, and were received by him into the church, and admitted to special ordinances.—Therefore it is evident that every christian church may and ought to require, of every one who offers himself as a candidate for admission, a knowledge of the plain and essential doctrines of the gospel, and a credible profession of his faith in Christ, and obedience to him, with a life which corresponds

ponds with such a profession: and every one who has this competent knowledge, and from a rational conviction of it can make this profession, and who leads a blameless, sober life, has undoubtedly a right to all the honours and privileges of a christian church; and no church can understandingly and scripturally refuse such a candidate admission; for this is the best evidence we can give of our being possessed of the necessary qualifications of a worthy member of a visible church, and this is all that the apostles required of candidates for admission, and this gave full room to form a judgment of charity grounded on Scripture and reason.

But, after all, there will be found unsound believers. There will be bad and good men, sincere believers and disguised hypocrites, found in the visible church, while in her present imperfect and militant state: for the kingdom of heaven is likened to a net cast into the sea, which encloses both good and bad; but, in culling the fish, the good are preserved, and the bad cast away. So, in the government and discipline of the church, those who by their temper and conduct discover a bad heart, destitute of the true principles of the gospel, must be rejected; while the faithful and true are encouraged and established. And the most express rule which our Saviour has given us for the government and discipline of his church presupposes that there will be found in it unsound believers, nay, incorrigible offenders, who, when known, are to be rejected, as heathen men and impenitent sinners. Some of these tares will grow among the wheat until the harvest, when a full and final separation will be made.

The second question was, What must a person find in himself, to be satisfied that it is his immediate duty to join a christian church?

The answer to this question is obvious. He must find in himself these necessary qualifications—such a clear and distinct

distinct knowledge of the gospel plan of salvation, by grace through faith, as to be fully convinced of the truth and importance of it; and, in consequence of this full conviction, really believe that Jesus Christ is the Saviour whom God has provided, with whom, therefore, he can trust his salvation, in the way of faith and holy obedience; resolving at the same time conscientiously to do the will of God, as it shall be made known to him. Such a person finds enough in himself to satisfy him that it is his immediate duty to offer himself as a candidate for admission into the church, and cannot excuse a delay of it on any principles of fair reason, or divine revelation.

Many sober, thinking persons, who have this knowledge, this faith, these sincere desires, and conscientious purposes, may find so many corruptions in their hearts, so many deviations from duty, and that they fall so far short of what they should be, and really wish to be, that they dare not offer themselves. But, if we were to neglect our duty till our corruptions were wholly subdued, till all our fears were dissipated, and all our weaknesses removed, and till our faith and hope had ripened into full assurance, one great end of the christian institutions would be superceded. But this is not to be expected till that which is perfect is come, and we shall join the general assembly, and the church of the First-born in her triumphant state. No, my friends, though you may find many corruptions still remaining in your hearts, and many involuntary irregularities in your lives, which you daily lament, you may still possess every necessary qualification of a worthy communicant required by our Saviour or his apostles. And that very humble sense of your own sinfulness, weakness and imperfection, is one of the best evidences you can have that you are well qualified for acts of holy communion at christian ordinances. That, instead of keeping you back from your duty, should animate and encourage you to do it without delay: for cer-

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certainly a serious, humble and conscientious man will wish to know how and when to do his duty in the best manner and in the fittest time, and attentively hear what the Spirit saith to the churches on this head ; and what he saith to the select bodies of professing christians is spoken by the Spirit to the churches in general ; for the inspired writers were holy men, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Let us now attend to what the Spirit saith to the churches about admitting members into the church, and to their communion in holy ordinances. And does not the Spirit say that they shall be admitted on the foundation which God has laid in Zion, which is, the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, on which ye are builded together, through the Spirit, an habitation of God ? i. e. it was upon a credible public profession of their faith in what the prophets and apostles had revealed ; truths which centre in, and rest upon, Jesus Christ, the chief corner-stone, which unites and supports the whole system of christianity.

When our Blessed Saviour was forming the christian church, he asked his disciples, Whom do men say that I am ? They told him that the world were divided in their sentiments about him : while some said that he was John the Baptist, others said that he was Elijah, others still said that he was Jeremiah, or one of the ancient prophets, risen from the dead. As it was but of little importance what the world thought or said of him, he, without any reply, added, But whom say ye that I am ? Peter, as spokesman for the rest, said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood have not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven ; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ; i. e. upon this public, credible



Die and sincere profession of their faith in Christ, and their obedience to him—a profession which is not merely the result of reasoning upon obvious principles, but a sincere profession of their faith in Christ, and in the revealed truths of the gospel, so deeply impressed on the heart, by the regenerating Spirit of God, that it becomes the principle of love and obedience—a faith which unites the believer to Christ, and conforms him to his amiable example. This is further evidenced from what John relates: When Jesus saw many, who had followed him for a while, but wanting this principle of love and obedience forsook him and walked no more with him; upon this defection, he asked the twelve, Will ye also go away? Peter, as before, answered for himself and his fellow disciples, To whom, Lord, shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

This is what the Spirit saith unto the churches about admitting members into their incorporate body; viz. that they shall be received upon this foundation; upon this profession, honestly and understandingly made, and supported by a temper and life which correspond with the gospel. And agreeably to this we find that the apostles ever conducted towards those who were candidates for admission, or to be incorporated into a christian church, either from the Jewish or gentile nations. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he reminded them of the foundation they were built upon, and said, Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. I have planted you, Apollos has watered you, but God gave the increase.

This serious and credible profession, understandingly made, attended with evidence of their sincerity, was all which the apostles required of those who were incorporated into the christian church under their administration,

or of individuals when added to any particular church. This was their constant instruction, direction and requirement: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, that your sins may be blotted out: Repent and believe the gospel, that you may be saved: If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest be baptized, or admitted to all christian ordinances, or the free enjoyment of christian privileges. This was all which the apostles required of the thousands who were converted to the christian faith by Peter's preaching on the day of pentecost; and these were on that day all admitted to what we call full communion; for it is said, These all were added to the church, and continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. This serious and credible profession was all which was required of the eunuch by Philip, and this was all which was required of the jailor, Lydia, and others, by the apostles. On this liberal basis the apostles were careful to maintain christian communion and fellowship, not suffering the punctilios of ceremony to divide them, to interrupt their domestic peace, or christian fellowship: therefore said the apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthian church, Let every one who is called of the Lord so walk, for so ordain I in all the churches: for circumcision and uncircumcision availeth nothing, but keeping the commandments of God.—This leads us to inquire further—

What saith the Spirit to the churches with respect to their general conduct and treatment of one another in their incorporatè state?

We shall find that it is the voice of the Spirit to the churches, that they walk in love and charity one towards another. The Spirit saith, by the apostle Peter, to the churches in general, that they shall love one another as brethren, that they shall be pitiful and courteous. Paul, by the same Spirit, when closing his epistle to the Ephesian church, breathes out this benevolent benediction—

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Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father. Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. To the church at Rome he says, Let love be without dissimulation; be kindly affectioned one towards another, with brotherly love. When writing to the Philippian church, he conjures them by the Spirit, that if there was any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy; that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. To another church, by the same Spirit, he observes, that he need not write to them concerning brotherly love, for they themselves were taught of God to love one another. And the epistle to the Hebrews closes with that sound advice, Let brotherly love continue.

Agreeably with this, the Spirit saith to the churches, that they shall watch over one another in love; that they settle upon this liberal spirit, and maintain a holy discipline in each particular church; that, from the same principle, they warn and admonish every member of their community who is unruly, or who walks not according to the maxims and rules of the gospel: Now we exhort you, brethren (said the Spirit to the church at Thessalonica) that you warn them who are unruly, that you comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all.

And the Spirit, by the united voice of all the apostles, in the most solemn manner, commanded them of the same church, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to withdraw communion from them who walked disorderly, and would not be reclaimed: and our Saviour, who received unmeasurable gifts of the Holy Spirit, having established his church in the world, gave her a most excellent and extensive rule for the direction of her discipline among her own members; which rule we have in the 18th of

Matthew, 15th, 16th and 17th verses: which rule is to be understood and applied in the following manner: If any member of our own body or community walk disorderly, or is chargeable with any direct immorality, or unchristian conduct, and we are made acquainted with it, either by credible information, or our own personal knowledge; we, or any of the offended members, must go to the offender in a private and friendly manner, and in the spirit of meekness make known to him or her the matter of offence, and lay before him or her the evidence of the fact; but if, upon an impartial inquiry into the matter, we find that we have been mistaken, or have been misinformed, and that the person is not guilty of the supposed fault, then the matter is at an end, and we have no just cause to be offended: but if not, and we suppose him or her to be really guilty of the fault charged upon them, but they obstinately persist in the wrong, then we must take one or two more, as the matter may be circumstanced, and those persons we take with us must be witnesses; therefore they must be privy to the alleged crime, or to some circumstances relating to it which may throw some light upon it, or tend to conviction. It is no matter who those persons are, or whether they be of the church or not, provided they are credible persons. If the offender yields to the conviction we lay before him by the additional evidence of these witnesses, and discovers a penitent frame, and sincere resolutions of better conduct, or purposes of reformation, we have gained our brother or sister. But if not, and he or she remains incorrigible, then we must acquaint the whole church with the crime, and produce the witnesses, to prove both the fact complained of, and the steps we have taken to convince and to reclaim: but if he or she will not yield to the conviction laid before them in the presence of the whole church convened together, nor by any other additional evidence which may be adduced or brought forward in the public hearing,

hearing, then the church must view the offender as guilty, and must withdraw communion from him. Upon a full conviction of the crime, and the guilty person remaining incorrigible, then solemn and public admonition is to be administered by the pastor or elder in the name of the church; and after waiting a reasonable time, and no signs of repentance appearing, then the guilty person is to be rejected, and treated no longer as a member of the church, but as an heathen man and a publican.

But where the offence is so private as to admit of no proof by witnesses, the first step only is to be taken; and if the offender cannot be reclaimed, by a private friendly remonstrance and admonition, the case is to be referred to the Omniscient God, the Judge of all, to the cool reflections of the guilty person's own conscience, and the elucidations of the final day, when the secrets of all hearts will be laid open, and judgment will proceed according to the gospel.—This is the rule, and thus it is to be applied. We only observe—

1. That matters of offence must be of general concern, not so personal as to render the person complaining incapable of being an impartial witness: for the rule is, Take with thee one or two, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; which supposes the person complaining is a witness. The action must be brought in the name of our Sovereign Lord, the King of his church; and therefore—

2. The just matter of offence must be, a breach of the laws of his kingdom, any direct immorality, or unchristian conduct, and what equally concerns the common cause of christianity, which every professing christian is bound to vindicate; and, when proved or made known, becomes just matter of offence to every individual professor, equally as to the complainer.

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3. Now what the Spirit saith unto the churches which respects their discipline is this, that with an eye of candour, and in the spirit of meekness, we inspect the whole body, and by this rule keep up a strict discipline with each member, and by no means suffer sin upon any. That this is the constant and repeated language of the Spirit, we think appears from those epistles which John, being in the Spirit, was directed to send to the seven churches of Asia; which epistles begin with these remarkable words: *I know thy works*: which implies, that *Jesus Christ* inspects the state of his churches, that he knows them, both individually and in their incorporate state, and that he would have his ministers know also the state of their flock. And he commends those who would not suffer false and irregular teachers among them, nor vicious and disorderly members to be of their communion: for he says, *I know thy works, that thou canst not bear them who are evil, and hast tried them who say that they are apostles, and found that they are not; but that they are of the synagogue of Satan.* So also the threatenings and the promises with which he closes these epistles, as well as the words of our text, (He who hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches) plainly imply, that the great Head of the church viewed it as a matter of great importance to the well-being of his churches that they attend to the doctrine and discipline of individual churches, carefully attending to the rules dictated to them in the word of God, by inspiration of his Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit saith to every individual member, that they must adorn the doctrines of God which they profess to believe, by a godly life and an holy conversation; that they should give no just offence in any thing, either to the Greek or Jew, or to the church of God; but that they should walk in love one towards another, and love one another according to their measure, as Christ hath loved them; for, as no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous,

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teous, or an idolater, or indeed any other vicious person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God, they should therefore have no place in his church, which is the kingdom of God among men. Paul tarried the longer at Ephesus, that he might more fully instruct Timothy how he ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of truth, where the truth of the doctrines and the true spirit of christian discipline should be ever maintained: for the ungodly lives of professing christians have done, and do still, more hurt to the cause of true religion, than all which the infidel world ever did or can do: for all which they have said or written has been answered a thousand times, by such sound arguments and fair reasoning, as the enemies of the Lord Jesus have not been able to gainsay or resist. But what can we say to those objections which have been drawn from the ungodly lives of christian professors? Though we think that christianity ought not to be accountable for the irreligious lives of its professors, (for the question is not, How do christian professors live? but, How did Christ, and how has he taught his followers to live? Without blame before God in love.) yet, when this objection is made, it fills all the true friends of Christ and his cause with pain and shame, because there is too much room for it. Let him therefore who nameth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ be careful to depart from all iniquity, and to adorn the doctrine of God in all things.—It only remains to show what the Spirit saith that the churches of Christ may expect in this life, and what they may expect in the next.

1. In this life the Spirit saith that the churches which walk in the faith and fellowship of the gospel shall be edified and built up. If they walk by its rules, if they mind the same things recommended therein, they may expect much of the divine presence and blessing. If you  
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(said the Saviour) will observe and do whatsoever I have commanded you, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. They may in this way expect, even in this life, all the necessary supplies of the Spirit of Christ Jesus: therefore it was observed, that when the church walked in the fear of the Lord they had the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and were multiplied. While Paul planted, and Apollos watered, God gave increase. Churches founded on this rock—a credible profession, supported by a godly life, and a prudent discipline—shall rise superior to every opposition; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against them; but they shall grow as the corn, they shall flourish as the vine, and spread forth their branches as the cedars of Lebanon, till they shall fill the whole earth, and become beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners.

2. In the next life they may expect the crown. For, having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, they shall inherit all things. Being crowned, and clothed with the white robe, with the palm of victory in her hand, the church shall be presented to God by Christ, her head and husband, as a chaste virgin, without spot or blemish, and shall receive a crown of glory which shall never fade away; and then she shall be led to fountains of living waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from her eyes.—A few inferences and practical remarks must close the subject.

1. We infer, that there always has been, now is, and always will be, a church in the world, till the end of all things shall come; and this select and incorporate body of professing christians will unite in general in sentiment, faith and practice; not perfectly so, for that is not to be expected; but in general they will be united in the most essential doctrines and rules of practice. And it is evident



dent that the church has ever been distinguished from the world of mankind. Our Saviour kept up this distinction, in that last and most fervent prayer which he made just before he entered the last and most extreme scene of his suffering, recorded in the 17th of John. I have (said he, addressing himself to his Heavenly Father) manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me; thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. I pray for them; I pray not for the world. And I pray not for them alone, but for all those who shall believe on me through their word, that they may all be one in sentiment, faith and practice, uniting in me, their head, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.

2. It is a high honour, and a distinguishing privilege, to belong to the christian church. They who sincerely profess their faith in Christ, and support that profession by a christian life, are interested in all the privileges of the sons of God, and in the petition of that divine prayer which our Saviour addressed to his Father a little before he yielded up the ghost; and every petition in that prayer will be completely answered in their favour; which is worth infinitely more than all the world.

3. It is the duty of all who enjoy the gospel, and are so fully convinced of the truth and importance of the christian religion as to influence their temper and conduct, and conform them to the temper and conduct of the christian, to join with the church where they live, and publicly profess their faith in Christ, and their obedience to him. It is an honour they owe to him, and a duty they owe to themselves and families: a duty they owe to their God and country; and their neglect cannot be excused on the principles of reason or revelation.

4. We infer, that those who do belong to the church are under the most endearing obligations to adorn the  
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christian profession by a godly life and a holy conversation—to walk worthy of God to all well-pleasing. The eyes of God and the world are upon them, and their conduct will either have a good or a bad effect upon others. They should be very careful that they encourage serious and conscientious persons to come up also to their duty, and give no occasion to any to excuse their neglect, or to raise the objection against the christian religion, because its professors are no better than others.

Again—We should be careful that we do not require of candidates for admission more than what the Spirit in the inspired writings requires. We must not be wise above what is written. When persons of sober lives and conversations, and who in their general deportment exhibit a christian conduct, and appear willing to make a public profession of their faith in Christ, and their obedience to him, offer themselves to our communion, we cannot, in my opinion, reject them, but we ought to invite them to come with us, and to walk in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless. The practice of exhibiting a public relation of christian experiences, may on some special occasions be for edification; yet it must be acknowledged that it is of human invention: we have not learnt it of Christ, nor of the Spirit—we must not make it a term of communion, or necessary to a regular admission into the church.

And may we not hope, that if we, with candour, and in the Spirit of meekness, watch over one another in love, and keep up the true spirit of christian discipline in our churches agreeably to the rule we have been explaining, that our churches, and all special ordinances and institutions, would acquire a greater respectability, and that the table of the Lord would not be, as it is with too many, contemptible? for, notwithstanding the present fallen and degenerate state of religion, and that few seem disposed to join with the church, yet her foundation standeth

eth strong; the gates of hell shall not prevail; she will arise and shine, and will acquire a much greater state of purity, simplicity and glory. Glorious things are spoken of her, and will be accomplished in their season. Things are maturing fast: obstacles are removing; there is a spirit of inquiry gone out; a thirst for knowledge increasing; a high relish for liberty, both civil and religious. The rights of man, the jurisdiction of conscience, and the principles of true liberty, are better understood and defined than they have ever been before; and these may be necessary steps to prepare the public mind to receive the more plentiful outpouring of the Spirit of God than there ever yet has been. And we must not be impatient: God must do his own work in his own way and time. He who believeth does not make haste. Let us all, by our prayers, counsel and examples, be workers together with God, and be steadfast, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain.



DISCOURSE

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## Discourse VII.

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### The Superexcellency of Religion in general.

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P R O V. xii. 26.

*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

**H**ONOUR and dignity are objects for which the mind of man has naturally a very strong passion : but, having lost by the original lapse the true excellency of our nature, every one is pursuing, in different ways, the same object, and placing true excellency in different attainments, till divine grace, that sovereign restorative, corrects the errors of the human heart, directs the judgment, and exhibits religion as the capital point in which the true dignity and real excellency of reasonable and immortal creatures centre.

Some place human excellency in riches, others in power ; some in honorary titles, and external pomp and grandeur ; some in sensuality, or in living above the restraints of reason and conscience. But Solomon, made wise by inspiration, experience and grace, placed it in religion, and said—The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour : that is, Our true excellency consists in our being truly religious ; or, the truly religious man excels his irreligious neighbour in the most amiable and noble endowments of the mind ; and therefore, upon an impartial view of his whole character, claims the preference :—

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Which truth we shall endeavour to illustrate in a few particulars wherein all the wise and the more judicious of mankind do agree that human excellency does consist; viz. an honourable descent, wisdom and knowledge, a noble indifference to sensual good, courage and fortitude of mind, virtuous freedom, and a benevolent goodness of heart; in all which the righteous or the sincerely good man excelleth all the world besides, as will plainly appear from the following considerations.

I. An honourable descent, or noble birth and extraction, is allowed to convey a sort of hereditary excellency to posterity, though we cannot see the propriety of such an estimation, unless the hereditary honour inspires the descendant with a nobleness of mind, and fires him with a laudable ambition that will elevate him above an unworthy action, and (being accompanied with an education equal to his noble extraction) begets in him a habit of thinking justly, and acting wisely and virtuously. The Jews piqued themselves on their honourable descent from Abraham; but Jesus, the wise teacher who came from God, gave them to understand that they could have no claim to such hereditary honours except they imitated the faith and piety of their patriarchal ancestor. But, allowing there were unalienable honours and excellency to be derived from a high birth and noble extraction, yet the righteous man, i. e. the truly religious man, has the advantage of all his fellow-creatures in point of pedigree, for he is of the blood-royal of heaven, born from above, and, in a religious sense, is said to be born of God, consequently of heavenly extract—an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, and to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away—an inheritance which cannot be taken from him by any act of confiscation: no act of attainder can deprive him of his honour, or prevent his inheriting all things, so long as he sustains his character as

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*the righteous man*, which he will in general sustain; for though he may, in some instances, and under certain circumstances and temptations, act beside or below his excellent character, and though he fall, he will rise again; for, with the honorary title, he has an excellent spirit; he partakes of the divine nature, and is growing up into a greater conformity to God his heavenly Father, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

II. Next to noble birth and extraction are the endowments of the mind. Wisdom and knowledge are excellent endowments, and what elevate a man's character, especially when conversant about the best things, and influence the temper and direct the conduct. And here the righteous man has the advantage of his unrighteous neighbour; for his knowledge is conversant about the noblest objects, and he contemplates things spiritual and divine. He leaves the philosopher diving into the works of nature, or traversing with cautious steps the ideal world; he leaves the mathematician bewildering himself with forms and rules for the adjusting abstract ideas, or the nicer arrangement of words; he leaves the astronomer soaring above the clouds, to explore the shining orbs and the planetary world; he neglects the dull stories of the historian, and shuns the depths of politics; contented with Solomon's aphorism—In much of this kind of wisdom there is much sorrow. They who increase this kind of knowledge increase trouble: but the righteous man studies his God, his Saviour and himself; for, without this knowledge, the heart cannot be good: and this knowledge never fails of making the heart better. He contemplates God, his moral perfections, and his holy law; he enters deeply into his own heart, and discovers with an impartial eye the imperfections, sins and follies which are to be found there. This excites humility and sincere repentance, leads him to seek for pardon and acceptance through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, and in-  
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spires him with an ardent desire to obtain those efficacious influences of the Spirit of Holiness, which may free him from this body of death, which operates as a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind ; and, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image, as from glory to glory. And by studying the doctrines, the precepts and the example of the Saviour, he imbibes, the same temper and spirit, and learns to walk even as he walked.

The Psalmist boasted that he knew more than all his teachers—that he knew more than the ancients ; and then he tells us by what means he acquired this superiour knowledge and wisdom. He said, it was by studying the laws of his God : upon which a learned writer observes, that it is deservedly accounted an excellent piece of knowledge to understand the laws of the land, or the laws of the kingdom, and the will of the sovereign ; but it is a branch of knowledge much more worthy to be celebrated, to know the statutes of Heaven, the eternal laws of righteousness, the will of the Universal Sovereign, and the customs of that country where we hope to live forever and ever. In this knowledge, which is of the most excellent kind, the righteous man excels ; and, if he has a mind, or if the business and employments of life require him, to intermeddle with the natural arts and sciences, he has the advantage of his unrighteous neighbour ; as his mind is clear, his ideas strong, and his reasoning powers heightened by divine contemplation. But the excellency of all knowledge consists in its having a good influence upon the heart and life. Mere speculation, without a salutary influence, is of no use ; it does neither good nor hurt : therefore the knowledge of the righteous man, as it has a great, an abiding and good influence upon his temper and practice, on this account is of the most excellent kind : he knows to some good purpose ; he is wise to salvation : he knows, and in consequence of his knowledge

he secures, his best interest ; he provides for futurity, and lays up a treasure solid and permanent, where the moth does not corrupt, and where the thieves do not break through and steal : he prefers the most valuable things to mean and sordid trifles—prefers the soul to the body—eternity to the passing moments of time ; and chooses the one thing needful, which cannot be taken from him. He knows his own heart, and how to govern his own passions and appetites, and keeps them within the bounds of prudence, reason and faith. A knowledge thus influential is far more important and excellent than to know the intrigues of state, or to fathom the counsels of princes, the secrets of popularity, or the exact balance of nations. Piety too gives the man the advantage of the impious in the common and ordinary concerns of this life : it teacheth him to order his matters with discretion, and maketh the simple wise.

III. Another instance in which appears the superexcellency of religion is, that it elevates the mind above the predominancy of sensual good. We can never weigh or measure the mind of man so well by any thing, as we can by those objects he sets his heart chiefly upon : therefore to be much taken up about trifles, or to have the mind strongly set upon mean and low objects, is a certain sign of an ignoble and base mind. And it is too obvious, that the thoughts of the unrighteous or the irreligious are chiefly employed about little things, things which have no connexion with true greatness, or real happiness—about, it may be, gathering together a little wealth, which they cannot use or keep ; for sometimes riches make to themselves wings, and fly away : or it may be they are chiefly concerned about pleasing the fancy, gratifying a base and sordid lust, or indulging the flesh : or it may be they are principally engaged in erecting and finishing a fine house, according to refined modern taste : or how they shall extend their landed interest, and be called



called of men *rabbi, rabbi*, is all their care : all which a wise man, i. e. a good, can and will despise, when they come in competition with his soul's interest, the honour of God, or the good of the public. His thoughts are above these painted vanities, and are employed about some more substantial good ; he shakes off these incumbrances of flesh and sense, and aspires heaven-ward, saying, Whom have I in heaven but thee, O God ? and there is nothing on the earth which I desire beside thee.

The knowledge of nature is always supposed to enlarge the mind, and to improve and ennoble the soul : therefore the philosopher who converses much with the great works of God, as manifested in the natural world, and who takes the universe into his contemplative mind, learns to despise riches and the pageantry of princes, and think very diminutively of a few acres of land, of a stately house, or of being known and admired by a few staring, scrambling fellow-mortals who happen to live on the same speck of earth with himself. How much more then will it enlarge the mind, and ennoble the soul, to contemplate the Author of nature, the great Lord and support of the universe, all of whose perfections are infinite ! how must it sublimate the immortal spirit, to contemplate heaven, that magnificent seat of the extensive empire of the great Jehovah ! enough, one would think, to prevent an undue attachment to carnal and earthly things ; especially when he can do it with the consciousness that this seat of bliss is his own immortal home. When once raised on the wings of faith and holy contemplation, we can obtain and maintain just apprehensions of the great and blessed God, the beauty and glory of the incarnate Redeemer, and by anticipation enter into his joy, it must elevate and aggrandize the human soul to that degree that this terrene world and all which is in it will, as it were, vanish and disappear, as the twinkling stars retire before the rising sun. And the righteous, i. e. the good man, will  
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be able, under these elevating contemplations, to look down with a pious indifference upon those sublunary things which are the first objects of the unrighteous man's desire. All the splendour of a court, all the pomp of the great, the gilded amusements of the sensualist, and the gew-gaws of fashion and ceremony, can no more dazzle his eye, than the feeble lustre of the glow-worm will that of the eagle when he soars above the clouds, and dwells among the sunbeams.

The righteous man is not concerned about the punctilios of power or honour, and cares not, with respect to himself, who shall be preferred to such a post of honour or trust, or who shall obtain such a fortune, or sit highest at table or in the synagogue; his chief concern is, to please his Maker, to honour his Saviour, and secure his interest in the heavenly Canaan, and to walk worthy of so glorious a hope. Hence it is that the righteous man enjoys peace and tranquillity within his own breast, while storms and tempests and the sad vicissitudes of fortune rage without. His treasure is in heaven, and his best interest above the sky; he can therefore view the misfortunes, the bustle, the confusion and the ruin of this world with much the same temper of mind that a foreigner or a traveller views the ruin of a town or city in which he has little or no concern. He is indeed sensibly touched with what others feel, but comforts himself with this—The Lord reigneth, and the clouds are passing, and a serene sky may soon succeed the storm and the tempest. But, if the darkness should continue to the end of life, he knows that the time will soon come when the darkness and the storm will be succeeded with light, and peace, and glory, so bright and tranquil as will in a great measure erase from the memory those painful scenes, or rather they will receive some additional lustre from the shades and gloom. But those whose spirits are not balanced with the permanent principles of religion, are  
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tossed to and fro, like a ship in the boisterous ocean without ballast, with every wind, or the caprice of fortune, and are some how or other affected with all the motions of this fluctuating state of mortal things; for they are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest. The righteous is not afraid of evil tidings; for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord: but the wicked are alarmed at every threatening aspect of Providence, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf; for the wicked flee when none pursue, but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

IV. We have to observe, in the next place, that the righteous is more excellent than his unrighteous neighbour, in true magnanimity, and genuine courage. Heroism has always been celebrated as something noble and excellent, and those who have bravely achieved great and noble actions have had their names enrolled among the great, and transmitted down to posterity with honour and renown. And there is nothing which inspires a man with such a spirit of fortitude, and true courage, as religion. An inward consciousness that we are in favour with the great Lord of all, and that we have in the main approved ourselves to the Searcher of hearts, and the Director of the events of providence, must arm the soul with magnanimity and courage, which no danger can overcome. Hence said the heroic Apostle, armed with this religious fortitude, and in full view of bonds, imprisonments and martyrdom, None of these things move me, nor count I my life dear to me, so that I might finish my life with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord to fulfill it.

True fortitude and magnanimity of spirit appears rather in suffering hard things, than in achieving great things. Many great cowards would enterprize great things, were it not for the danger that attends; but at the sight of danger their spirits recoil, and their courage fails:

fails: but faith and piety can face any danger, when duty calls, and manfully surmount difficulties which lie in the way. Clad with this spiritual armour, the feeblest of the human race, and the most delicate of the fair sex, have wrought wonders which have surpris'd and astonish'd an infidel world—have performed acts of true heroism which have equalled if not excelled any which have been performed by the most renowned conquerors. Let the world produce, if they can, such instances of firmness and courage as the christian martyrs have shewn—instances by which they not only amaz'd but converted their bloody persecutors. They endured such cruelties and torments as cannot be mentioned without filling every human breast with horror, with patience, meekness and joy. They achieved great things, as well as suffered hard things: they subdued kingdoms, put to flight infidel armies, quenched the violence of fire, stopp'd the mouths of hungry lions, escap'd the edge of the sword; and, however dear liberty and their native country were to them, yet they cheerfully quitted them, and exchanged their comfortable habitations, and their decent apparel, for rocks and dens, for sheep skins and goat skins: and when deserts, dens and rocks could no longer shelter them, they were seiz'd by their bloodthirsty enemies, and patiently submitted to imprisonment, torture and death, undismay'd and unmoved, except it was with commiseration for their enemies, and joy for themselves that they were accounted worthy to suffer for their Lord and Master, and in defence of his cause; rejoicing too that they were dismiss'd in so honourable a way from a world and a state of existence so far below the elevation of their views and hopes. Here heroism assum'd its proper attitude, and rais'd human nature to a degree of honour next to that which is reflect'd on it by the incarnation of the Son of God. And these heroic actions were not performed only by a few of the hardiest of mankind, but by children,

children, and the feeblest of women, and the most delicate of their sex, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Nor did they wantonly throw away their lives, or give them up from unavoidable necessity or stoic insensibility, but voluntarily fell a sacrifice in the cause of truth and goodness. They might have escaped all these tortures and deaths by uttering a few blasphemous words, or by betraying the cause they were embarked in, and by denying the Lord who bought them; but they wisely judged it better to suffer these momentary pains, than to forfeit their title to eternal life, to displease their God and Saviour, and to expose themselves to future eternal punishment. Ancient Rome and Greece may boast of their heroes and conquerors, but they fall as much short of the christian martyrs in point of true courage and magnanimity, as the madmen of Bedlam do of them. What if now and then there has been one in those nations who has been justly celebrated for his heroism—one in a century who has been so far stimulated with a desire of glory, and animated with a secret hope of receiving some unknown reward in a future world (of which he had no idea) as to sacrifice his life to the good of his country? what are these to an almost infinite number, who, in the cause of truth and goodness, have not counted their lives dear to them, but quietly resigned liberty, property, reputation, and life itself, that they might hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, and maintain their fidelity to their great Lord and Master.

Certainly there is nothing which can fortify the mind, and inspire it with true and manly courage, when real danger threatens, like a fixed confidence in God, and a well-grounded hope of eternal blessedness. This the good man alone has: religion, therefore, renders him more excellent than his neighbour who is destitute of the principles of religion, the only sure basis of true heroism.

V. The righteous man excels the wicked as much in freedom as he does in fortitude, and therefore is more excellent. Freedom is the idol of human nature—claimed as the birth-right of all, and the boast of an *American*—but the property only of the good man, and possessed by him. It is what all pursue; but none obtain it except the sincerely good man. He who uniformly acts voluntarily upon the principles of enlightened reason, and approves himself to his God and his own conscience, is a freeman. The fetters of state, the chains of ceremony, the tyranny of custom, the false painting of interest, and the impetuosity of the passions, deprive a very great part of mankind of the happiness of freedom: and even the good man, while he is connected with the world, cannot get quite rid of these shackles and bonds; though he is not conformed to the world, but is transformed by the renewing of the mind, and practically approves of that good, acceptable and perfect will of God. And, besides these ensigns of slavery, the wicked man suffers a far more shameful bondage; he suffers violence from his own irregular passions and appetites: as, for instance, the passionate man is, before he is aware of it, transported beyond the bounds of reason and decency, and is sometimes forced on by the impetuosity of his angry passions into such extremes, that on cool reflection he is ashamed of his rashness, and is ready to cry out, with the Psalmist, So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was a beast before thee: and, though he severely condemns himself for his folly, yet on a like occasion he gives a loose to the same unruly passions, and is pushed on to the same extremes; like the lawless waves of the sea, which foam and rave till they lash the shore. So the covetous man is a drudge to Mammon; he toils all day, and his rest is disturbed at night with plans and schemes how to get wealth, and treasure up gold; so that he has not the respite of his African slave, who, when he has done his work, and performed

performed his daily task, repofes himfelf on his hard pillow, and fleeps without anxiety or care. The ambitious, he fawns and flatters, ftoops to thofe he hates, crottes his own inclinations, and does even violence to his own feelings, in order that he may rife by favour. He waits the will of the great, and watches the motions of his eye, with as much fubmiffion as the tameft flave does the eye of his mafter. The drunkard, too, fuffers himfelf not only to be deprived of his freedom, but of his reafon and his wealth, and confents to aft on a level with, or rather below, the beafts who perifh : and, though when he firft awakes from his cups, having fleep out the frolic humour, and finds that the whole animal frame has fuffered by the excefs, he condemns himfelf, and forms new refolutions that he will forfake his cup and his companions in vice ; yet, almoft as foon as the fumes of the liquor are out of his head, and his confcience is a little pacified with promifes of reformation, and his appetite has recovered its former tafte, he, on the firft invitation from thofe whom he calls his friends, goes with them, as the ox goeth to the flaughter, and afts over again the fordid fcene. The luxurious and the fenfual will talk much of health and long life—will praife temperance and fobriety, and will refolve upon a reformation, and that for the future they will keep within the bounds of moderation ; but the fight of a well-fpread table dafhes all their refolutions, and they are borne away by the ftrength of their appetites beyond the bounds of nature and reafon, and feed as freely as if they were fattening themfelves for the day of flaughter. And when they find an opportunity to gratify their unclean defires, and lafcivious inclinations, (which by intemperance grow impetuous) they purfue the object of thier flefhly lufts, till a dart ftrike through their liver ; as a bird hafteth to the fcare, and knows not that it is for his life.

Thus these high claimers of freedom are the veriest slaves; for while they promise themselves freedom, they are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. But the good man is in a good measure free. He is indeed the servant of God, and the disciple of Christ. These our Saviour said he had made free—and those whom the Son of God shall make free, they are free indeed. It is religion, the religion of the gospel, which restores true freedom to the soul; it is divine grace which conquers the turbulence of the passions, and creates peace within; it is divine grace which gives us the command and the free possession of ourselves; it is divine grace which mortifies fleshly lusts, purifies from all iniquity, and inspires with a laudable ambition to excel in goodness. When religion gets a seat in the heart, it corrects the thoughts, and governs the desires, and so attempers the mind to duty, that the matter of duty is the matter of choice and delight; so that his actions are voluntary, when he is under the proper influence of religious principles. He possesses, therefore, the happiest freedom, and in this respect he excels his neighbour whose mind is not balanced with the principles of religion, as much as freedom excels slavery.

VI. Another thing in which the righteous excel the wicked is, the purity and spirituality of the mind. The sincerely good man rises above the fumes of the vaporous sphere of sensual pleasures, which darken and debase the soul; they sully its lustre, and abate its native vigour and activity. While the vicious and profane are wallowing in impure lusts, and sinking themselves below the character of men, can there be any thing noble, any spark of generosity, or any degree of excellency in them—while they make their belly their God, and place their felicity in the sensuality of the brutes? Oh, no! no! Did men,  
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but of tolerable capacity, open their eyes, or allow reason and common sense to speak, they could not but see, nay, feel, the amiable and excellent form of virtue and godliness—the beauty and majesty of religion—as what at once adorns human nature, diffuses a sanctity through the whole constitution, and elevates to a near alliance with angels. And at the same time they must discover the ugly deformity of vice and wickedness, and that the heart which is under the influence of vicious principles is a cage of unclean birds, and the habitation of foul spirits, who enter and dwell there, and the last end must be worse than the first.

VII. Another thing in which the righteous excel the unrighteous, and which completes the character of the righteous man, is, a truly *benevolent and benign spirit*. Nothing can be a more evident mark of a base and ignoble mind, than confining our benevolence to the small circle of our friends and relatives. The righteous man embraces the whole family of mankind within his benevolent wish. As a man, he pities all in distress, and relieves all within his reach; and if he could have his wish, there would not be pain and poverty in the world: and, where his alms deeds fail, and his acts of kindness cannot relieve, he supplies their impotency with his counsel and his prayers: for the righteous man is gracious and full of compassion, he sheweth favour, and lendeth; and by opening the heart to the exercise of such extensive benevolence, he acquires a nobleness of mind, an habit of greatness and excellency, beyond what is possible to be obtained while a selfish and contracted spirit is indulged. And, besides, it is a godlike temper, and a mark of the children of God, who is the bounteous Father of angels and men, and who is ever diffusing his benevolence through his mighty empire, and liberally conferring his bounties on the members of his numerous family. Therefore our Saviour urged his followers to universal benevolence, not excluding their  
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most spiteful enemies, from this weighty consideration—that they might be the children of their Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise and shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust.

I M P R O V E M E N T.

I think we may infer the sad and fatal mistake which a great part of the world make about true excellency; as they seem to place it in mean and sordid things, merely sensual, nay, in vicious things, in an indulged appetite, lawless passions, in a freedom from the restraints of reason and religion, and in being above the sacred rules of virtue, and the dictates of a well-informed and tender conscience. Poor, mistaken mortals! they must have mistaken the body for the soul, an empty sound for solid good, a shadow for the substance, earth for heaven, and their belly for their God, and their shame for their glory.

If the mind is the man, if to be like God is the perfection of our nature, if heaven is the home of holy souls, and the only state of future happiness; then the sensual and vicious man, who despises the restraints of virtue, reason and religion, and suffers his appetites and passions to give law to his action, and direct his conduct, is not only mistaken in a capital point, but is ruining himself, and is doing what he can to disturb society and destroy the world; and is therefore an enemy to himself, to his God, and to his fellow-men, and is in combination with infernal spirits, and must, on the principles of fair reason, expect to share with them in that punishment originally prepared for the fallen angels.

What madness and folly are those guilty of who neglect or contemn religion, and despise and scoff at the righteous! What can such scoffers mean! Would they banish religion out of the world, and make her retire ashamed

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med into oblivion ! Alas ! what a world would this be, were that the case ! This earth would be but another hell, without the righteous, and the happy restraints of religion. Without the divine and sacred guard of the religion of the gospel, tumults, sedition, anarchy, rapine, murders, secret malice, open fraud, fierce revenge, in short, every evil, every enemy, and every calamity, would reign without controul and without bounds ; order would forsake the earth, the sacred boundaries of property and conscience (if conscience there was) would be broken up, and the whole world would become miserable. It is only the small remains of the religion of Jesus, that super-excellent thing, which keeps the world in any tolerable order and condition.

What an enemy, then, must the vicious man be to his God, to his country, to the Saviour, to himself, and to mankind in general ! How does he oppose the benevolent Jesus, who came to save and bless the world with peace, and truth, and grace ; to atone for sin by the sacrifice of himself, to regenerate the human heart, and to subdue the malignant passions of our fallen nature, to sanctify the sinner by the influences of his Spirit co-operating with the truths of his gospel, and thereby to raise him to the nobler forms of the divine life ; and in fine by the same grace to animate him in the way of well-doing to seek for glory, honour and immortality, until he shall obtain eternal life, and be made meet to enter upon the inheritance of the saints in light !

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## Discourse VIII.

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### On Family Religion and Prayer.

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E. P. H. vi. 18.

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*

**T**H E S E words contain a part of that exhortation with which our Apostle closes his excellent epistle to the Ephesians. In the preceding chapter, and in the former part of our context, he enlarges upon the duties of a well-ordered family; urging the mutual duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; and then he warns them of the danger they were in from their own native corruptions, and the common enemy of mankind: and, that they might be able to withstand the temptations they might be assaulted with, both from without and from within, he advises them to put on the whole armour of God, that they, like good soldiers, might maintain their ground in the evil day, and prove successful in the christian warfare. He adds in our text—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, &c. q. d. If you would make that noble and successful stand in the evil day, you must live in the exercise of all kinds of prayer, especially social, in your families; and this not only when they or the public are  
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under some distressing calamity, but constantly pray for yourselves and families, the church of God, and the world of mankind, and let the suffering saints have a particular and an affectionate part in your pious addresses, that they may be supported under those cruel persecutions, and that intolerable weight of general odium, which their amiable characters have drawn upon them from an ignorant and an ungrateful world. Thus our text enjoins upon us all kinds of prayer, with constancy and perseverance therein; but more especially social or family prayer. The exhortation of the Apostle is addressed to heads of families; therefore in the following discourse we shall have reference chiefly to this kind of prayer, as a leading article in family religion, and which is both introductory to, and has a happy influence upon, every other duty which heads of families are bound to discharge towards their families.

Family-prayer is a duty so natural, so well supported from Scripture, and so admirably adapted to support the honour and promote the domestic happiness of a well-ordered family, that little need be said in its defence; but, for the sake of the rising generation (for whose benefit this little work is principally designed) we shall offer a few things in support of the duty, and to enforce the practice:—in doing which we shall observe the following order:

I. We shall offer a few plain and serious arguments to prove that family-prayer is a duty incumbent on all heads of families.

II. Enforce the practice from several weighty and interesting considerations.

III. We shall answer the most considerable objections which have been or may be formed against the practice.

IV. Give some directions how it should be performed.

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I. The arguments which we shall make use of in support of the duty shall be drawn from reason, Scripture and example.

1. Nature and reason require that we socially and religiously acknowledge that being on whom we depend for life and breath and all things, and from whom we receive the constant supplies of life. I shall take it for granted that all whom I mean to address in this essay believe that there is a God who governs the world, and who, in the administrations of his providential government, bestows benefits, and inflicts evils. And we ask, Ought not this God to be religiously acknowledged in that family where he bestows his blessings, and inflicts his corrections? And in what more decent, rational or proper way can that religious acknowledgment be expressed, than for the master or principal head of that family to call his family together, and, as their mouth to God, offer sincere and united thanks to him for mercies received, and humbly ask for their continuance; to confess also the sins of the family, and implore his gracious pardon, through the merits of Jesus Christ? or if under the frowns of his providence, to humble themselves under his afflictive hand, and to pray for the removal of the tokens of the divine displeasure, or for divine support under the afflictive hand of providence, and grace to make a sanctified improvement of both mercies and afflictions; and to commit his family to the protection and guardianship of the God of their fathers, without which every family would soon become a scene of misery, distress and ruin?

Now does not reason and natural conscience strongly dictate this, that these joint acts of homage, adoration and worship should be paid in this social way to the God of the families of all the earth—to that God who has formed you into families—to that God who is constantly showering

showering down family blessings, and daily surrounding you with domestic enjoyments? Should not that God who is the Creator of the ends of the earth, your Creator, and your families', your preserver and theirs, your benefactor and theirs, have your daily joint homage, worship and praise paid him on the domestic altar of your family? Every argument which operates in favour of public worship operates equally in favour of family-prayer, of social and domestic worship; for every family is a single part of the whole public, is but a distinct member of the whole family of mankind; therefore, if joint social worship is reasonable any where, it must be reasonable in families.

II. We pass to examine the arguments drawn from Scripture which enjoin and enforce this duty.

Prayer is a piece of natural religion—what the light of nature teaches, and what the common consent of mankind has put beyond all doubt; therefore we cannot reasonably expect to find many express precepts for it in Scripture, for it is not the business of divine revelation to teach natural religion; though the holy Scriptures are not wholly silent on this subject: in our text the duty is clearly implied, if not particularly expressed. The Apostle in our context is giving advice to heads of families, exhorting them to the duties which are incumbent on them as such; and he says, *Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and then adds, And ye masters, do the same thing unto your servants; i. e. give them a religious education; and that masters or heads of families may do this, they must pray in their families constantly, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit: so that the Apostle makes the faithful discharge of this duty an essential part or branch of that religious education which heads of families are bound to give unto their children and servants.*

In this connexion can any imagine that the Apostle meant to exclude family-prayer from the exhortation of the text? We think not; it is as fairly implied as if it had been expressly said, And ye, fathers and masters of families, you must give your children and servants a religious education; and if you would do this with success you must pray with fervour and constancy, with your children and servants, in your families, and suffer no secular business, company or diversion, to break in upon your morning and evening sacrifice, which should be the continual burnt offering. If the Apostle had treated in the context on personal religion, or secret prayer, and then said, Praying always with all prayer, it would be natural enough to understand him as chiefly intending secret prayer; or if he had been speaking of public worship, and the duties of the sanctuary, it would have naturally led us to suppose that he chiefly intended public prayers, in the synagogue, or at some public oratory: but, as he had been professedly treating on relative duties and family religion, and closes his exhortation and instructions on that subject with saying, Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, &c. we cannot suppose him to exclude family-prayer from the spirit of his pathetic exhortation; but that he principally intended to recommend and enjoin it as a necessary branch of family religion and a pious education. So that if we take in the scope and design of the Apostle, we must allow our text fully to imply, and fairly to enjoin, the duty of family prayer; that heads of families are required, as a necessary part of that religious education which they are bound to give to their children and servants, to pray with and for them in their families, with constant fervency, in which supplications a particular mention of the saints, or the household of faith, is to be made.

The next text we shall consider as enjoining the duty of family-prayer is that in Col. iv. 2, where the same Apostle



He gives similar advice to heads of families, particularly to masters, and says, Give unto your servants that which is just and equal, and continue in prayer: q. d. in the educating of your families you must be careful to withhold nothing from them which is their due, or any of those just rights and privileges which they may naturally expect as members of your family; therefore you must continue in the serious discharge of family prayer, from which domestic service not the least servant is to be excluded. And, as the Apostle mentions constant prayer, which the masters of families must continue in, we cannot suppose him to mean any other than family prayer; before not exclusive of that; therefore that he expressly enjoins this as a duty which heads of families are constantly and conscientiously to discharge. And, to close this argument, which is drawn from express texts of Scripture in favour of family prayer, we shall mention that in 1 Peter, iii. 7, where the Apostle exhorts husbands and wives to live peaceably together, that their prayers might not be hindered. What prayers can we suppose the Apostle had reference to? Certainly family prayer, in which husband and wife are to join, and which would be obstructed by domestic jars, especially between the husband and the wife. Here we see three texts of Scripture in which family prayer is fully and fairly implied and enjoined, almost as expressly as if it had been said, Parents and heads of families, you must frequently call your families together, and see that none of your children and servants are absent, and pray with them, fervently, constantly and perseveringly, if you would succeed in your religious education of them, and would not deprive them of any of the natural rights and privileges of your family. And there are several other passages which may be collected from the sacred Scriptures in which the duty is fairly implied, if not expressly enjoined. To these may be subjoined another argument, from the example

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of the pious in all ages, whose example carries in it the nature of a precept. In the first class of those worthies are found Noah, Abraham, Job, Joshua, Daniel and David. These, if we mistake not, have all set us the example of family prayer. Of Noah it is said, that he was a just man, and perfect in his generation, or, as it may be rendered, perfect among his children and domestics; and it is added, he walked with God. Now we cannot conceive how he could be a just man, perfect in his house or among his family, and walk with God, while he neglected family prayer: but it is more expressly said, that when his wife, his sons and his sons' wives came forth out of the ark, he built an altar, and offered a burnt offering thereon, and that the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and blessed Noah and his sons, or family, and said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. Of Abraham it is said, that he would command his children and his household after him, and they should keep the way of the Lord. This implied at least that he would take the most direct and the most effectual care that religion should flourish in his family: and we cannot suppose this without we suppose that he devoutly and steadily prayed in his family; and we find that, whenever he removed his family, the first thing he did after pitching his tent was, to build a domestic altar, on which was offered the sacrifice of the family. Of Job it is said, that he offered sacrifice for his children, who he feared in the gaiety of their hearts had sinned against the Lord; and it is particularly observed that he arose early in the morning, and called all his children together, and offered up burnt offerings according to their number: and this was not an occasional act of religious worship in his family, but it is added, thus did Job continually. Joshua too resolved, for himself and house, that he and they would serve the Lord. But can any imagine that this resolution was made without any regard to family religion, or that it could be kept without

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without family prayer? We think not: but while the idolaters around him were offering daily sacrifice to their senseless deities, he and his house would jointly serve the Living Jehovah. Devout Daniel would not omit so important a branch of natural religion as family prayer, though he exposed himself thereby to be torn to pieces by hungry lions; therefore it is recorded, that he prayed in his house (or with his family, as it may be read) though according to the wicked edict every one who did so was to be thrown into the den of lions. It seems that he had stated hours or seasons for his family devotions, and in that corrupt and dangerous age he was not satisfied with the morning and evening sacrifice, but three times in a day he prayed in or with his household: notwithstanding the impious and horrid edict, he went into his house, and, kneeling down, prayed as before, with his face towards Jerusalem, according to the custom of the devout Jews: and it is observed that the windows of his house were open, which plainly shews that it was not secret prayer, for then he would not have entered into his chamber or common hall, but into his closet, and shut not only his windows but his door, and prayed secretly to his Father who seeth in secret, and would have rewarded him openly. David, the man after God's own heart, was eminently a man of prayer. When therefore he had worshipped God publicly in the sanctuary, where he delighted to have his feet planted, he returned to bless his house, i. e. to discharge the duty of a master of his family, to lead in acts of domestic worship, and in a social manner to implore a divine blessing on his household, and, as the head and priest of the family, to bless them in the name of the Lord.

Thus we have the example of the most eminent saints of the Old Testament, under a much less enlightened dispensation than we enjoy. But we have much greater and far more illustrious examples in the New, especially

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that of our Blessed Lord and Master, who came to set us an example that we should follow his steps. His example with us should have the weight of ten thousand arguments, and supply the place of positive and express precepts. We find him often praying with and for his disciples, who, being staidly with him, formed his proper family. In one place it is said, that when he was praying in a certain place with his disciples, on his closing his social address, one of them said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples; in answer to which request, he gave them that excellent form of social or family prayer which we have recorded in the sixth of Matthew. And again we read of his praying alone with his disciples; i. e. there was no other person with him but his staid followers, who formed his proper family. But we need not multiply instances; in those we have adduced he has set us the example, and he bids us learn of him—Look on me, and go and do ye likewise.

We might collect examples from the writings of the apostles, but, omitting these, we shall collect some from the more sober and sagacious heathens, whose example may have as great weight with some in the present age as any we have mentioned. And it is certain that they always had their *lares* and their *penates*, their household Gods, to whom they paid family worship. Of this sort were those images of Laban's which his daughter Rachel stole, from a superstitious regard which she had contracted for them, and for the great veneration which was paid them in her father's house. And the example of heathens, when it corresponds with, or results from, the plain dictates of nature, ought to have some regard paid to it, especially in matters of natural religion, and therefore in family prayer. Those, therefore, who enjoy the gospel, and profess to be christians, would do well to consider whether in neglecting family prayer they do not in this article fall below the heathen, and have just reason

to expect that in the final day they will rise up against them in judgment, and condemn them, as our Saviour said the men of Nineveh would against those of that generation with whom he was then conversant. Will they call themselves christians, the servants and worshippers of the only Living and True God, who neglect to pay an act of religious worship and homage to the everlasting Jehovah, which the stupid heathen devoutly pay to their penates, their household images! We close this argument with that passage of Scripture which we have, recorded Jer. x. 25: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, who know thee not, and upon the families who call not on thy name:" and we will leave it to every man's conscience to say whether this passage does not strongly imply, that every family which is not heathen will call upon the name of the Lord, or, in other words, maintain family religion and worship; or whether the neglect of family prayer does not expose that family to the divine displeasure.

II. We are in the next place to enforce the practice, from several weighty considerations: and all heads of families should consider, that the serious, devout and conscientious practice of family prayer is one of the most direct and effectual ways to procure the greatest good for their families, and to prevent the greatest evil.

1. It is the most direct, easy and effectual way to teach their children and servants the knowledge and practice of true religion. That this knowledge and practice is necessary to true happiness, and is productive of the greatest good to families as well as to individuals, and preventive of the greatest domestic evil, we shall take for granted. And what more easy, natural and effectual way can there be taken to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion in a family, than the serious, constant and devout performance of family prayer? While the head of a family is, in their name, addressing himself

to God as a being of divine perfections, possessed of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, truth and faithfulness, he leads his children and servants into right apprehensions of him; and thus he does, as it were by insensible degrees, initiate them into the true knowledge of God, before, it may be, they are capable of forming any clear and distinct ideas on any complex subject. Hence it is, we suppose, that we often hear our little ones, with a lisping or stammering tongue, ask surprising questions about God and Christ, about heaven and hell—questions which they have formed out of those fragments of thoughts which have been excited by the daily prayers which they have heard so constantly and devoutly addressed to God in the name of Christ, imploring his favour, a deliverance from hell, and the bestowment of eternal life and happiness in heaven.

Young and tender minds must be taught religion as they are taught language: they must have line upon line, and precept upon precept, by little and little. And by the constant, serious and pertinent prayers of the family, there are the gentle and continual droppings of instruction in the nature and practice of true religion, as the dew, which daily refresheth the earth, and by which it is impregnated and rendered more fruitful: as, for instance, when our family hears us confess our sins to God, and express our grief and sorrow for them in the language of humble penitence, they are naturally led to conclude that sin is hateful to God, but that he is willing to pardon the true penitent who cries to him for pardon. So when they hear us every day giving thanks to God for mercies received from him, acknowledging at the same time that we receive from him life, and breath, and all things, they will learn their dependence on him, and their obligations to him, and will be led to the exercise of unfeigned gratitude towards him, and their young hearts will be deeply touched with a sense of the

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the divine goodness and those natural obligations they are under to live to that God by whom they live and move and have their being. And, as the obligations to natural gratitude are perhaps the first which we feel, so when our children and servants hear us present our addresses in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Almighty and All-gracious Redeemer, through whom we hope for pardon and happiness, they may learn, from their very childhood, to venerate that dear and adorable name, and may ground a hope, or place a confidence, in him, as in one able and willing to save, long before they can digest a definition of saving faith, or distinguish the character which it bears, or the place it occupies, in the gospel scheme of salvation. So, when they hear us pray for the afflicted and distressed, it may teach them to practise sympathy and compassion for the sons of sorrow, and the children of wo; and when they hear us address the Father of the universe for the whole family of mankind, it may inspire them with sentiments of universal benevolence and charity, which makes no inconsiderable part of that religion which is from above, and is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of love and good fruits. The same advantage may be derived from every branch of a devout, pertinent family prayer, to every member of the family; therefore it may be the most direct, easy and effectual way to procure for, and secure to, our families the greatest good. And this consideration must have weight with every conscientious master of a family, who is bound, both by the laws of God and nature, to do all he can, to take the most direct, easy and effectual measures, to instruct his children and servants in the knowledge of God, and the practice of true religion; especially, considering that they are come into the world under the power of corrupt and vitiated natures; and, as far as we have been instrumental of their existence, so far we have been instrumental of con-

veying to them that corruption, the only cure of which is true religion, seated in the heart, and influencing the temper and life: when we consider this, we must be persuaded, by the children of our own bowels, and the weight of our private charge, to maintain constantly, in a serious and devout manner, this piece of natural religion, family prayer.

2. Family prayer is one of the most direct, easy and effectual ways to prevent the greatest domestic evils. It is in this way the divine blessing is obtained, which is the greatest preservative from evils of every kind. If it is the most natural, easy and effectual way to teach our children and servants the knowledge and practice of true religion, then it is the most direct and efficacious method we can take to procure for them the divine blessing; for the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but he blesteth the habitation of the just. And the habitation which is blessed is under a divine and invisible guard, while a wicked and prayerless family lies naked and open to the judgments of God. Can we reasonably expect family protection, without we jointly ask for it? can we rationally expect that God will set an hedge about all which we have, without we religiously commit ourselves and all we have to his care, and put ourselves under his protecting wing? The Scriptures intimate, at least, that those families who call not upon God are in danger of having his fury poured out upon them. But perhaps some of you will say, There is no such danger; for we have lived ever since we formed a family, and our fathers before us, in the neglect of family prayer, and have felt no harm—have shared the common lot of our fellowmen—have not been distinguished in any calamitous way from our neighbour who constantly prays in his family: the arrow which flieth in darkness does not wound us, though we go to bed without family prayers; and the pestilence



pestilence which wasteth at noon day does not come nigh us, though we rise from our beds, and pursue our business or our pleasures, without praying in our families. We are in health and outward prosperity, and see no danger.—It may be so; but this only proves that God is good, and has drawn out his patience to long-suffering—that he is waiting to be gracious—that he does not execute his judgments speedily against an evil deed: but if you take encouragement from thence to continue in the neglect of so plain a piece of natural religion, you will but verify the observation of the Wise King, that therefore the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do wickedly. And though God should not immediately bless your families, but wait, that he might be gracious, and see if you will not repent and reform, and then he will turn away from the fierceness of his anger, that you perish not; yet if you should continue to abuse his patience and long-suffering, and persist in the neglect of this your duty, you must expect that the day of his recompence will come; and what will you do in the day thereof! for God will turn the wicked into hell, and all the families (though there were so many as to compose whole nations) who so forget him as not to call upon his name.

Another consideration, which will add some weight to this argument, is, that it will be greatly for the spiritual advantage of your families. Here we will appeal to fathers or masters of families, to say whether they do not stand in daily need of those spiritual helps and advantages which the serious and conscientious discharge of this duty is calculated to afford; or whether these adorations of the Divine Majesty, these humble confessions of sin, and these earnest supplications for pardon, and grace to help, have not a natural tendency to beget a kind of habitual fear of God, an inward remorse for sin, and an earnest desire of pardon, grace and holiness. And may

we not suppose that the daily mentioning of these things in our religious exercises will improve the mind in practical knowledge, and give us a more impressive sense of spiritual things? Besides, a person who conscientiously prays in his family cannot be supposed to perform this duty without *thought*, though it should be in ever so formal a manner: and, if he thinks, his thoughts must improve his mind, and that improvement will diffuse a happy influence over the whole family. And the serious and religious performance of this duty will restrain from innumerable evil practices. For instance, a master of a family, who makes conscience of praying in and with his family, will not be unnecessarily absent at the hour of family prayer; he will not be found at public houses, or at the gaming table, when he should be on his knees offering up the sacrifice of the family. Common decency, too, will restrain those who are the mouth of their family to God, from those vicious practices which dishonour the christian name; for who can go from an evening debauch to his family prayers, or from his prayers to his vices? who can daily call his family together, and devoutly pray with and for them, and at the same time live in the practice of drunkenness, uncleanness, fraud, injustice, or any other direct act of immorality? He who can, must have got to a very high pitch of wickedness—almost beyond the reach of hope.

These are some of the considerations which if attended to must, we think, persuade every considerate man to the performance of this duty: and, that you may feel the weight of these arguments, we ask of every head or master of a family *one favour*, viz. that the very next time you see your children and servants together, you would cast a compassionate eye upon them, and consider them entrusted with you, placed under your care, and dependent upon you, and at the same time their hearts corrupted, and their minds destitute of divine knowledge, but capa-  
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ble of being taught the fear and love of God by your instructions; and then ask yourselves whether you have any right to deprive those little dependents of the privilege or advantage they may have of learning religion from your daily reading the word of God to them, and praying with and for them. Can you deprive them of this privilege, which is connected with their being placed under your care? or how can you answer such neglect to them—to their Heavenly Father? or how will you support the charge in the final day, if that should be made on you, that they learnt to neglect religion from your example in your family, where even the external form of it was not to be found?

III. In the last place we proposed to answer an objection or two against the practice of this duty: and we know but two which can be made. The first is, the want of capacity. To this may be replied, Where there is not a heart wanting, this objection will not long remain in force; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. If you want not a disposition, you will not long complain that you have not ability; for the heart of a good man will teach his mouth wisdom, and will add knowledge to his lips. If the mind is properly impressed with a sense of eternal things, and you are made really to feel your spiritual wants, and your dependence upon God, you will soon find words to express that sense you have of divine things, and those wants which you feel. It requires but a very small capacity to express in a decent manner your wants, and to acknowledge your dependence upon God, and your obligations to him; and the plainest and most natural expression in prayer is all which is required. The most natural expressions of your feelings, sentiments and desires, if sincere, are much more eloquent and acceptable to God than the most elegant and pompous language, and are more pertinent and useful in ordinary families. And, after all, if you cannot  
pray

pray extempore, or without a studied form, you may make use of some easy, plain and short form composed by somebody else, which you may get by heart, and repeat *memoriter*, or from memory, in a serious, distinct, grave and devout manner :\* so that this objection can be of no force, or any sufficient reason why this duty should be neglected any longer.

The other objection is, the want of confidence to begin and practice that which has been too long, and is too generally, neglected. But if you are convinced that it is your duty to pray in your families, and you make conscience of duty, this objection will not long have sufficient weight with you to prevent it. That bashfulness which will not suffer you to do your duty is sinful, and must not be indulged ; for the longer it is indulged, the more you will be enslaved by it : therefore this objection should rather excite you to the practice of the duty immediately, than be offered as a reason why it should be neglected.

We close with a few directions respecting the manner in which the duty should be performed. And we will venture to say, in general, that family prayers should be plain, pertinent, short and seasonable.

1. Family prayers should be plain ; for, as one great and noble end of family-prayer is to teach your children and servants religion, so they should be expressed in plain and familiar language, not couched in figurative and rhetorical phrases, or what is called high-flown expressions ; for then a great part of your prayers will not be understood, and one valuable end will be lost. To use such expressions, words or phrases, as are above the capacities of your family, is to pray in an unknown tongue ; and the great Apostle said he had rather speak five words so as to be understood, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

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\* For this purpose I have added a short form at the end of this discourse.

2. Your prayers should be pertinent. In your adorations you should mention with reverence the natural and moral perfections of God. In your petitions, you must particularly express the grounds of your hope—the free mercy of God, the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gracious promises in the word of God. In your confessions for sin, you should mention and lament the corruption of our nature, as well as the actual transgressions of life; so in your thanksgivings you must express your thankfulness to God for his boundless goodness and free mercy, and especially for that unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ, to a lost and guilty world, and for all the gifts of nature, providence and grace, which we and all mankind derive from God through him. You should particularly mention the favours and blessings, both personal and domestic, you enjoy as a family. By these pertinent expressions, in the various parts of prayer, you will, by little and little, form the young and tender minds of your children and servants to right apprehensions of God, of Jesus Christ, and themselves, and of the way and method of salvation. Such prayers have a tendency to impress their minds with a sense of their obligations to God, and their dependence upon him, for life, breath, and all things.

3. Your family prayers should be short. If they should be drawn out to an undue length, they will become burdensome to youth and children, whose minds are too volatile to be kept long fixed to any subject. To the weak we are to become as weak. But then you are not to be so short as to omit any essential part of prayer, or not to give yourself time to be a little particular: as, for instance, you should frequently, if not constantly, (besides praying in general for the temporal and spiritual prosperity of your family) pray for civil rulers; that will teach them loyalty and subjection to government, and respect and esteem for our political fathers: you must pray  
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for the ministers of the gospel; that will teach them respect for the ministers of Christ, and to esteem them highly for their works' sake: and for the church of Christ, which he hath redeemed with his own blood; this will teach them to seek her interest, and to wish and pray for her peace and prosperity. You should pray for the poor, the sick and distressed; this will teach your family compassion, benevolence and charity. In one word, you should pray in particular for your children, servants, and every member of your family; for, when they hear themselves mentioned, it will naturally enkindle in their bosoms a veneration, affection and esteem for you, and a serious concern for themselves, which may have a good, yea, a saving, influence on their minds, and become a source of joy and comfort to you.

4. Your family prayers should be seasonable—in the morning, before family business or secular employments call the family different ways, or hurry and discompose the mind for the serious and religious exercise—and in the evening, before your children and servants grow sleepy, so as not to be able to attend, even though the spirit should be willing.

Here I cannot but observe, that care should be taken that children and servants are not absent when the morning and evening sacrifices of the family are offered, and that heads of families (without absolute necessity) should not be absent from their families at the hour of prayer.—We conclude.

As we have proved the duty reasonable, scriptural and christian, have recommended the practice from the most amiable and exalted examples, and have urged it from the most rational, moving and interesting considerations; have removed every material objection, and rendered the whole natural, easy and instructive; we shall now take it for granted that it is a duty, and that no heads of families,

lies, who conscientiously wish to do their duty, will live in the neglect of it, but, reviewing the duty of family prayer in the light in which we have held it up, will immediately enter upon the practice, if neglected before. And, that this so important a duty should not dwindle into spiritless formality, you must labour, above all things, after the true spirit of prayer; that you may realize your wants, that you may feel your need of divine help. Let your expressions be serious, weighty and fervent, as becomes an act of homage paid to the Ever-living Jehovah.

And now may the God of the families of all the earth shed down upon you and your families the blessings both of his grace and providence, and make you and your families the blessed of the Lord, while he pours out his fury on those families who call not upon his name.

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*A Morning or Evening PRAYER for a Family.*

**O** THOU most Great and Glorious God! we, thy rational and dependent creatures, beg leave to address thee, as the only Living and True God—who heareth prayer, to whom all flesh should come. To thee therefore we come, in the name of Jesus our great high priest, to offer up to thee our morning [or evening] sacrifice upon this domestic altar; as thou art the support of universal nature, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

But we have to own, in thy presence, that we have sinned against Heaven and before thee; in many things we have offended, and in all things we have come short: but thou art the Lord God, merciful and gracious, seated on a throne of grace, and a mercy seat, dispensing pardons to true penitents. O grant us repentance unto life, that

we may obtain the remission of sin, according to the riches of thy grace; and by the sanctifying influences of thy Good Spirit deliver us from the power, as well as from the guilt and punishment, of sin, and replenish our hearts by thy grace.

O thou God of our lives, give us grace that we may live, in this world of sense, a life of faith and holy obedience; and, while we pass this vale of tears, may we have as much of this world's goods as we may use well—most for the honour of God, for the good of society, and our own final happiness.

May we realize the shortness of time; the uncertainty of all worldly good; and feel the importance of eternity: and behave at all times in such a manner, that, should we be summoned away ever so suddenly, death may not be a dreadful but a joyful surprise to us.

Father of the universe, pity and relieve the sons and daughters of affliction every where. Bless all our dear and absent friends, and make them share with us in all the blessings we ask for ourselves, as far as their circumstances and ours may agree.

Bless the civil government over us, and may all its offices be filled with men after thine own heart, that they may be ministers of God for good to the people of these United States.

May the glorious gospel of the Blessed God be spread abroad in all the earth, that all nations may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent: for which purpose we pray that the ministers of the gospel, of every denomination, may with united affection, and pious zeal, tempered with the meekness of wisdom, become eminently successful in carrying on the work of the Lord, until knowledge, peace and truth shall bless the whole family of mankind.

Bless,



Bless, we beseech thee, our family, that both we who preside over it, and they who belong to it, may belong to the household of faith, and be blessed in him in whom the families of the earth are blessed.

Most Merciful Father, we thank thee for all thy goodness which thou hast manifested to us, or conferred upon the whole human race. We thank thee for the inestimable privilege we enjoy, in having free access to the throne of grace through a Mediator, for the ample provision thou hast made for the forgiveness of our daily sins, and for the future supplies of grace which we may need while we pass this vale of tears.

We particularly thank thee for the salvations of the day [or night] past, and humbly commit ourselves to the care of thy kind providence. Protect us from all evil through the day, [or night] and bring us safe to another morning, [or evening] when we may meet again at the throne of grace to present our morning [or evening] sacrifice; and may we be perpetually advancing in our preparations for heaven, where we hope to pay thee acts of homage and praise more worthy of thine acceptance, through Jesus Christ, our great high priest, in whose exalted name we present our social address; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed immortal praises. Amen.

Or you may close in the words of the Lord's Prayer; thus—'In whose exalted name and words we present our social address, calling upon thee—"Our Father," &c.

For the sake of those whose minds are not sufficiently tenacious easily to commit the above to memory, I have added the following:

O THOU God of the morning [or evening] in the morning [or evening] shalt thou hear our voice, for we direct our prayer to God Most High.

In the name of our Lord Jesus, we pray for the pardon of all our sins, the justification of our persons, and the sanctification of our natures; and bless our family, in him in whom the families of the earth are blessed.

We humbly thank thee, O Lord, for the day [or night] past, and desire to commit ourselves, and all we have, to thy future protection. Shed down, O thou Father of light and grace, upon us the influence of thy good Spirit, and implant and cultivate in us every christian grace and moral virtue, and thereby advance us in our daily preparations for heaven.

O merciful Father, pity and relieve the sons and daughters of affliction every where, and do good in thy good pleasure to Zion, and to the whole family of mankind.

Bless the government over us, and the ministry of the gospel which we enjoy, and spread the knowledge of thyself, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, and fill the whole earth with thy glory: and may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on the earth as it is done in heaven; for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.



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## Discourse IX.

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### On the religious Education of Children and Servants.

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E P H. vi. 4.

*And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

**T**HE Apostle, in the close of this epistle, set himself purposely to treat on relative duties; the mutual duties of husbands and wives, of parents and children, and of masters and servants: for this great apostle (as every good minister will) inculcated social virtue, as well as the doctrines of grace. He thought it not beneath his office, or beside the beneficent design of his commission, to descend into the private walks of life, to give directions, and address exhortations, to every class of mankind; for he would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God; warning every man, teaching every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. And indeed every goodnatured man, who is not a stranger to benevolence, or who wishes well to the whole family of mankind, will be desirous of promoting social virtue and domestic happiness; since the public good, the well-ordering of the state, depends very much upon the well-ordering of private families.

In our text the Apostle addresses parents and heads of families on the subject of a religious education of their children and servants, and says, *And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*: which address we shall endeavour to explain, and apply to the subject of the religious education of families. When the Apostle says, *And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, we are to understand him as addressing heads of families in general; and it is as if he had said, I advise and exhort heads of families to make use of no such severe or tyrannical discipline, among or with their children or servants, as may have a tendency to break their young and tender spirits, and so discourage and suppress a laudable ambition in them to excel in those things for which they have a natural genius. And he gives the same caution and advice in that parallel place in Colossians iii. 21: *And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged*. And heads of families should be upon their guard against a too severe discipline, lest the angry passions of their children, being often provoked, should be exasperated to such a degree as to break out into indecent expressions about their parents, masters and guardians, and, from secret indignation, and suppressed anger, may be led to wish ill to them, which is a very great sin, and big with all manner of ill consequences. Prejudicing the children and servants of such families against religion is not one of the least.

Children receive their first impressions from their parents, or from those who have the direction of their childhood. If they observe, or are led to think, that their conduct is not such as the rules of christianity allow or require, or is not agreeable to the benevolent genius of the gospel, their exasperated minds will be soured against  
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the gospel itself, and so the heads of such families will involve themselves in the guilt which their children and servants may contract by their disobedience to the gospel, and may share with them in final ruin. To prevent this most fatal of all consequences, the Apostle exhorts and enjoins it upon all heads of families to bring up their children and servants in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; i. e. instead of a severe and rigorous discipline, they should tenderly nurse them up in the knowledge, love and practice of religion; early, but tenderly, curb the beginning of licentious thoughts and vicious inclinations, and suppress with a gentle hand the first budding of wickedness. And, on the other hand, they should cherish every good and virtuous disposition found in them, and teach the shoot how to grow, in such a manner as to convince the child how much they love him, and care for his honour, peace and happiness. This, we apprehend, is implied in the words of our text: for by *nurture* we understand, a nursing up in knowledge and *good manners*; and by the *nurture of the Lord*, we are undoubtedly to understand, a *religious education*, or a tenderly nursing up in the knowledge and practice of *christianity*; and by the *admonition of the Lord*, we are to understand, a *religious discipline*, softened by the lenient hand of parental affection, kindly admonishing them of sin, its nature and consequence, correcting and removing any false notions which they may have imbibed, suppressing any evil disposition which may arise in their minds, and guarding against the dangers they may be in, either from their own natural corruptions, or the baleful influence of evil company.

Having explained the words of our text, we pass to point out to heads of families that pious and prudent care in the instruction and religious education and government of their families, which we think is implied and recommended in the exhortation of the text. We are sensible that this is a very tender, and at the same time a very  
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important and delightful, subject. The religious education of families admits of such a variety of delicate and minute circumstances, as will hardly allow of determinate rules of conduct in all cases. We have not entered upon this subject without well weighing what we have to offer; nor have we dared to venture very far out of the path others have trod before us; and at the same time we acknowledge the advantage we have received from their excellent writings on the religious education of families.\* And we shall submit what we have to offer on this very important subject to the serious, candid and impartial examination of the fathers of families throughout these United States in the present critical day.

We think, according to the most obvious and natural meaning of the text, parents and all heads of families are required, with all tenderness and fidelity, to bring up their children and servants in the knowledge and practice of religion; by instruction and a wise discipline to lead them early into the knowledge and practice of christianity: and, in order to this, we should endeavour to form their young and tender minds to right apprehensions of God and moral obligations, of Jesus Christ and the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and of that amiable assemblage of christian virtues which result from thence.

Those parents and heads of families who would not needlessly or imprudently provoke their children and servants to wrath, but would bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, must endeavour to form their young and susceptible minds to right apprehensions of the Great and Blessed God: and this cannot well be too soon attempted. We are very apt to excuse ourselves from undertaking this task, till our children and servants arrive to years of discretion and understanding.

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\* Particularly Doctors Tillotson, Nelson, Baxter, Clark, Doddridge and Orton, whose writings on this subject are highly recommended to every family.

But who knows how soon our children may begin to form, under the cultivating hand of a wise and instructive parent, tolerably correct ideas of their Creator and Benefactor? We find that very early they begin to learn and distinguish sounds, and then to form sentences, and connect ideas, and from these connections to draw conclusions: and why may they not conceive somewhat correctly of a Being who is wise, great and good, and worthy to be feared and loved? A child who sees a fine house will readily conceive some idea of the builder, and will immediately ask, Who built that fine house? And why may we not suppose, when he looks abroad, and views a world, the sun, moon, stars and clouds, and sees the trees, mountains, rivers and lakes, that the child will naturally conclude that there is some great, wise & good being somewhere who made and upholds all these things, especially when he is told, seriously and repeatedly, that he who built all things is God? And if the child is brought to conceive of God as the Author and Supporter of the universe, he will easily and naturally conceive of him as his Creator and Preserver, and conclude that he is to be loved, feared and obeyed. And this is the very beginning of piety; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And, as an argument that children are capable of being taught this fear, the Psalmist invites them to come unto him that they might be instructed in it: Come, ye children, unto me (saith he) and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

It is certain that there must be some right apprehensions of God formed in the minds of our children, before we can advance one step with them in a religious education, before we can instruct them in the nature of religious obligation: they must be convinced or brought to believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him, and that he has never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face, in vain. Therefore it is

is the first thing essential in a religious education that we impress the minds of our children with right apprehensions of God ; *that he does really exist* ; that he is before all things, the first cause of all things ; that he is great and powerful, wise and good ; every where present, beholding the evil and the good ; that he hates sin and vice, but loves virtue and goodness ; that he is merciful and gracious, and governs the world by his providence ; and that, though there are other invisible beings above and around us, good and bad angels, they are under his government and controul, and made to subserve the purposes of his providence and grace : that good angels are employed in protecting and guarding good children, and that bad angels are permitted sometimes to punish the wicked ; and that he only leaves those who first leave him, to be tempted and ruined by the devil and his wicked angels. Our Saviour has assured us that the children of his covenant people have each one his guardian angel, who continually stands before God, to render an account of his guardianship. And from the book of Job we learn, that Satan, an evil angel, could not do him or his children any injury until he had obtained leave from God.

But, while we speak to our children of this great God, who has all the good in his hands and at his disposal, and all the evil we can fear or feel, we must take care that we do not excite in our children an obedience to God which is merely mercenary—an obedience from selfish principles and motives—to serve him that he may do us good, and not hurt, all the days of our lives : we must therefore inculcate upon their minds that God is good, even while he is angry with and punishes the wicked, and that he punishes them for their good, and because he is good—not willing that any should perish, but come to repentance. Punishment is said to be God's strange work : he afflicts not willingly, nor does he delight to grieve any



any of the children of men, but that he might maintain the honour of his government, and shew his displeasure at sin: and, though he visits the transgressions of his own people with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes, yet he does not take his loving kindness from them, nor cause his faithfulness to fail. This is the representation God made of himself to Israel, and which he would have them make to their children—The Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin: but yet he will not by any means clear the guilty; for he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the the third and fourth generation. We must at least mix the idea of his goodness with his justice, and represent him as the kind and indulgent Parent of the universe. He watches over them who love and fear him, with peculiar tenderness. And we may convince them of his goodness by telling them that it is this God who has made them, and who watches over them with more than paternal kindness; that all our care would have been fruitless without his; that all the good which they receive from us, or from any friend, comes from God; that it was he who first implanted in our breasts that affection which we have for them; and that all the power and inclination which we have to do them good is no more nor other than he has lodged in our hands for that very purpose. We should therefore teach them ever to respect God as the source of goodness, as well as the supreme and righteous judge, to whom all things lie open and naked. This idea of him will naturally beget in them a veneration for God, as the best and greatest of all beings.

Lest our children should imbibe the false notion of meriting the favour of this great and good God (a notion so repugnant to the gospel plan, and so agreeable to the corrupt and proud nature of man, that it cannot be

too early guarded against) we must take great care *seasonably* to instruct them in the corruption and sinfulness of our nature, the holiness of God, and the purity and perfection of his law. We must let them know that God is so holy, his law so pure and perfect, and their natures so wicked and corrupted by sin, that they cannot merit any thing at the hands of God, nor come up to the requirements of his holy law; for his law is exceeding broad, and extends to the thoughts and dispositions, as well as to the words and actions; and that therefore they must go to God in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and ask his gracious acceptance of them and their poor and imperfect services for the sake of this Son of his love; and that they must never approach this Holy Lord God, to ask the pardon of sin, but in the name of his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

That we may give our children right apprehensions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the nature and design of his mediation, we must tell them plainly, that our first parents fell from that state of rectitude in which they were first created, and by that fall (things were so circumstanced) subjected themselves and their posterity to the wrath and curse of God, and could not be restored upon the foot of their own personal merit; that God was pleased, out of his mere goodness, and eternal unmerited benevolence, to propose to restore fallen and guilty man, and finally to save him, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, his Beloved Son; and that the Lord Jesus Christ as voluntarily undertook to mediate in the affair of man's salvation; for which purpose he became man, assumed our nature, and in our stead obeyed the law, which was broken by man, suffered the penalty which was due to him, and so made a full satisfaction for sin, so wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness, which justifies from all things, and by his obedience and death purchased also peace, pardon and eternal life for all who believe

lieve in him, and obey the gospel : and therefore we are now to ask of God the pardon of sin, the acceptance of our persons, and eternal life, in the name and for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ. And we should let our children know, that God requires full satisfaction for sin ; not because he delights in the pain, punishment and death of his rational creatures, but because he is holy, and sin is so hateful, so contrary to his nature, that he cannot pardon it, and maintain the honour of his law, vindicate the purity of his nature, and support the dignity of his moral government, without full satisfaction : therefore he spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, a sacrifice for sin, and now freely offers to accept of what his Son has done and suffered, in our nature and stead, as full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world ; and is willing, and has promised, to pardon and save all who will accept of Christ for their Saviour, believe in him, and submit to him as he is offered to them in the gospel. And, that we may clearly open to our children the way in which they may rationally exercise a faith in, and love to, the Lord Jesus, we should often represent to them how ready he was to undertake for us, how voluntarily he closed with the gracious proposals made in the councils of heaven to redeem fallen man, and, that he might be qualified for this work, he condescended, though he was Lord of all, to become a helpless babe, and a little child, like one of them—was obedient to his earthly parent, and when very young evidently loved and feared God his Heavenly Father ; that he loved to be in his house attending upon religious exercises more than to be at plays and childish diversions ; that when he grew up to be a man, he went about doing good, teaching every body religion and good manners ; and that while he lived he took particular notice of little children, and was greatly pleased when their parents brought them to him for his blessing, and was much displeas'd at his disciples for rebuking

these who brought them, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven ; and he took them and set them beside him, and, embracing them tenderly in his arms, he blessed them.

We should further inform our children and household, that after he had finished the work of obedience to the laws of God, and of teaching mankind the way to life more perfectly than ever it had been before, he was accused and apprehended as a malefactor, by his enemies. He could indeed have delivered himself, confounded and disarmed all his enemies, and triumphed over them, if he had been of a mind to do it ; for by one word, and that the most mild and gentle, he struck them all back who were advancing to take him, and threw them all to the ground twice ; but he had rather die himself, for a while suffer the wrath of God for our sins, than that we should all suffer the wrath of God forever : so he patiently submitted, and let them come and take him, and, having secured him as a criminal, they led him away for a sham trial, where they accused him of many things of which he was not guilty, for he was without sin, neither was there guile found in his mouth ; and they condemned him at last for saying that he was the Son of God, and after many abuses and insults they crucified him between two thieves, as being the worst of the three ; and after he was dead he was taken down from the cross by one of his friends, and decently buried in a new tomb ; and after three days he arose from the dead, and was seen by many, and freely conversed with his disciples about religion for forty days together, during which time he endowed his disciples and friends with rich miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, and, having taught them fully what they were to teach others when he was gone to heaven, and given them all the instructions necessary for him to give, or for them to receive, he, as he had

had told them before, went up into heaven, in the sight of his disciples and many others, till he got beyond the clouds; and that, though he is now in heaven, out of our sight, yet he knows all we need, and is as tenderly concerned for little children as ever he was when on earth; that he sees them always, and will hear their prayers; that he has appointed good angels to be their guard, and that he will finally save them if they love him, trust in him, and live to him. Thus we should bring our children to Christ, and open unto them the way of faith in him, and excite their love to him; and so teach them the way by him unto the Father.

We must endeavour to form the young minds of our children to right apprehensions of the Holy Spirit of God, (called in the Scriptures the Holy Ghost) and the need they stand in of his enlightening, sanctifying and saving influences, and what encouragement they have to pray and hope for them. We need not perplex their tender minds with the mystery of the Trinity, that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God in three persons; this must be left to the improvement of riper years, when they may be better able to digest a scheme of redemption, and more clearly to conceive of that subordination which the three sacred persons observe in accomplishing the work. We should tell our children, that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, whom God the Father sends into the hearts of the sinful children of men, to enlighten their minds in the knowledge of Christ, to renew their wills, and to sanctify their affections, and so to change their hearts, to make them holy, that they may be fit for heaven, and be made completely happy when they die.

We must often tell them, that they were born in sin; that their natures are corrupt, and must be sanctified by the influences of the Blessed Spirit; and that for this purpose God has promised his Holy Spirit to them who ask him;

him ; and that therefore they must pray to God for his Holy Spirit ; for God has said that he is as ready to give his Holy Spirit to them who ask him, as earthly parents are to give good things to their children, when they ask them ; that therefore they may pray to God, in Christ's name, for the Blessed Spirit, with as much confidence as they can ask their parents for any thing they want, and which is good for them to have. And they must not be soon discouraged ; for, as God is sovereign of his own promised or unpromised favours, so they must patiently wait his will and time for the bestowment.

Thus much, we apprehend, is contained in the first branch of a religious education, and is plainly implied in bringing our children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We now proceed to a second general branch of a religious education, and which we apprehend is equally implied in the admonition of the text ; which is, to give them right notions of God, and to make them feel the force of moral virtue. And if parents would do *this*, they must early, seriously and steadily inculcate upon them respect to superiors, benevolence to all men, integrity, diligence and fidelity in business, and humility and self-denial in their whole deportment.

1. Parents should teach their children and servants respect to superiors. One of the commands which God delivered by the ministrations of angels, in awful pomp and majesty, from Mount Sinai, is, 'Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother ; which is enforced by the promise of long life and prosperity ; which the Apostle observes is the first commandment with promise ; a promise adapted to strike the tender passions, and to make a deep impression on the minds of youth. Respect and obedience to parents is a duty founded in nature and reason, and results from the relation there is between parents and children ;

children; therefore it is written, Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Children should be taught to respect magistrates, ministers, and superiors in general. Abraham bowed himself before the children of Heth; Jacob, his wives, and children, bowed themselves before his elder brother Esau; and Paul spake very respectfully to Festus the Roman governor. And it is expressly commanded, Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head; thou shalt honour the face of the old man: and the prophet Isaiah mentions it as a mark of sad degeneracy, when children behave themselves proudly against the ancients, and when the mean or lower class of the people behave themselves insolently against the honourable.

Children should be made to know, that to treat all their superiors, especially parents, masters, mistresses, guardians, rulers and ministers, with great respect, is a duty which they owe to God, and which they cannot withhold without offending him, and endangering their own souls: they should be early taught, that God has committed them to the care of their parents, and made them more dependent on them than any other creatures; and that respect and obedience to them is a duty they owe to God, for that care and dependence; a duty founded in nature and gratitude. And it ought to be observed, that disobedience to parents, and disrespect to superiors, is ranked by St. Paul with those sins which are committed by them who are given over by God to a reprobate mind. Parents therefore should not indulge their children in any thing which is in direct opposition to the known will of God, nor allow them to conduct as they please—to go and come, to do this or that, without the knowledge and approbation of their parents; for a child left to himself will bring his parents to shame, and himself to ruin.

2. If we would bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, we must teach them benevolence to all men. Parents and heads of families should be the more careful and thorough in cultivating this temper in their children and servants, as it is a leading trait in the christian character, and of the most happy and extensive consequence. Love and benevolence are the fulfilling of the law; and in many instances they are a law to themselves, and will of themselves beget and maintain a very agreeable conduct towards all men. A benevolent and kind disposition and behaviour will procure for our children many friends, render them an honour to the families they spring from, make them blessings to society at large, and be a presumptive evidence that they are inspired with that divine wisdom which is from above, and is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of love and good fruits. All the bright and beautiful assemblage of social virtues, and the various amiable branches of relative duty, are comprehended in *christian benevolence*: this, when deeply impressed on the young and tender minds of our children, by a religious education, accompanied with the regenerating spirit of the gospel, will engage them to act upon the principles of integrity towards others, even before they are capable of conceiving clearly, or sensibly feeling, the force of those moral obligations which result from the more abstract principles of mutual equity. And we think it is evident from observation, that benevolence is one of the first virtuous impressions which a child is capable of receiving, and that golden rule of benevolence and equity is felt and understood by them as soon as they are capable of connecting ideas—As you would that others should do unto you, do you even so unto them. The propriety of this rule is so obvious, that it does not exceed the capacity of a child; and, if once fixed by a reasonable education, will not fail of adorning a useful life; as it will enable him to examine



mine with impartiality his conduct towards his equals, and will always keep the mind open to conviction, whenever they depart from this golden rule. We should teach our children that the christian religion consists very much in doing good to others; that Jesus went about doing good; that he improved every opportunity to shew kindness to the poor and distressed. We should use every proper method to form the hearts of our children to sentiments of humanity, tenderness and compassion; we should tell them that kindness to the poor and distressed is a duty; that to shew this kindness is to be and to act like Christ, the best friend of mankind. We should often set this example before them, and (as a pious and learned author\* observes) we should sometimes make them our almoners, by whom we may send relief to the needy and distressed, and encourage them on particular occasions to part with what we allow them to call their own, to the proper objects of charity, at the same time taking care to replace what they give away with something; that they may feel the weight of that truth, He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord. By these means we may inspire them with a benevolent temper from their cradles, and, by laying hold on the very first feelings of humanity, may form them to that temper and conduct which will be the glory of riper age; and, practising upon this temper, they will become an honour to religion, a great comfort to us, and rich blessings to the world, and will be likely to rise to, and continue in, affluence, when others, of a parsimonious spirit, will suffer want: for the promise is, Give, and it shall be given to you again; good measure, shaken together, pressed down, and running over, shall men (or, as a flowery writer† critically observes, shall God and conscience) give into your bosoms. Agreeably to this, the Wise King observes, There is that which scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that which withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall

\* Dr. Doddridge.

† Mr. Hervey.

shall be made fat, and he who watereth shall be watered also himself.

If we would give our children and servants a religious education, we must teach them the true worth of time. It is certainly a very great sin to spend away a considerable part of time to no valuable purpose. Diligence and industry are ordinances of heaven; and, considering the connexion which they have with religion, they may be very well reckoned branches of a religious education. Diligence and industry are moral virtues, upon the same ground that sloth and idleness are immoralities: for, if we are members one of another, we certainly as a body have a right to the usefulness of each other. If therefore we would put our children into a capacity to fill their stations in social life, and to pay that debt to the body politic which each member owes, we must early instruct them in the right improvement of time, and the talents which the Author of nature, and the Former of the human mind, has entrusted with them, with this injunction—*Occupy till I come*. It is not likely that any one will acquit himself with honour, or to advantage, who is brought up in idleness: nay, without a close and steady application to business in childhood and youth, little can be expected from them, either honourable or profitable to themselves or the public. Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, and not before mean men.

We do not think that as soon as they are capable of business they should be denied innocent diversions, suitable to their age and rank in life. Their youthful spirits are too volatile to be kept under constant restraint: this would break their spirits, render them mean and dastardly, and reduce them to an abject and sluggish disposition. It was said of Jerusalem, when under the best government and regulation, and styled the city of truth, and the mountain of holiness, She shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets. But it is a sin and shame when they

they do nothing else, at a time when they are able to earn half their living. The diversions of children should be at the appointment and under the regulation of their parents, and their youthful hours, as one expresses it, should be wisely divided between their business and their plays. God did not allow Adam, no, not in a state of innocence, to be idle, but sent him into the garden to keep and to dress it.

Diligence, too, in business, is the way to avoid a thousand snares, temptations and evils to which children are exposed, and by which they are often ruined. Wise and pious parents, who are properly concerned for the best good of their children, will keep them as much as they can out of the way of those gilded and dangerous snares, and will early assign them such employments as are suitable to their age, sex, rank and capacity; so moderated, diversified and alleviated by innocent and seasonable diversions, wisely directed, that the young mind may be neither overwhelmed nor fatigued.

And, as the first idea children form of labour is that of a task, every prudent parent or master of a family will render that task as agreeable as possible, by the alleviations of well chosen and regulated diversions. Parents who bring up their children in idleness have but little comfort to expect from them when they arrive to mature age; especially if an Athenian law should take place, (which indeed is not without some foundation in reason) viz. that those children who were brought up by their parents in idleness were not obliged to support them if they should come to want in their old age. Therefore, when parents have not employment at home, they should place their children in such other families where they may be taught industry; but then care must be taken that they be such families as are pious and well governed. Diligence, joined with religion, is the surest path to wealth and honour.

4. If parents and masters of families would give their children and servants a religious education, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they must teach them integrity and uprightness in all their conduct towards their fellow men. God requires truth in the inward part, and that the internal principle shall discover itself in the external conduct; and it is essential to the character of every good man, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he has his conversation in the world. Therefore every conscientious person, who shall have the care of the education of children and youth, will be careful not to give the least countenance to a fraudulent, dishonest disposition in his young charge. It is certain that the corruptions of the human heart begin to work very early in children; and it is truly affecting to discover the reality and strength of innate corruption, in the cunning artifice, sly deceit, and childish craft, of a young creature who is scarcely able to speak plainly. What art and contrivance will they use to conceal the truth, when they fear the punishment of falsehood, though they dare not tell a bare-faced lie. We think great care should be taken, by all who have the care of youth, that they do not tempt a child to prevaricate, by a too severe animadversion on venial faults, or by too closely interrogating the child supposed to be guilty, when the truth can be obtained without. But when the child is convicted of a known falsehood, he should not escape punishment, before not beyond the first offence; and the first should not pass without such indignation, surprise, grief and displeasure, on the parent's part, as will make a very deep impression on the mind of the guilty child. All disposition to cheat their play-mates, or fraudulently take from them those little toys which they use in their play, and call their own, must be discountenanced. Property is sacred; and parents should let their children know, that to cheat one another, even in  
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their play or play-things, is a sin, displeasing to God, and dishonourable to them, and what will expose them to punishment and shame when grown up: for the same disposition if indulged will lead them to the commission of more gross and direct acts of dishonesty.

Parents should decide, too, the little disputes which arise among their children and servants, not arbitrarily, but with a manifest shew of reason and equity, in a manner suited to their capacities, and which may fasten conviction upon the minds of the little disputants: and the parent's determination must be the end of all strife. And the parent must not admit of an arrest of judgment, on the complaint of one or other of the contending parties, without such obvious reason for it as may be seen and felt by both; nor may the parent give the child against whom the case turned something to pacify or to make up for the loss of the case; for this will carry conviction, even to a child's apprehension, that the parent is conscious that ample justice has not been done; and this will lessen both the parent's authority and the child's esteem.

Parents should by all means inculcate upon the minds of their children these texts of Scripture—He who walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he who perverts his way shall be found—The Lord loveth the righteous, and beholds with a favourable countenance the upright in heart—A lying tongue is but for a moment—Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord—and, All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,

5. If parents or heads of families would bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they must teach them a meek, courteous and amiable conduct towards the different ranks and orders of men. Pride is the poison of our natures. A stain so deep, and spread so wide over our lapsed natures, should be very carefully watched, and its operation very soon restrained. Parents should

should know that humility and a condescending temper is the brightest ornament of youth—that a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price—that it will engage the esteem and affection of all around them, and set them in a very advantageous point of light : for before honour is humility.

Heads of families should teach their children and servants to reverence and respect their superiors ; that while before them they must be silent and reserved, and to learn the government of the tongue ; a point of great importance in every rank and stage of life : to equals they are not to assume a forward and pert air, nor an insolent, imperious, domineering behaviour to inferiors ; no, not to the meanest servant (for there should be no slaves in any christian family) ; but they should be modest, courteous and obliging to all, and make every body as easy and happy around them as they can. This is so easy, cheap and delightful a way of communicating happiness to all, that every goodnatured person will readily go into the practice of it, especially since it is enjoined upon us in the sacred oracles to be courteous, and promised that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.

6. Self-denial is another lesson which parents should teach their children and servants, if they would give them a religious education. Without some degree of this temper, we can neither be the true disciples of the meek and self-denying Jesus, nor pass comfortably or safely through such a world as this is. If parents regard either the comfort or the salvation of their children, they will early teach them the knowledge and practice of this christian and social duty. Children must be taught to deny their appetites and passions, and be inured to restraint—to withstand the sollicitations of the senses, and the gieties and follies of youth—to be submissive and quiet under crosses and affronts, which they will be likely to meet with as they pass through the different scenes  
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which may open to them while acting on the stage of human life. Children possessed of this self-government, and who grow up in the steady practice of it, are and will be happier in this world than they can be without it who are possessed of the largest fortune, the greatest earthly honours, and the most unlimited power. Parents should govern their children's appetites, both with respect to their food, clothing and diversions. Reason should direct what kind and what quantity of food the child should eat. Parents may destroy, shorten the lives, and hurt the senses, of their children, by indulging an unreasonable appetite. The food of children should be plain, simple, light, and sometimes scanty. Cleanliness, but not delicacy, should always be observed with respect to our children's food, and sometimes, let the circumstances of the parents be what they may, children should fare hard, that they may learn to make those shifts which luxury and delicacy are strangers to. Children's passion for dress and finery is commonly strong; and therefore, while the reason of the child is weak, he must be governed by the reason of the parents, which will never indulge beyond ability and rank: and oftentimes the child should be denied the gewgaws of fashion, and the useless ornaments of dress, merely because a very strong passion for them is discovered; and always when they boisterously say that *they will have them*. They should be made to know that such a temper, and such indecent expressions to a superior, to a parent, are sufficient reasons why they should be denied: for a child left to himself, or allowed to carry his point by clamour and obstinacy, will bring himself to shame and ruin.

Having mentioned what we apprehend to be the most material things in a religious education, we close the whole with a few arguments drawn from several very serious considerations, that, if it be possible, we may persuade

suade every master and mistress of a family to the steady practice of the above-mentioned rules.

1. It is a pleasing duty to give our children and servants a religious education. The God of nature has implanted in the breast of parents such a strong affection for their dependent offspring, that it is impossible for them to seek and promote the child's happiness without feeling at the same time great inward pleasure and satisfaction; for this is one of those ways of wisdom which are pleasantness, and one of those paths which are peace. And if our endeavours should succeed, and we should see the young and tender minds of our offspring opening to the genial influence of knowledge and virtue; and we should hear our tender charge, in consequence of such instructions, inquiring with a becoming solicitude after their Father God, and Jesus their Saviour, and after those ways in which they may please him, and pattern after their Redeemer; if we should hear them inquiring, with proper concern, what they shall do to be saved, or how they shall have their sins pardoned, their hearts changed, their lusts and corruptions mortified, and their souls finally saved, and at the same time see them aiming at a most amiable and decent deportment; Oh! it must give us a pleasure far beyond what it is possible for us to receive from any other employment: for here is all that pleasure which the strength of parental affection can afford, joined with that which results from a consciousness of having done our duty, and succeeded to our wish; and at the same time having it in our power to reflect, that we have pursued the most direct way to secure our own comfort, and our children's happiness, to honour God, to benefit the church, and to bless the world.

2. The probability of success may be considered as an argument of considerable weight to encourage us in this delightful practice. And that there is a very great probability of success, may be argued—

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1. From the susceptibility of young minds. Children early receive impressions, and are very tenacious of first impressions. Though their minds are not like clean paper, without a blot or any innate contamination, yet they are much easier impressed and formed to virtue and goodness before these innate corruptions are grown into habits and deep-rooted principles of vice and wickedness. If we had a piece of ground, which was good in itself, but full of bad weeds in the first stage of vegetation, we should not think it prudent to stay until those weeds were grown up into sturdy plants, and their roots had struck deep, before we should make a trial to cultivate the soil, and cast in the good seed; and we should hope for success if we were early in subduing the noxious, and in cultivating the good, seed. So the earlier care should be taken of our little ones, from the melancholy consideration of their having vitiated natures; especially since observation and experience assure us, that first impressions are the longest retained; that the vessel commonly receives the strongest tincture from the liquor which was first put into it; and that the tender twig and the slender shoot is much easier bent than the sturdy oak. From these obvious principles of nature, Solomon ventured to deliver it as a proverb, Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

2. The probability of succeeding well in the religious education of our children may be argued, further, from a religious education being the appointed means of grace, and the express command of God. God particularly appointed and commanded his people Israel to instruct their children in every branch of their religion; they were to teach them the meaning of their laws, customs, sacrifices and religious rites. And our text is an express command to all parents and heads of families to bring up their children in the knowledge and practice of the christi-  
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tian religion ; and this is urged as an appointed means of acquiring a more established state of piety.

3. The probability of succeeding may be argued, from the success which has generally attended the serious, prudent and faithful endeavours of parents to form their children, under the influence of a religious education, to knowledge and virtue. God, foreseeing the good success which would attend Abraham's wise instruction and pious discipline, said, I know Abraham, that he will command his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord. The parent and grand-parent of young Timothy succeeded well in their endeavours to educate him religiously : they early taught him to read, and from a child to understand the Holy Scriptures, which by the blessing of God made him wise unto salvation. And cannot some of us testify, from our own experience, that it has been owing (under God) to the seasonable admonitions, the pious counsels, and the early instructions, received from a godly father or a pious mother, that we have been brought to fear God, to trust in Christ, and to make conscience of religion ? If so, we need not go from home for examples of success, this being enough, one would think, to engage us cheerfully to make the experiment upon our own children. But if we have not been so happy as to be brought up in a religious manner, nor received any special advantage from a pious education, yet let us look round and see if others of our acquaintance have not. Is it not a general truth, that the most renowned for piety, wisdom and goodness have sprung from those families where religion has been taught and practised—from families where social prayer has been seasonably and steadily performed by the master—where reading the word of God has been constantly attended to, and religious instructions of children and youth seriously practised ? Some exceptions we know there are, as there always will be from general rules :  
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some there are who are proof against all the force of a pious and well-directed education, who, like the steel, grow harder under the strokes of the hammer; while there are others who have been bred up in families where there has not been the form of religion, nor so much as the shadow of prudent discipline or religious instruction, and yet have been snatched as brands out of the burning, and have been made the trophies of divine and sovereign grace. But these instances are rare; just enough to prove that grace is sovereign, not confined to means, nor to be expected without.

It is the opinion of the most accurate writers upon education, and who were good judges of human nature, that of the men we meet, or taking mankind as they rise, nine out of ten are what they are (good or bad) according as they have been educated. If it is so, or if the bigger half of mankind are what they are according as they have been educated from their youth up, then there is a probability that our children may be. If then we would not have them enter the stage, to act their part on the theatre of this world, ignorant, profane, corrupt and vicious, we must bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

4. The fourth and last argument that we shall make use of, to engage heads of families piously to educate their children and servants, shall be taken from the importance of the rising generation. And it is certain that the honour of God, the support of religion, and your own comfort, depend very much upon the conduct of your children: and this consideration must furnish a very cogent argument to engage you to do your utmost that they may be formed by knowledge and grace to subserve the noble purposes of public utility. We are moving off the stage, as our fathers have done: for our fathers, where are they? Gone; and we are entered in their room, and must soon give place to our children,

who will be the only supporters, under God, of the cause of truth and religion. And can we expect that they will espouse, support and defend that cause which they have been taught to despise and contemn, by a loose, careless and irregular education? Can we reasonably suppose that they will rise up, and warmly plead the cause, the injured and neglected cause, in a degenerate and corrupt age, when we are sleeping in the dust, if we neglect to teach them the knowledge and fear of God—if we neglect to bring them up in the way they should go—in the way of piety to God, of faith in his Son, benevolence and righteousness towards all men, and temperance and sobriety towards themselves? Can we think that they, already corrupt in their own natures, neglected in their education, and strangers to the power of godliness, will make a bold stand, when surrounded by a thousand temptations, and as many evil examples, and maintain the honour and practice of the religion of the Blessed Jesus? And who of us can relish or support the thought, that the blessed cause of religion should sink, droop and die in the hands of our offspring, and this merely through our neglect? We know that God will plead his own cause, and not suffer it entirely to perish; yet there is no certainty that he will not take his gospel from our neglected offspring, and write upon our children, *Ichabod*. It is certain that God will have a church in the world, where will be enjoyed the privileges and liberties of religion; but it is not certain that these United States will always be the privileged place. The churches of Asia were once as golden candlesticks; but those very places where Jesus delighted to walk are become the seats of darkness, superstition and vice. Where is the security that these highly honoured, free and independent *States of America* shall not suffer the like fate, and sink into oblivion and wickedness, if the very next generation should desert the cause of religion? And I appeal to your consciences

to say, whether there is any thing which is so likely to bring on a general desertion of the all-interesting cause, as the neglect of the education of your children. But it must yield the pious parent much comfort and great consolation, if he should succeed—if he should live to see his children grow up in knowledge and virtue, the honour and support of his family. It must refresh his aged heart, and become a source of gladness in his declining years, and inspire his hopes of Zion's prosperity when he shall be gathered to his fathers: for a wife soon maketh a glad father.

But if you should not succeed to your wish, and should have the mortification to see them grow up vain and vicious, you will have two things to comfort you; one is, the hope that God will remember your pious endeavours and fervent prayers for them, and by his almighty grace save them from final ruin, though it should not be until your days are numbered and finished; and the other is, that, though they should finally perish, yet you will be able to reflect that you have in some good measure done your duty, and that their final ruin will not be charged to your account. But, on supposition you should succeed, as there is the highest probability you will, what must your consolation be at death! To see around your dying bed your children, pieces of yourselves, with filial affection and pious sollicitude affording all the support and comfort in their power; if you can look on them as on those for whom you have travailed in birth again until Christ has been formed in them; whom you have not only nursed with care, but educated religiously, in consequence of which you have reason to believe that they are become the children of God by faith, and heirs of glory; Oh! how comfortably may you die! Supported by such a prospect, how cheerfully can the dying parent take his or her leave of them and the world, saying, Behold I die, but God will be with you, and conduct you safely through  
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the wilderness of this world to the heavenly rest! How cheerfully may a dying parent say, My work is done, I have finished my course, but I leave behind me those who will, I trust, stand up for God, and steadily appear on the Lord's side—those who will plead the cause of truth, righteousness, peace and holiness, with fidelity and a well-tempered zeal, and I hope with better success than I have done. I leave my children in an ensnaring world, and in a corrupt age, when the advocates of infidelity and licentiousness are doing what they can to undermine the pillars of our holy religion; but I leave them under the care of my Heavenly Father and theirs, under the care of my God and their God, and under the guardianship of my Redeemer and theirs: and though, my dear children, I shall soon be separated from you, as far as heaven is from earth, yet, with the reviving hope of seeing you again, when you shall in your order safely arrive at the haven of eternal rest, when I hope to have the honour and happiness of presenting you all before the mercy-seat, saying, Lord, here I am, and the children whom thou hast graciously given unto me; with such a prospect, and with such a hope, I can say, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, having seen thy salvation.

Here we might close the argument, and with it the discourse; but if we should leave the dreadful counterpart untouched, some part of its force would be wanting: therefore give us leave to add—

If you should see, through the neglect of their education, your children turning into the paths of the destroyer, and becoming vain, disobedient, ungrateful, and, in one word, wicked; Oh, how cutting must be the separation by death! how wounding the last farewell, when you can rationally expect to see them but once more, and that on the left hand of Christ at the final day, with all the marks of horror and despair in their countenances,

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ees, and eyeing you as the authors and instruments of their ruin and misery!—But the scene is too painful.—I forbear.

These are some of the arguments with which the duty of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is enforced. For the fuller handling of the subject, we refer the reader to Dr. Doddridge's sermons on education and the importance of the rising generation; to whom we acknowledge ourselves much indebted for many of the leading thoughts in this discourse.

We close with saying—If these serious considerations and pathetic arguments have their proper weight with parents and heads of families, they must be sufficient to enable them to support their weight of care, and surmount every trifling difficulty which may lie in the way of giving their children and servants that religious education above recommended, and arm them with fortitude sufficient to form and execute Joshua's resolution—*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

1795

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## Discourse X.

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### On Filial Piety.

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COL. iii. 20.

*Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.*

THE great Apostle, that he might be clear from the blood of all men, and might impartially declare the whole counsel of God, in this epistle to the Colossians interspersed practical precepts with relative duties, among the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. In this paragraph, which begins at the 18th verse, he dwells chiefly upon relative duties—on those which mutually subsist between husbands and wives, parents and children. The verse I have chosen for the theme of the following discourse leads me to consider the duty which children owe to their parents, under the general term of obedience. Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord. It is as if he had said, Children, you must be obedient to your parents in all things lawful, not merely because it is right and just in itself, but because it is pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, when he condescended to become a child and to dwell in human flesh, set an amiable and steady example of filial piety and obedience, not only to his real mother, but to him who was his reputed father; for it is said, that he went  
down



down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them.

By children, in the text, we are to understand, all the youth of a family, whether they are natural children, apprentices, servants, or those who are committed to the care of the heads of a family; and by parents we are to understand, all heads of families, whether they be fathers or mothers, masters, mistresses, or guardians. So under the general character of parents are comprehended rulers, ministers and schoolmasters; as these are called fathers of the people. But I shall principally aim to point out and inculcate the duty which youth and children owe to their parents, or to those who have the care and instruction of their youth; and, as I am writing or speaking to children, I shall use great plainness of speech—speak as unto children, and use plainness and such simplicity of style as may be best adapted to their capacities, though not below the dignity of truth and grace, or beneath the notice of heads of families, who are so nearly interested in those instructions given to their tender charge.

I. As love is the genuine principle of all true obedience, so it is a natural duty we owe to God, the parent of the universe; and, next to him, the duty which all children owe to their parents, who under God are instrumental of their existence, preservation and comfort; so that love is the first duty which children owe to their parents. Children who do not love their parents sincerely, are without natural affection; which is highly criminal, and which the Apostle reckons among the very worst sins which the heathen and hypocrites were guilty of. They must love their parents, or they cannot do their duty to them, but will be guilty of disobedience, even while out of fear, or from self-interest, they pay an external obedience to them. Children should love their parents, not merely because they are their parents, but because God has commanded it, and it is right, and well  
pleasing

pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved his parents, and was therefore obedient unto them. Children should therefore yield all that respect and obedience to their parents which is the genuine fruit and natural effect of filial love. Those who do not love their parents, but hate them, and wish them ill, are both monsters of ingratitude, and disobedient to God, and must expect that the curse of God will follow them in this life, and that he will make them the objects of his displeasure in the next: for “curst be he who setteth light by his father, and despiseth to obey his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.” *Deut.* xxvii. 16.

2. It is the duty of children to fear their parents, not with a slavish, but with a reverential and filial, fear; for they have a natural power and authority over them, and God will have them acknowledge and revere that authority. They must fear to disobey them, they must fear to displease them; for those children who displease their parents needlessly, displease God voluntarily, and will fall under his wrath; for he has expressly commanded, Ye shall fear every one his mother and his father. I am the Lord your God. Here God commands every child, be he of what age he may, that he shall fear his parents, both mother and father. The mother is mentioned first, perhaps, because children, especially who have got from under their mothers' care, are more likely to disregard them than their fathers—are not so much afraid to disobey and displease them as they are to disobey and displease their fathers. But the Great God will have children fear and reverence both. Those children, therefore, who are not afraid to disobey, displease and grieve their parents, disobey, displease and highly offend God. Therefore children, when grown up, who have got beyond the immediate care of their parents, and are in no danger of suffering any punishment from them for their disobedience, must still fear and reverence them, and be  
afraid

afraid of offending them; for it is a sin against God, which he in the common course of providence generally punishes in this life. God has promised temporal good, outward prosperity, to them who honour their father and mother; saying, Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.—Therefore—

4. Children must honour and respect, as well as fear and reverence, their parents. The command we just mentioned is, as the Apostle observes, accompanied and enforced by a promise. The same God who said, Thou shalt fear thy mother and thy father, has said, Honour thy father and thy mother; which if they did from filial respect, they should, as the consequence of such respect, have a long and prosperous life, as far at least as it might serve for God's glory and their highest good. This command is not only found among those ten moral precepts published from Mount Sinai with awful pomp and solemnity, but it is what our Lord Jesus Christ repeated with peculiar emphasis. Our Lord said, God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and thy mother; and he who curseth father or mother, let him die the death. And the Apostle after him enjoins, Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise. Children are bound to honour and respect their parents, by the most solemn ties; and they should do it both by words and in their whole deportment. Children should speak respectfully to and of their parents. When they speak to them, it should be with some honorary additions, as *Sir*, and *Madam*. When they speak of them to others, it should be with the appropriate *My—My Father*, and *My Mother*—not *Father*, and *Mother*, as they would of any other aged people, to whom they were not related, or to whom they were under no special obligations, or as if they were ashamed of the relation. Isaac, when he spake to his father it was with the great-

est respect and affection: *My Father*, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering? Jacob, when he went to his aged father for the blessing, in disguise, said, *My Father*; and Solomon, when he was exalted to royalty, did not lose the respect of the child, the son, in the authority of a king; for when his mother approached the throne to make her request, he arose and bowed himself unto her; and when he had seated her on his right hand, he then said, *My Mother*, say on. This was written, no doubt, for the example of all children, be their circumstances what they may. This wise king did not view himself as released from his duty as a child, a son, either by his age or royalty. Joseph, too, though advanced to the first office next to the king of Egypt, inquired of his brethren, with great respect and affection, *Is my Father yet alive?* and when he saw him for the first time after his long exile, he rose up, and bowed himself; and when he presented his two sons to his father for a blessing, he again bowed himself before him, with his face to the earth. This teaches children always to speak to and of their parents in the honourable and respectful style, *My Father*, or *My Mother*; beware not in any contemptuous manner, as superannuated folks—the *old man*, or the *old woman*: and there are dreadful woes denounced against those who do, or who despise or disrespect their parents: “Curfed be he who setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.” It is a sin so directly contrary to the laws of God, and the light of nature, that if such should fall under the curse of Heaven, the justness of the dispensation would be so obvious as to meet the approbation of all considerate people. Again—“The eye which mocketh his father, or despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” They shall live under the curse of Heaven, and die some shameful and untimely death, be denied a decent and

and christian burial, and their bodies lie exposed to become a prey to birds or beasts of the forest, or the fishes of the sea. And if children should carry their contempt or their disrespect of their parents so far as to curse them or strike them, the great God views them as worthy of death; therefore it is written, He who smiteth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; and he who also curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. And though such wicked children may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgments. Children should not despise their parents because they are old, infirm, crooked or childish, nor think that because of their infirmities they are not obliged to pay them honour and respect, or that they may treat them with neglect or unkindness: this is a great sin, and the basest ingratitude, and when shewn to tender and aged parents, is one of the most heinous crimes, and is punished with death by some heathen nations in the present day. This ingratitude is the more heinous, because parents very often hasten upon themselves those infirmities of age by the care, pains and labour which they have sustained in bearing, nursing, educating and watching over their children in their youthful days; and for them to despise, disregard or dishonour them because of the infirmities which they have brought upon them, is the very height of impiety and baseness, and what does not commonly (if ever) go unpunished in this life: whereas, on the contrary, honour, respect and kindness, shewn by children to their aged and infirm parents, is commonly, if not always, crowned with long life and prosperity, so far at least as may subserve the divine glory and their happiness.

Indeed, parents may, through infirmity and aged childhood, require that which is quite unreasonable and absurd; but even then children should kindly endeavour to persuade them out of their wrong notions, rather than  
violently

violently oppose them, or despise or laugh at them for it, as the effect of superannuation. And, as children are more apt to despise their mothers than their fathers for their old age and infirmities, so God has particularly commanded, Despise not thou thy mother when she is old. And this is the more ungrateful and abusive, as she has had the pain of bearing, and the care of nursing and bringing up, the children, the first care of whom fell with double weight upon her. Respect and kindness is a debt of nature which should be paid in old age, especially to a mother; and to withhold it betrays both folly and ingratitude; and therefore it is said, A foolish man despiseth his mother. There is none but the wicked and the base who will do it. Children should be so careful of their parents' honour, as kindly to cover their infirmities, and even their faults, when they are old, if they can do it without sin to themselves, or injury to others; making great allowances for their aged childhood; remembering that they are *their* parents.

5. Children must be honest and faithful. Integrity is a virtue, and a duty we owe to all men; but children should practise it towards their parents with great fidelity. They should be faithful in their service, true to their interest, and provident of their time. Some children are apt to think that their time is their own; that they may be idle, or spend their time, in their parents' absence, in gaming, drinking, or useless and dangerous amusements; or that they may take, use or give away any part of their parents' property, without their knowledge or leave, and yet do no wrong; or they may, by foolish bargains, or some expensive vice, bring their parents, especially their fathers, into debt. But children must know that they may steal from their parents, as well as from others; and that taking any thing which is the property of our parents, without their leave, is as really stealing as it would be if we had taken any part of the property of a neighbour

bour or a stranger without his knowledge and leave. This is a very great sin, and highly reprobated in Scripture. He who robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression, the same is the companion of the destroyer : and he who wasteth his father, and chafeth away his mother, is a son who causeth shame, and bringeth reproach. Children, then, must be very careful that they do not defraud and injure their parents, either by wasting away their time, which is their parents' property, or by taking away and misusing any part of their property without their leave, or by plunging them into debt, or putting them to needless expence ; all which are species of robbery. Such are companions of the destroyer, and, if indulged, will most probably soon be joined with those who live on rapine and murder. Their sin is very heinous, and is commonly attended with the most melancholy and fatal consequences : they bring down the gray hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave, and themselves to ruin.

As children should be honest and faithful, so they should be obedient to all their parents' lawful commands. I say *lawful* commands—for though our text says, Children, obey your parents in *all things*, yet it must be understood with limitations—in all things *lawful* : for it is possible that parents may command their children to that which is wrong and sinful, though it is presumed in our text that they will not. And though it can hardly be supposed, yet it is a fact that some have done it. Rebecca commanded Jacob to speak falsely, and to deceive his aged father ; and others may command their children to work on the Sabbath, to steal something which they may want, and to lie to cover the theft, or to swear profanely or falsely. And so in other cases, where it is plain from the light of nature and Scripture that it is contrary to the mind and will of God, in such cases it is plain that children are not to obey their parents ; for we must obey

God rather than man. Children are not to displease God, and ruin their own souls, to gratify their parents' humours, passions, or vicious inclinations. When children are required to obey their parents, it is that obedience which is well pleasing to the Lord : therefore it is not only said, Children, obey your parents, for it is right, i. e. in all things which are right and lawful ; but it is said, Children, obey your parents, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord : and he cannot be well pleased with an obedience to commands which are unlawful in themselves, and highly displeasing to him ; and indeed such a compliance is not an obedience to parents, for they have no right or authority to command their children to do things displeasing to God : and obedience is obeying lawful authority.

6. If children would do their duty to their parents, they must be willing to administer to the maintenance, support and comfort of them, especially when they are old, poor, and not able to help themselves. As they have watched over them, nourished and brought them up from the womb, carried them through their childhood, and guided their youthful steps with parental care, without any other bonds but those of nature and of God to oblige them, so children should support, comfort and cherish their parents when they are become children by age and infirmity ; for they are under the same bonds of nature and of God to maintain and comfort them ; nay, more, for there are the bonds of gratitude and natural justice lying upon them, strengthened by natural filial affection ; for all parents, who have brought up their children well, have the claim of justice and gratitude upon them, obliging them, according to their ability, to afford them a comfortable maintenance. Those who have been, under God, the instruments of our existence, and afforded us all the comforts and advantages in their power, must certainly have a just claim upon us, both from gratitude  
and



and common equity, for all the comfort and support we can possibly afford them.

Kindness to old, decrepid parents was always thought an eminent branch of filial piety. It is so plain a dictate of nature, that the heathens have ever celebrated it as an act of filial piety. Eneas makes a distinguished figure, both in ancient poetry and history; but chiefly for the care he took of, and the kindness he shewed to, his aged and helpless father: for, in the burning of *Troy* by the *Grecians*, he took care to save his aged father. When obliged to flee in the night, he took him on his back, and, under the cover of darkness, made his escape, through raging flames, armed enemies, and ten thousand deaths; but no danger or difficulty was sufficient to prevail on him to forsake or neglect his aged and helpless parent. He was therefore ever after celebrated as the **PIOUS ENEAS**. Joseph, who was exalted to great power and influence in Egypt, did not think the circumstances of his needy father below his notice; but kindly sent for him, and tenderly nourished him through the famine: and before he could remove him within his own jurisdiction, he sent him a present of the good things of the land of Egypt; what was for his delight and comfort, as well as what was necessary for his support. He was willing his aged father should share with him the best he had; therefore he sent him not only corn for bread, but the good things of the land for his comfort and delight. He did not say, as it is to be feared some have done, The old man has got beyond his usefulness; any thing will do for him, no matter what, if it does but keep soul and body together. No; he sent ten asses loaded with the rarities and delicacies of Egypt, and ten more loaded with corn and the necessaries of life, as a present to his aged father. But the most worthy of all examples is that of our Blessed Saviour. When surrounded with the ignominy of the cross, and pierced with the pains of death;

death; when insulted by a lawless mob, and sinking under the agonies of dissolving nature; he piously recommended his aged mother to the filial care of his beloved John. The sacred historian observes, no doubt for our imitation, that, while Jesus hung on the cross, he saw his mother standing near it, and his favourite disciple John not far off; and he said to him, Behold thy mother. He well understood the language of filial piety, and from that hour he took her home to his own house, and no doubt took the best care he could of her through the remainder of her life. Our Saviour condemned negligence to parents, and severely rebuked those who countenanced it; for, though it was a tradition of the fathers, and allowed by the lawyers and rulers of that age, yet it was highly disapproved of by our Saviour. The tradition was, that if a child brought any part of his estate to the sacred treasury, and said it was *corban*, i. e. a part of his support, and what he devoted to a public and pious use, he was by that freed from any obligation afterwards to support or maintain his parents, should they come to want. But the Blessed Jesus said, that by this tradition they made the commandment of God of no effect.

The Apostle, speaking of those who were objects of public charity—of widowed mothers in particular—said, If they have children, let them relieve them, that they be not burdensome to the church. Thus it is most obvious, both from Scripture, reason and the law of gratitude, that it is the duty of children, be they old or young, to shew kindness unto their parents, and be ready to administer all that assistance, comfort and support to them which they can, and which is comprehended in that obedience required in our text.

7. The last branch of filial duty which I shall mention is, cheerful submission to parents; and this in three particulars:

### 1. Children

1. Children must submit to all the lawful commands of their parents: for though it is required in our text, Children, obey your parents *in all things*, it is evident that this obedience must not be a blind, unlimited obedience, as I observed before, but limited to all things lawful, or well pleasing to God. In those only children are to yield a cheerful and ready obedience. But when parents do, as it is possible they may, command their children to do some things which are wrong in themselves, and contrary to the mind and the revealed will of God, either through ignorance, prejudice, passion or wickedness, yet even then children should not obstinately resist, or contemptuously oppose, their parents, but humbly persuade them to desist from such unlawful or unreasonable requirements; and they may modestly shew their parents wherein they are wrong, and let them know that the reason why they do not readily and cheerfully obey them is, because they fear God, and dare not displease him, being bound to obey God, their heavenly father, rather than their earthly parents, whose authority is subordinate to his.

2. Children should patiently submit to the reasonable correction of their parents.

What I have to say under this head chiefly respects young children, who must sometimes come under the discipline of the rod, before reason and moral sense is become sufficiently powerful to curb the exuberance of youthful passions. Yet the correction of the rod should be with parents their strange work; not frequent, nor ever used when the remonstrance of reason, parental authority, or the power of persuasion, will answer, or have the desired effect: but when these fail, then the rod must administer instruction, as it will to a wise son. The Wise King says (speaking of the discipline of the rod) Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight

delight to thy soul. Children must bear patiently deserved correction, and grow more teachable, dutiful and obedient thereby; so that their parents may have rest and satisfaction in the happy fruit of wisely and seasonably administered chastisements. They should love and reverence their parents the more for needful and wholesome discipline; for their parents cannot give a better proof of their love and tender concern for the best good and the highest interest of their children. He who spares the rod, spoils the child; nay, he implicitly hates him, or acts as if he hated him. Therefore if children should hate their parents for chastising them when they deserve and need it, and do it for their good, and not to gratify their own passions, they are in danger of being utterly and suddenly destroyed: for he who hateth reproof shall die; and he who being often reprov'd hardeneth himself, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

3. Children should be attentive to the counsels of their parents, as well as teachable under their instructions and discipline. Children are too apt to despise their parents' advice and counsels, vainly imagining that they know better than their parents, especially in those things which cross their inclinations, childish fancy, or youthful humour. Parents indeed may be imprudent, or ignorant, or wilful and childish, and their grown up children may know more, apprehend things clearer, than their parents; but this is not so often the case as they may think it is; and where this is the case, they must not contemptuously slight the counsel of their parents, nor despise their advice, but humbly and kindly endeavour to convince them, where they apprehend that their parents are in the wrong—not violently oppose, nor openly to their face disregard, their counsel and advice, if their counsel and advice should not be quite so wise and prudent as might be expected from a parent. It argues a very bad disposition in a child, be he ever so old, wise and discerning, when he will not  
patiently

patiently hear, but despise and contemn, the counsels and instructions of his parents. The Spirit of God, by Solomon, calls upon children to hearken to the counsels and instructions of both father and mother: My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: and a wise son (says the same inspired writer) will hear the instructions of a father. So that those children who will not hear attentively, are disobedient to God, and, in the judgment of that wisdom which cannot err, are fools, and void of understanding.

Children who are grown up to years of discretion and understanding, are as apt to slight the counsel and advice of their parents in the article of marriage as in any one thing, and are as often wrong in that as in any one thing. Children are very apt to say, In choosing our own companions for life, we are free, and can be under no controul; and madly run on, with little judgment, and less regard to their parents' advice and counsel, till they have broke their hearts, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows, and, too late, see their own sin and folly. But, children! I have the heart of a parent, and must speak freely and feelingly to you. You are much mistaken if you think we have no right to interpose with our advice, counsel and direction, in the serious and delicate case of your marriage. Yes, my young friends—our honour, our comfort and our interest are all concerned in it, and are intimately connected with it. And we ought to be consulted in so weighty and interesting an affair. Nay, you ought to be pleased and gratified too, when that can be done consistently with your happiness, and it is to be hoped that our advice and counsel will never, on so tender a subject, interfere with your natural rights, honour or happiness. But if it should so happen, children should never violently oppose, but by reason, persuasion and filial condescension endeavour to gain over their parents, that their choice may coincide  
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with their own. And children had better deny themselves the gratification of their own fancy, than obstinately disobey a parent in so interesting a point.

If, however, parents are evidently unreasonable, and governed by unworthy motives, in their advice, without any regard to personal worth, as it is very possible they may be, then children are not bound to obey them; for their authority does not extend so far as to require unreasonable or unworthy things. Children are not obliged to marry those whom they cannot love with complacency and esteem because they want personal worthiness or true virtue. But no child should obstinately say, I *will* marry this or that person, whether my parents will give leave or not; for, unless they can give a better reason for such a rash resolution than Sampson could, (because she pleaseth me well) they will have reason to repent it, when it is too late, as he had.

When children are governed by fancy, without a foundation in reason and virtue, they do but make work for fruitless repentance; for that which pleases without being amiable, will soon become displeasing, and a source of sorrow, as did Sampson's Tinnitish wife.

Parents have a right, and it is their duty, to forbid their children marrying irreligious, worthless persons. God, the Everlasting Father of the universe, forbade his children marrying with idolatrous heathens, and the Apostle, under his direction, forbids believers marrying with infidels. Speaking to believers, he says, Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what communion hath Christ with Belial? And what are wicked and profane persons better than baptized heathens? Nay, they are worse—practical atheists; for the wicked faith in his heart, There is no God. Before there is no fear of God before their eyes. Therefore parents have not only a right to interpose in their children's marriage by  
their

their advice and counsel, but they have a divine right, from the Universal Parent of men, to forbid their children's marrying with vain, wicked and unsuitable persons; and if any children are hardy enough to marry against their parents' will, and contrary to their wise instructions, prudent advice, and parental counsel, they disobey God, and must expect to go without his blessing, and must answer for this conduct at his awful tribunal in the last day.

I close this head in the words of a late pious author on this subject: \* "In choosing a yoke-fellow (saith he) be sure keep within the bounds of christian profession: marry no one who is not professedly united to Christ, and in the judgment of charity sincerely religious. Next to religion, have a particular regard to suitableness in age, quality, education and natural temper. Regard these things, and please God and yourselves, and you shall not displease me, in your choice."

Upon the whole, you, my dear children, see what it is to obey your parents in all things which are right, and well pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It implies, that you love, honour and respect them, and submit to them in all things which are lawful; that you comfort, assist and support them when they stand in need of your help; that you consult them upon the important article of marriage, and endeavour to please them, as their comfort, honour and interest are nearly concerned in your marriage; as you will find if ever you become parents, and live to see your children married. Now these things may look like small matters, not worth your attention, or such a serious and public notice; but they are what the great God has thought fit to enjoin upon us, and commanded us to inculcate upon you our children, and has promised his blessing to those who conform to these instructions,

\* Mr. Philip Henry's Advice to his Children.

structions, and practise this filial piety. He has threatened his curse to those children who do not obey their parents in all things which are right and well pleasing to him. And the blessings and the curses of the Almighty are no small things; they are not to be trifled with; for in the divine blessing is contained all that you can need or enjoy, and in the curse of God are all the evils you can fear or suffer.

But that your obedience to your parents may be pleasing and acceptable to God, it must spring from a principle of religion—from supreme love to God your Heavenly Father, and your dear Redeemer; who has said, Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is right, and well pleasing to the Lord. He who for our sakes became a child, and set the amiable example of filial love and obedience, he was subject to his parents in his childhood and youth, and took the most effectual care that his widowed and aged mother should not want any thing for her comfort and support. And to act after his amiable and excellent example is to act the most honourable and safe part you possibly can, and the only way in which you can be sure of the blessing of Heaven, and the favour and esteem of all the wise and good among men. In this way you will not fail of the outward blessings of this life, so far as will best subserve your best interest and true happiness; for this is acting in obedience to that command which is with promise of outward prosperity, as far as it will promote the divine glory and your good.

Those obedient children who have conscientiously done their duty to God and their parents, are blessed in this life, and completely happy in the next; but those who are disobedient to God and their parents meet with the frowns of Heaven, and the curse of God often blasts all they attempt, and all they possess in this life; and at death they must go away accursed into everlasting punishment—punishment prepared for the devil and his angels. But,  
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my young friends, if you are obedient to your parents in all things which are lawful, because it is right and well pleasing to the Lord Jesus, herein acting from supreme love to God and the dear Redeemer, you shall inherit all things; you shall live esteemed and blessed in this world, and you shall die happily, and be greatly lamented by your surviving friends here, and be owned and honoured by your Heavenly Father as his children, and be received hereafter into the everlasting arms of his mercy, crowned with life immortal, and invested with the inheritance of the saints in light:—for if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, his Blessed and Eternal Son, to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

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## Discourse XI.

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A Century Discourse, delivered on the 1st of January, 1800; in which are collected some of the more distinguishing Historical Facts, and Providential Events, which took place in each of the last hundred Years.

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PSALM lxxvii. 10, 11, 12, 13.

*I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God!*

**T**HIS pious resolution of the Psalmist should be adopted by us, on this memorable era, the birth-day of the new year 1800. Such a day we never saw, nor ever shall see another.

It has ever been the custom of God's people, in all past ages, to perpetuate the remembrance of some illustrious event which has taken place among them; either by erecting some monument, or fixing some *data*, to excite their humility and thankfulness, or for the strengthening of their faith, or the establishing of their hope, in all future times of trial.

This seemed to be the view which the Psalmist had when he formed, in a dark day, the resolution of our  
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text. To perpetuate the memory of that decisive battle fought between Amalek and the defenceless tribes of Israel at Rephidim, when Amalek was utterly defeated, Moses built an altar at or near the place where the victory was gained, and put this inscription upon it, *JEHOVAH-nissi*—the Lord is my banner. So Joshua was directed, when the tribes of Israel passed through Jordan on dry ground, to take twelve stones from the bed of the river, the waters being cut off before the ark of the Lord, and to erect them into a monument on the shore, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*. Samuel, in remembrance of a very signal victory which he had miraculously obtained over the Philistines, set up a stone, and wrote upon it, *Ebenezer*—hitherto the Lord hath helped us. We, having obtained help from God, and begun a more distinguishing date in the annals of time than any of us ever saw; (the first day of the 1800th year) may therefore set up our *Ebenezer*, and say, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

What I purpose in the following discourse is, to call to mind the more remarkable events which have marked and distinguished the last century, and displayed the years of the right hand of the Almighty. And surely we ought to remember the wonderful works of the Lord, to meditate on all his doings, and talk of all his ways: for thy way O God is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God!

1700—Began with a vacancy in the ministry in the only church in this town. [Gloucester.] The Rev. I. Emerson, their first ordained pastor, after more than forty years spent in the ministry among them, died in this year. There was a vacancy in the government of Massachusetts, occasioned by the removal of Lord Ballamont to New-York, who left the government in the hands of Mr. Stoughton, his Lieutenant. In this year a college was founded at New-Haven in Connecticut; and the first Quaker meeting-house was built at Newport, in Rhode-Island.

1701—This year Lord Ballamont died at Newyork. Mr. Joseph Dudley was appointed governor of Massachusetts and Newhampshire.

1702—Louis XIV proclaimed the Pretender king of England, which rendered a war between Great Britain and France inevitable. The governor of Canada, assuming the title of Father and Protector of the Indians, excited them to do what they could to prevent the New-England settlements. The Pequods and the Pemaquids led the way, and became very troublesome to the Massachusetts and Newhampshire.

1703—Meeting with some check, the Indians remained tolerably quiet this year, till late in the fall; but war being proclaimed between Great Britain and France, they were encouraged and supplied with arms and ammunition by the governor of Canada, and became, late in the year, very bold. A party of about three hundred French and Indians marched from Canada, destined against the frontiers of Massachusetts and Newhampshire. A detachment steered eastward, and fell upon the defenceless inhabitants of Kennebeck; but the main body bent their course more westward, and invested Deerfield, (the most considerable frontier town in the northwest part of Massachusetts) and surpris'd the garrison in the night of the 28th of February, 1704. They burnt the town, killed between forty and fifty inhabitants, and carried away above 100 prisoners.

1704—Governor Dudley united with the General Court in measures more effectually to secure the frontiers; thought best not to act any longer on the defensive only, raised several companies of volunteers, set a bounty on prisoners and Indian scalps. Col. Church, and captains Tyng and March, were the principal officers; and their orders were, to sweep the coast from the head of Connecticut river to St. John's; and they executed the plan  
with.

with good success. They returned, in the close of the year, with little loss, some prisoners, and many scalps.

The frontiers remained quiet till the fall, when 400 French and Indians marched from Canada, and fell upon Lancaster, Groton, Haverhill, Amesbury, and some other towns and settlements east of them, where they burnt, destroyed and took as many captives as they could, though not without considerable loss to themselves.

1705——There was some abatement of the war; and queen Ann signified to governor Dudley, that she was laying a plan of an expedition against Canada, to be put in execution the next year. The Governor and Council thought it a good opportunity to endeavour the exchange or redemption of prisoners.

1706——Five men were chosen, and sent as a flag to Canada, for that purpose; and they obtained all the captives, except a few children, who were adopted into Indian families, and removed at a distance; of these a daughter of the Rev. Mr. Williams, taken at Deerfield, was one, who was never recovered, but grew up among them, adopted their customs, manners and dress, and married a sachem of the Onondago tribe.

1707——Small parties frequently appeared, and kept the whole frontiers in one perpetual alarm: but Chelmsford, Sudbury, Groton, Exeter, Dover, and some exposed settlements, suffered the most. In all these places they burnt houses, killed many of the inhabitants, and carried away a number into a dismal captivity: though not without suffering nearly equal loss themselves, which made them weary of the war. The governor of Canada proposed to governor Dudley a treaty of neutrality; but governor Dudley, not falling in with the proposal, waved an answer, expecting an army and a fleet from England, in the spring, to invade Canada. Preparations were accordingly made, both in England and in the colonies, especially

especially in Massachusetts. But the troops which were raised in England were wanted elsewhere, and so the expedition was laid aside.

1708—Opened with a very threatening aspect. There was a combination of Mohawks, Penobscots, Norridgewoks and Canadians, whose orders were, to burn, to kill, and lay waste all the frontiers, from Connecticut river in the west, to St. John's in the east. This was very alarming. The court was called together; public prayers and fastings were appointed; volunteer companies were raised, but did not march until they heard that the right hand of the Most High was doing wonders: the Mohawks returned back before they reached the place of rendezvous; for a gun went off accidentally, and killed or wounded one of their number, which they thought was a bad omen. The Penobscots and the Norridgewoks never came: the Canadians were divided among themselves; only a small part came forward, and fell upon Haverhill, and burnt that part of the town next to the river, killed a few, took a small number captive, but left a greater number of their own party.

1709—Governor Dudley received letters which gave him to understand that the Queen was determined, at all adventures, to invade Canada in the spring. The quota for each colony was assigned and raised. A large fleet was to go up the river St. Lawrence, and besiege Quebec; an army, made up chiefly of provincials, was to penetrate by the way of the lakes, and invade Montreal at the same time. The land army marched under command of gen. Nicholson, and arrived safely at Wood-creek, near the head of South Bay, and threw up some temporary works, and waited to hear from the fleet and army in the river; but the fleet and army never came, being employed another way. Gen. Nicholson built a small fort at the head of South Bay, and, as the troops grew sickly, he returned, without doing any thing more, November 4,

1710—Gen. Nicholson, with the assistance of a small naval force, took Port-Royal, with its dependencies, and sailed for England to solicit another fleet and army for Canada, and obtained his object; and returned early in the spring.

1711—He made, with all possible dispatch, the necessary preparations. On the 24th of June, the fleet with the transports arrived, and on the 30th of July sailed for the river. On the 2d of August gen. Nicholson set out for Albany, to take the command of the land army, and to pursue his former route. The fleet, commanded by admiral Walker, got, with all the transports, &c. safe into the river; but for want of good pilots, or by storms, winds, fogs, or some other unknown cause, the fleet was so broken, scattered, wrecked and lost, that few ever returned, and those which did were in a very shattered condition; and the expedition to the westward failed of course.

1712—Was very remarkable for increasing trouble with the Indians. A very great fire happened in Boston, which consumed the central part of the town; and the treaty of Utrecht took place, when peace was restored between England, France and Spain, in which treaty of peace the colonies were included.

1713—Peace between the colonies and the Indians was made and ratified by their chiefs on the 15th of July at Portsmouth. In this year queen Ann died, and George I was crowned.

1714—King George I was proclaimed in Boston with great pomp, solemnity and joy. Governor Dudley was removed, and col. Burgess appointed in his room. [From *Philip's War*, which began in 1675, to 1714, Massachusetts and Newhampshire alone lost 6000 young men and male children, who were killed, and taken without being recovered.]

1715——Disputes ran high in the General Court, which terminated in the resignation of Governor Burges; and col. Samuel Shute was appointed to succeed him.

1716——Ralle, a French Jesuit, missionary to the eastern tribes, became stationary at Norridgewok, and had the address and influence to persuade the Indians to break the peace with the Massachusetts, which had been made and ratified two years before at Portsmouth. Governor Shute, with some members of the court, went to Arowic, where they assembled the chiefs of those eastern tribes, and after some time persuaded them to renew and ratify the peace before made at Portsmouth: but Ralle soon prevailed with the young warriors to repeat their wonted depredations, and kept the frontiers in one perpetual alarm.

1717——The Governor and Council were divided as to the mode of defence. Some were for proclaiming war against those tribes only; others were for negotiating a peace: but nothing was done to effect.

1718——The Governor and Council offered them a bible, translated into their own language, and a protestant minister to teach them religion; both of which they rejected, saying, they had a minister, sent by the Great Spirit, who would be angry if they did not mind what he said.

1719——Warm debates and new subjects of contention arose between the Governor and the Court, who had imbibed a strong suspicion that he was under the influence of men of arbitrary principles, and were apprehensive that their privileges were in danger.

1720——Being the famous anniversary of our forefathers' landing on the rock at Plymouth, the year of the right hand of the Most High was remembered by  
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their descendants, and united and inspired them to go on; for said they, Who is so great a god as our God?

1721—The small pox broke out and prevailed in Boston, and of 5889 who took it the natural way, 844 died. This heavy judgment delayed the operation of any effectual measures to prevent the savages' depredations.

1722—The Governor, Council and General Court were united, & proclaimed war against those hostile tribes, and set a bounty on scalps and prisoners, especially on Ralle's scalp; but chose rather that he should be taken prisoner.

1723—Several scalping parties were commissioned, and went with orders to take Ralle, if possible. One party surpris'd his dwelling, and took his box of papers, but he narrowly escaped. By those papers it appeared, by his correspondence with the governor of Canada, that he was the fomentor of all the trouble we had had with those Indians. His death or capture became now a more interesting object.

1724—Two companies, of 100 men each, were raised, and put under the command of captains Harmor and Moulton. These marched on the 6th of August with a determination to take Ralle, if possible, dead or alive; as he was now viewed as the sole agent, cause and fomentor of the war. In September following, they surpris'd the principal town of Norridgewok, where they found Ralle. They offer'd him quarter, for they meant to take him alive; but while they were endeavouring to secure him, he fired his piece, and wounded a friendly Indian of capt. Harmor's company. Another friendly Mohawk, of the same company, seeing that, shot him through the head, and he fell dead on the spot. After this, the heads of the tribes sued for peace, which was ratified before the year clos'd.

1725—Some of St. Francis's Indians engaged some young warriors of those tribes, and made great depredations on our frontiers, and the General Court increased their premiums on scalps to £100 each. This encouraged capt. Lovel to raise a company of 100 men, who went out upon a scalping party; but he was more unfortunate in this enterprize than he had been heretofore; for being decoyed by a single Indian, who shewed himself on a point of land skirting Penopetotick pond, he was ambushed by a superior number. Capt. Lovel and his men fought under great disadvantage, yet with such bravery, that the enemy suffered equal loss, and left him master of the field. The captain was mortally wounded, and soon died, with most of his officers and men. This was the last considerable action before a general peace was settled at Casco-bay.

1726—From this time a long and happy peace ensued, compared to what had been before. Governor Shute is recalled, and Mr. Dummer, his lieutenant, succeeds him in the administration.

1727—Was remarkable for a very hard and extensive earthquake. It took place on the 29th of October, about 40 minutes past ten, at night. It was preceded by a very great and terrible noise, which increased till the shake began, which lasted about 3 minutes. It threw in cellar walls, and shook off the tops of some chimnies; but no houses were thrown down. It was felt through the colonies, but hardest at Newyork and in the Massachusetts. Gentler shocks were felt for several months after, which was very alarming to the people. Many became very thoughtful and serious; religious impressions were made upon the minds of many; with some, those impressions were lasting, and settled into a state of practical piety and religion; with others, they wore off as the symptoms of the earthquake abated.

1728—Upon the accession of George II to the throne, Mr. William Burnet, son of the celebrated bishop, was appointed governor of Massachusetts and Newhampshire, and received with great pomp and parade at Boston, on the 13th of July. Upon publishing his orders, the probability of his having a quiet seat in the chair of government was very small; but his death, which took place on the 17th of September, the next year, put an end to those altercations which began with his administration, and which had a threatening aspect.

1729—Governor Burnet's death was thought to be occasioned, in part at least, by the ill effects which his controversy with the court had upon his nerves.

1730—Mr. Belcher was appointed to succeed governor Burnet, and he renewed and kept up the debates about a governor's power and salary, through his whole administration.

1731—He gave up the idea of getting his salary fixed, and, being possessed of popular talents, he for a while gained the esteem and confidence of the government; yet there was a party formed against him, who transmitted loud complaints of his public conduct to England.

1732—A plan was laid to make Newhampshire an entirely separate government, and to have a distinct governor, who should reside in the province, and have no connexion with Massachusetts.

1733—But, previous to this separation, it was necessary to run the boundary lines. This occasioned warm disputes and contentions, and was finally settled by commissioners appointed by the crown of England, and settled more in favour of Newhampshire than was expected, giving them 14 miles in breadth and 50 in length more than they ever claimed.

1734—Newhampshire was made a separate government, and the boundary lines run and ascertained; but

this controversy, and the adjustment of the disputes, was not completed until the year 1740.

1741—Governor Belcher was removed, and Mr. William Shirley was appointed in his room, governor only of Massachusetts, and Benning Wentworth governor of Newhampshire.

About this time a very remarkable religious commotion began to make its appearance, and was greatly promoted by the arrival of Mr. George Whitfield, and other popular preachers and pulpit orators. This was undoubtedly a wonderful work of God in the main, though not without being attended in many instances with the wildfire of enthusiasm and false zeal. With many it degenerated into error and infidelity.

The most remarkable event which distinguished Mr. Shirley's administration was, his planning and successfully executing an expedition against Louisbourg, which engrossed his attention for several years.

1744—He laid his plan before the General Court, after having sworn them all to secrecy; and after some debate the Court adopted his plan by a very small majority, with this proviso, that the other colonies should join their forces, and assist them. Newhampshire, Connecticut & Rhodeisland only promised military aid; Newyork and Pennsylvania engaged to provide and send some provisions and artillery.

1745—Preparations were early made, with great dispatch and secrecy. The fall and winter proved uncommonly favourable. War being proclaimed between Great Britain and France, gave legality to such an enterprize. Massachusetts voted to raise 3250, Connecticut 516, Newhampshire 304, and Rhodeisland 300. This army was put under Mr. Pepperell, of Kittery, a gentleman of good character, undoubted courage, and great prudence; and who was very acceptable to the officers, and to the army

in general. Admiral Warren was hoped for with a small naval force ; but there was no certainty that he would come, and but little reason to expect him. The army sailed from Boston on the 24th of March, and landed on the 30th of April in Chapeauroug bay, where, to their great joy, they found Admiral Warren with a larger naval force than had been expected. All united and laid close siege to the city, being favoured with extraordinary fine weather, and other kind interpositions of Providence. The city capitulated, and was surrendered on the 17th of May. This was a heavy and unexpected stroke to France, and they meant to revenge it the next year.

1746——They fitted out a fleet and army on a very cruel, bloody and extensive plan. The fleet consisted of near half the naval force of France. There were 14 ships of first rate, and 20 smaller ships of war, with transports carrying 8000 troops, bomb-ships, fire-ships, tenders, &c. without number. Their orders were, to begin at Chebucto, (now Halifax) and from thence to lay waste by fire and sword all the sea-coast to Georgia: D'Anville, a nobleman of France, was appointed to the command. The fleet was ready to sail by the first of May. But by contrary winds, calms, storms, and other unforeseen disasters, they were detained, dispersed and broken, so that none of them arrived at Chebucto until the 24th of August, where they found Ramsay, a French officer from Canada, with 1700 men, to receive and co-operate with them. When it was known what a formidable fleet had sailed, with bloody orders, that there was an army of 1700 French and Indians on the spot to receive and co-operate with them, and that some of the fleet had actually arrived, the whole country was alarmed. They flew to arms, and flocked to the sea coasts. Public prayers and fastings were appointed, and attended with great devotion, every one calling upon his God. It was the year of the right hand of the Most High. Thy way, O God, was in  
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the sanctuary : who is so great a god as our God, whom the winds and the seas obey ! The storms, the winds, the calms, mutiny, and sickness, dispersed and destroyed the whole. The admiral did not arrive until the 12th of September, and then saw the ruin of his fleet, to his utter desperation, and was either poisoned, or died of an apoplexy, the next day. The rear-admiral fell sick, became delirious, and fell upon his own sword, and was found dead in his cabin the day following. The general, with the 8000 troops, and the transports which carried them, has never been heard of since ; and very few of the whole armada ever returned. This was the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes. We were allowed to do nothing but pray, fast, and stand still to see the salvation of the Lord.

1747—Was very remarkable for one of the most violent and dangerous mobs which ever took place in Boston, occasioned by a hot and indiscriminate press. Commodore Knowles, who with a small squadron lay in Nantasket road, lost some of his seamen by desertion, who were concealed, as he supposed, in the town, by the inhabitants. He sent a pris-gang up to town in his barge, with orders to impress all the seamen they could find, and the labourers and artificers on the wharves. As soon as this was known, the town rose in a mass, seized all the officers, with their servants, whom they could find on shore, belonging to the squadron, and made them prisoners ; they grappled the barge, dragged her from her mooring, upon one of the wharves, and through the streets, with as much ease as if she had been a birch canoe, and burnt her on the common, amidst the acclamations of thousands. The commodore threatened to bombard the town ; but, by the prudent and firm interposition of the Governor and the Council, the impressed men were returned, the officers with their servants were set at liberty, and the commodore thought it prudent to sail for Europe the next day.

1748—Mr. Ballan, agent for Massachusetts and New-hampshire, obtained an act of Parliament for payment of the whole expence of the Louisbourg expedition, amounting to £180,000 sterling; which being received, the outstanding bills of credit were redeemed, and silver and gold became the circulating medium of trade.

1749, 1750 & 1751—Were taken up in disputes about the boundary lines between the British colonies and Canada, as they had not been precisely fixed by any former treaty, but only, in general, that the river St. John's on the east, the great lakes on the northwest, and the river Mississippi on the southwest, should be the boundary lines; and that no forts for defence or annoyance should be built on these lines by either nation. But the French were building a chain of forts, and establishing military posts, from St. Lawrence to the Mississippi, which they called trading-houses.

1752—We found them fortified, or fortifying, at all the heads of our most commanding waters. The colonies remonstrated against the measure, but to no effect. This year the old style ceased, and the new and present style commenced.

1753—The southern colonies sent major Washington, with a small armed force, to the trading house on or near the head of the Ohio, which they had improved into a strong and impregnable fort, and given the name of Du Quesne. His orders were, to inquire into the reasons of their fortifying; but he could obtain no answer from the commanding officer, but that such were the orders of his master. This answer was communicated to the British court, with the information that they were fortifying on the lakes, and at the head of all the commanding waters, and that their whole conduct was hostile.

1754—The British court being informed of the answer the French commander of fort Du Quesne made to major Washington, and of their hostile encroachments, it was determined to send an army the next spring to dislodge the French from this fortress, and demolish all the rest.

1755—This army, consisting of two regiments, arrived some time in July, under the command of gen. Braddock, and was joined by some light troops, chiefly from Virginia, under the direction of major Washington, with the rank of colonel. The whole army consisted of 2200. They marched for Du Quesne, and col. Washington acted as aid-de-camp to gen. Braddock. But the event was melancholy: the general, though a brave commander, yet did not enter into the genius of the enemy he had to contend with, nor would he listen to the remonstrances of his aid, col. Washington. The consequence was, that he was ambushed and surpris'd, and killed at the first onset, and a dreadful slaughter ensued; and, had it not been for col. Washington, the whole army would have been destroyed. But he, with great presence of mind, brought off as many as he could, but left the field to the enemy, with all the heavy artillery, and most of the baggage, ammunition and provisions. This spread a thick cloud over the colonies; but the cloud was in some measure dispersed by the success of the British-American troops under generals Moncton and Winslow in the east, by whom Novascotia was subjected, and the perfidy of the neutral French was chastised; and by the success of gen. Johnson in the west, at lake George, who was sent on the same errand to Crown-point that Braddock was sent on to Du Quesne. He was attacked by gen. Deseau, with a superior force, at the head of lake George, where Deseau was defeated, himself wounded and taken prisoner, & his whole army killed, wounded and dispersed, with as little loss of the colony troops as could be expected.



pected. We had to lament the loss of several brave officers—colonels Williams, of Deerfield, and Titcomb, of Newburyport. In the close of this year there was another very great and extensive earthquake.

1756—War being proclaimed between Great-Britain and France, it was determined, by Great-Britain with her colonies, to carry the war into the very bowels of Canada. Yet while things were preparing, and plans maturing, the enemy gained some advantage, made further encroachments upon our boundaries, and committed depredation and spoil on our frontiers, and took fort Oswego, on the hither end of lake Ontario. The colony troops were partly employed in building a fort at the head of lake George, which they called William Henry.

1757—The campaign was opened, and the command devolved on lord Loudon and gen. Webb; but, from some unaccountable obstructions, little was done. Montcalm, a French general, took advantage of the dilatory measures of the British-American armies, marched forward, and with a large body of French and Indians invested fort William, and in six days carried it by capitulation. Though the garrison were, by the articles of capitulation, to march out with all the honours of war, and to be safely escorted to fort Edward, 14 miles, yet the Indians, being promised plunder, fell upon the troops as they marched out, stripped them naked, and murdered all they could who made resistance. Montcalm demolished the fort, and returned to Canada.

1758—The British-American army rendezvoused early at Albany. General Abercrombie, an old Scotch commander, took the charge of the ensuing campaign, though lord Howe, a young British nobleman, was really the soul of the army, and had the principal direction; but he was unfortunately killed by a reconnoitring party before the army arrived before Ticonderoga, the object of the  
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the present expedition ; which threw the whole army into the greatest confusion, and a new arrangement was made ; which gave the enemy several days to prepare to receive us, which they industriously improved in throwing up impregnable lines, and in artfully concealing them. The consequence was, the army was repulsed with great loss, and returned to the head of the lake. This was a very melancholy scene, but was soon shifted. Part of the returned troops took a different rout, up the Mohawk, retook Oswego, passed over an arm of lake Ontario, surpris- ed and took, without loss, Frontenac, where were deposited the provisions and warlike stores for fort Duquesne, which of course fell into the hands of the army, sent against that fortress, under the command of general Forbes.

1759.—The time drew near to favour the American Zion, and the year opened with a smile. The command for this year's campaign fell upon Mr. Amherst, who sailed from England early in the spring, with some recruits, and a naval force under the command of admiral Boscawen, and took Louisbourg in his way ; where the young but brave general Wolfe distinguished himself. He was appointed to a more distinguished command, up the river St. Lawrence, the next year, in order to reduce Quebec, the capital of Canada. General Johnson took a western route by way of the lakes. Soon after, he arrived at Albany, and had settled the plan of operations for the ensuing year. The strong and well-defended fort at Niagara surrendered to general Johnson, and the garrison were made prisoners of war, on the 25th of July. Two days after, on the 27th, general Amherst possessed himself, without loss or delay, of the strong holds of Ticonderoga. The French set up their favourite Virgin on the walls, to whom they had dedicated their fort, and raised a cross in the front, on which was displayed the representation of our Saviour, as large as the life, near the

the top; and they inscribed on it, near the foot, *Hoc signum vincit*. But the Virgin betrayed her trust; their *Ave Marias* did not prevail, and *Hoc signum vincit* proved a lie: they blew up the fort on the 28th, and retired to Crown-point, which they abandoned the next day, and retreated with all their apparatus over lake Champlain. This was the year of the right hand of the Most High. We meditated on his wondrous works, and talked of all his doings, and said, Who is so great a god as our God! This year was crowned with the conquest of Quebec, when both general Montcalm, the commander of the French, and general Wolfe, the British general, were slain. The city surrendered to general Townshend, his successor.

1760—Makes a very distinguished era in the annals of the Anglo-American war; when all Canada, with her dependencies, forts, lakes, and a vast territory, was added to the British crown; and from the 8th of September we were ready to date our future peace, safety and political happiness; a freedom from French and Indian wars; a happiness we had been strangers to for near a century: for, from Philip's War, which began in 1675, to 1760, the New England colonies had but little respite. And, considering the part the colonies had borne through this long, distressing, but finally successful, war, they had a right to expect all which a mother state could confer, or that her colonies could need. But O, the sad degeneracy of human nature, the deep depravity of the heart, and the great uncertainty of all earthly things!

1761—The figure which the American colonies made in the drama of the late war inspired the British Parliament with a spirit of jealousy, even before a declaration of peace was made. The success which attended their exertions, aided by the colonies in the West-Indies, hastened on the conclusion of the war, and gave room for parliamentary debates.

1762—During the administration of Mr. Pitt, in the latter part of the reign of George II, and the beginning of that of George III, a liberal kind of policy had been adopted, which attached the colonies more than ever to the kingdom of Great-Britain; and, had they uniformly pursued an equitable system of commercial regulation, they would have drawn the whole profit of our labour and trade into the hands of the British merchants and manufacturers, and secured our future connexion with, and dependence on, them.

1763—Peace being established and proclaimed between Great-Britain and France, in which the colonies were included, the Parliament of Britain began to concert measures to secure our future subjection and dependence, and passed a resolve in favour of their own omnipotence, and asserted that they had a full right to bind the colonies in all cases.

1764—This was very alarming to the colonies, and plainly discovered to them the determination to levy duties or lay taxes on them as they thought fit. As soon as the General Court could be convened, a resolve unanimously passed, in the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, that the imposition of duties and taxes by the Parliament of Great-Britain upon a people who were not represented in the House of Commons was absolutely irreconcilable with their rights, because no man has a right to take the property of another without his consent; which resolve was adopted by the other colonies.

1765—Notwithstanding, a bill was framed and brought in, which provided for the raising of a revenue from the colonies, by stamped papers, and passed by a great majority, and on the 22d of March received the royal assent, and passed into a law, which was to take place the next November. This was soon known in the colonies; Dr. Franklin, their agent in England, wrote,  
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that *the sun of liberty was set*. This act was called the Stamp-Act. It was an artful mode of taxing the colonies without a representation—an act unconstitutional, oppressive and impolitic. The colonies saw through the whole design, took the alarm, rose in a body, and were determined, almost to a man, that they would not submit to it. As soon as the stamp-masters were appointed, erected their offices, and received the stamped papers, the *posse-comitatus* rose in a body, seized the stamp-masters, and obliged them to resign, tore down the offices, and burnt all the stamped papers they could find.

1766—This act met with such united opposition here, and the colonies had so many powerful friends, both in the House of Lords and Commons, that on the 19th of March it was repealed by a respectable majority. Now we thought that the bitterness of our political death was past; and the repeal raised an uncommon tide of joy in every well-disposed heart. But such was the infatuation of the British Parliament, and the mortification and chagrin of the framers of the act, that they, availing themselves of the national honour, obtained another; imposing heavy duties on trade, under the specious pretence of raising a revenue for the support of civil government.

1767—This act, which was but the dregs of the stamp-act, came to hand. We fasted and prayed to the God of Heaven, we remonstrated and petitioned to the British crown, and asked only for life and liberty, for peace and safety; but to no purpose. They went on, and established a board of commissioners, and a court of admiralty, with unlimited power.

1768—But the colonies were united in their opposition to the operation of the revenue act, and used every method in their power to interrupt the officers in the execution of their business. Three of the commissioners escaped

raped with the hazard of their lives, the other took refuge in the Castle.

1769——The friends of the revenue solicited protection by a regular military force, to be stationed in the town. In compliance with their wishes, his Majesty ordered two regiments, with some armed vessels, immediately to repair thither to support his commissioners in the execution of their duty. Accordingly, as soon as could be expected, the two regiments came, and were peaceably received.

1770——Authentic accounts were received, that the revenue act was so far repealed as to take off all duties, excepting that of three pence per pound on tea. This gave no satisfaction to the colonies: they considered that a small tax was equally dangerous with a large one. On the 5th of March a bloody scene opened. The King's soldiers fired upon the people who were collected to provoke and insult them, killed three, and wounded five more. Captain Preston, who commanded the party who fired upon the mob, with eight of his soldiers, was imprisoned and tried. He, with six who had been apprehended, was acquitted; two were found guilty of manslaughter, and punished. This year a charter for a college in New Hampshire was obtained. The place fixed upon for erecting the building was Hanover, on the eastern bank of Connecticut river. It took the name of Dartmouth, and Dr. Wheelock was declared the founder and president.

1771——Governor B. Wentworth died, and was succeeded by his nephew, John Wentworth. The consequences of the tragical act of capt. Preston were made subservient to the common cause. The enthusiasm for liberty was much increased, and advocates for the American cause were multiplied, both in England and America.

1772—A similar spirit of opposition to the measures of the British ministry was diffused through all the colonies. The *Gaspee*, a British armed schooner, stationed at Providence to protect the officers of the revenue, was burnt, and a reward of five hundred pounds promised to any one who should discover the perpetrators; but no one was found to accept of the promised reward.

1773—The East-India tea-ships arrived at Boston with the dutied article, consigned to persons in favour of the British claim. Application was made to the assignees to resign. They said it was out of their power. In the night following, seventeen persons in disguise repaired to the tea-ships, and broke open 342 chests, and, without doing any other damage, discharged their contents into the sea.

1774—Governor Hutchinson was recalled, and Gen. Gage appointed in his room, with a large reinforcement; and the town of Boston blockaded, in execution of a port-bill, by which they were deprived of all means of subsistence. Liberal contributions, to relieve the distress of the Bostonians, were raised through America, as they considered them as suffering in the common cause of liberty.

1775—Now every thing wore the appearance of war; but we parried the blow till the 19th of April; when an armed force marched from Boston to Concord, but, meeting with some hostile appearances at Lexington—a few men in arms—they unsheathed the sword, threw away the scabbard, and drew the first blood. The alarm spread like lightning; the people in the vicinity flew to arms, and chased back the murderous band. Boston was shut up. We formed a line of circumvallation from Roxbury to Chelsea, establishing a central camp at Cambridge, and shut up all the British troops in Boston—made our stand, and maintained our ground. Gen.

Gage was recalled, and three able generals came in his room—Howe, Burgoyne and Clinton—to get *elbow-room* (as they phrased it) and to chastise the *rebels*. While they were forming a plan to penetrate into the country by way of Dorchester, the only avenue left open, Gen. Ward, who was chosen and appointed to command the American army, (for the present) to divert their attention, took possession of Bunker's hill, in Charlestown, and threw up some lines in the night: which they perceiving, turned their attention to that place, and on the 1st of June set fire to Charlestown, and attacked the lines on the hill with their main body, and carried them, though not without the loss of the flower of their troops, with comparatively little loss on the American side, except the worthy and able general Warren, greatly lamented. Now all thoughts of penetrating into the country were laid aside; and general Ward laid close siege to the town of Boston. Mr. Washington was unanimously chosen captain-general and commander in chief by the second American Congress. He accepted, and superceded general Ward at Cambridge on the 5th of July. General Washington (whose name we cannot mention without a tear, since he is no more) being appointed and commissioned by Congress, came forward, being every way formed for the post of danger and honour he was to fill. He found himself at the head of a numerous army, brave and resolute, but without order, discipline, arms or ammunition; but, wholly devoted to him and their country, he shortly formed a regular camp, and was soon amply supplied from the enemy's transports which fell into our hands. An ordnance brig was brought into this town, [Gloucester] by capt. Manly, with every kind of military stores in the best order; so that if gen. Washington had sent an order for articles most wanted, he could not have made out a more suitable invoice. Being amply supplied, he made regular approaches towards the town, and possessed



fed himself of Docheſter heights, which gave him the command of the town of Boſton; which the enemy ſaw, feared, and fled.

On the 8th of the preceding Auguſt, capt. Lindſey, of the Falcon ſloop of war, without juſt provocation, or previous notice, cannonaded this defenceleſs town, [Glouceſter] from 1 o'clock till 5, P. M. in which encounter he loſt four of his boats, 40 of his men, and met the diſapprobation of his admiral.

1776—On the 17th of March the enemy left the town of Boſton for Halifax, with as few marks of fear, profanenefs, cowardice and cruelty, as could be expected from the badneſs of the cauſe.

General Burgoyne took a command up the river St. Lawrence, with a deſign of penetrating into the colonies by way of the lakes. Generals Howe and Clinton, being reinforced, took a different route, and in May or June appeared off the moorings of Newyork, where they found gen. Waſhington, with his flying camp, ready to receive them. The repreſentatives in Congreſs, ſeeing all hopes of a reconciliation at an end, on the 4th of July declared the Thirteen States, in confederation, independent of Great-Britain.

A ſham negotiation was ſet on foot, through the mediation of lord Howe, which, without effect, cloſed the year.

1777—Is very memorable by the wonderful interpoſitions of Providence in our favour, too many to recount, and too recent to be forgot. I can only mention a few: On the 17th of October, the boaſting Rabshakeh of Britain, I mean Burgoyne, was taken, with his motley army, Britons, Heſſians, Indians and Frenchmen, with all their baggage and camp equipage, with little loſs on the American ſide; and the total defeat of the German troops at Bennington, with the ſurpriſe and capture, with-

out loss, of the whole Hessian camp at Trenton, on the 25th of December, crowned with the defeat of Howe's corps de reserve at Princeton, with the capture of the main baggage of his army lodged there. The battles of Trenton and Princeton closed the year 1776, which was eminently the year of the right hand of the Most High.

1778—Was rendered very noticeable by the treaty of alliance with France being closed, when an application for a naval force was made, which was obtained.

1779—Was spent in skirmishing, taking and retaking forts, redoubts and reconnoitring parties, and an unsuccessful attempt made by Massachusetts on the river Penobscot.

1780—On the 19th of May was a remarkable, dark day, when most people of the States were obliged to dine by candle-light. On the 21st of September, general Arnold was proved a traitor, and fled, and major Andre, whom he employed as a British spy, was taken, tried, condemned, and hanged.

1781—Makes another distinguishing era in the annals of the revolutionary war; for, on the 20th of October, general Cornwallis, with the main body of the royal army, was taken by general Washington at Yorktown. This was a decisive and fatal blow to the royal army.

1782—The Dutch government acknowledged our independence, and ratified a treaty of amity and commerce with the United States of America, on the 17th of August.

1783—An amnesty, or cessation of hostilities, between the royal and the American armies, took place on the 5th of February, and negotiations for peace ensued. The American army was disbanded, and their worthy general resigned his commission to Congress, and retired to his delightful seat at Mount Vernon, in Virginia.

1784——Peace was ratified by Congress, and proclaimed on the 5th of January, and by the king and parliament of Great-Britain on the following April.

1785——Was chiefly taken up in settling the expenses of the late war.

1786——Debates ran high in Congress. Insurrections were generated among the lower class of citizens. A very dangerous one, headed by Daniel Shays, made its appearance in the county of Worcester, and extended its baleful influence through the counties of Hampshire and Berkshire; but it was soon quelled by the energy of governor Bowdoin, and the military skill and prowess of gen. Lincoln and the brave troops under his command. A similar one appeared at Exeter, in Newhampshire, but was soon and happily suppressed, and peace and good order restored.

1787——By these internal disturbances it was found, that the Confederation was deficient. A very learned and judicious delegation were chosen and sent by the individual states, and met for the professed purpose of altering it, or framing a new constitution of federal government. When met in convention, they chose general Washington for their president, and, after four months' close attention, when all the jarring interests of different states were thoroughly canvassed, they agreed to recommend a plan of federal government to all the United States.

1788——The new Federal Constitution was made public, and offered to each state for its acceptance. It was adopted by a majority of the United States, and became the common law of the land.

1789——General Washington was chosen unanimously the first president of the United States under the new Federal Constitution, and proclaimed, with joy, on the 30th of April; and Mr. John Adams was chosen vice-president. By their joint mild and prudent administration,

all things in the Union began to assume a new and beautiful order : peace seemed to spring from the earth, and righteousness to look down from above. And we promised ourselves that we should for the future sit under our vines and our fig-trees, and that we should eat the good of our land, and that there should be none who should make us afraid. But perfect peace, the earth saith, is not in me.

1790, 1791, 1792—The British, not cured of their envy and jealousy, under the flimsy excuse that we had not complied with the articles of the treaty of peace, refused to give up the western posts which they held within our lines, which occasioned a correspondence between lord Dorchester, governor of Canada, and the president of the United States, upon the subject, but without effect.

1793—Various tribes of Indians became very troublesome, and made war upon the frontiers of the western territory, through the influence and aid of the British troops who occupied those posts.

1794—An army was raised to quell those hostile tribes, and after several fruitless attempts the object was obtained, and peace was restored, by the courage and address of gen. Wayne ; but the posts were not given up, and indiscriminate depredations were made upon our trade and commerce by British cruisers.

1795—The president of the United States, with advice of counsel, thought fit to send chief justice Jay as plenipotentiary to the court of Great-Britain, invested with full powers, to demand an immediate surrender of the western posts, to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce, and to require a restoration of property which had been taken from the United States contrary to the law of nations. He went, and obtained his object : a treaty of amity and commerce was settled, the western posts were given up, and commissioners were chosen to settle the rate of depredations. While our envoy was  
successful

successful abroad, a dangerous insurrection arose in the upper counties of Pennsylvania; but the militia of that state offered themselves willingly unto the help of the Lord. They mustered and marched under the inspecting eye of our late worthy president, at whose presence the heart of anarchy melted, the malignant spirit of fell discord fled, and the misguided were reduced to good order and peace without bloodshed.

1796—In consequence of a well-founded and a well-administered government, unexampled prosperity ensued, and the nation, though in her minority, increased in population, commerce, science, arts, manufactures, and in every branch of improvement, with amazing rapidity.

The president of the United States resigned his commission on the 17th of September, and took his leave of the presidency, and left his farewell address with Congress, a precious legacy to the United States, and refused to be considered a candidate in a future election.

1797—Mr. John Adams was chosen president, and Mr. Thomas Jefferson vice-president, of the United States. The French nation, irritated at the treaty we had made with Great-Britain, and not being pleased with our choice of president, or our resolutions strictly to observe the laws of neutrality, assumed a hostile appearance, and committed great depredations on our trade and commerce.

President Adams, by advice, thought it best to send envoys extraordinary to France with full power to settle or remove all existing difficulties, to alter the old, or make a new, treaty with the French Republic; but they were not received, and were therefore recalled by the president, with an assurance to the directory, that he would not send any other until he had received the most explicit promise that they should be received, and treated in all respects

respects as ambassadors of a free, independent and great nation.

By an act of Congress, the former treaty of alliance, amity and commerce was dissolved, and commerce suspended, and preparations were made for a defensive war.

1798——An army was raised. Our infant navy acquired strength from acts of government. General Washington, being appointed to the command of the army now raising for the defence of the States, he, though he had retired from public that he might enjoy the sweets of domestic life, as soon as he saw his country insulted and threatened, nobly stepped forth again in her injured cause, and took a commission, as lieutenant-general and commander in chief, from Mr. Adams, the president; willing to sacrifice the last remains of life in his country's cause.

1799——President Adams received the most explicit assurance, from the directory of the French Republic, that his envoys should be well received and accredited. He sent other envoys, invested with the same authority as the former.

Last June our worthy and beloved INCREASE SUMNER, governor of Massachusetts, died, very much lamented, and left the government in the hands of his Honour Moses Gill, his lieutenant. But the year closed with the much more melancholy death of our best-beloved, general WASHINGTON; who, though he was not called to encounter the enemies of his country, yet was suddenly called to encounter death, the common enemy of mankind, in the chamber of sickness and pain. And even here, like a christian hero, he conquered the last enemy, on the 14th day of the last month of the last year, 1799; when he appeared more than a mere conqueror. He laid aside the harness for the palm of victory and the crown  
of

of glory. Thus, under this dark cloud, edged with the celestial beams of light, we close the last and begin a new century. We must resign, and say—

Farewel, *Great Soul*, a short farewel,  
Till we shall meet again above  
In the sweet groves where pleasures dwell,  
And trees of life bear fruits of love.

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THE END.

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555

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