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FAMILY SERMONS.



BY THE
REV. E. W. WHITAKER,

LATE OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD:
NOW RECTOR OF ST. MILDRED'S AND ALL SAINTS,
CANTERBURY.



VOL. I.



“FEED MY SHEEP.”



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PREFACE.

SINCE the extensive consideration which is in the following Discourses bestowed on the evidence of religion, may, to some readers, appear unnecessary to be entered into before the circles for whose use the work is intended, the authour thinks it incumbent on him, to state his reason for having been so diffuse on this subject. The propagators of infidelity have lately, in a manner even unprecedented in the annals of iniquity, made their attacks on the truth in tracts, purposely written for the perusal of the least informed of those who can read, and taken abundant pains to disperse them not only among servants, but even in schools,

that the poison of them may be injected into the infant mind, while yet unprepared to resist it.

To counteract this mode of attack, no measure appeared so proper as that of arming those who are exposed to it, with that settled conviction of the truth of what they have been taught to believe, which can be raised only by such demonstration as may be intelligible to unimproved and tender minds. On proof of this kind, therefore, the authour has so largely dwelt, and stated, with all the perspicuity he was able, the grounds of faith, from the dawn of the religious principle in the human mind, to that demonstration of the Spirit given in the miraculous gifts exercised by the first preachers of the Gospel. Still the attentive reader will perceive, that whether the evidence or the doctrines of religion be treated of, or not,

the

PREFACE.

the necessary connection between faith and practice, is never lost sight of; and it is intended, that in the volumes which will contain the subsequent parts of the course, the latter of these shall be most amply discussed.

The evils under which so large a part of Christendom now groans, would scarcely be misnamed, were we to call them, in a considerable degree, the natural penalties of that neglect of duty, against which the holy Scriptures denounce the heaviest woes, the omission of that instruction to those under our care, of which the want may cause them to transgress. For how have the attempts of some, to destroy all subordination, and subvert society, met with success so rapid, in exciting subjects against their sovereigns, servants against their masters, and children against their parents, but

a 3 through

through the ignorance of their duty, and forgetfulness of all moral obligations, into which these inferiour classes have been permitted to sink? Yet, severe as are the sufferings now undergone, they can, by christians, be considered but as pledges of still severer, which must, in a future state, await the guilty, who will not receive the correction at present sent them, and as forming an earnest call on all who have not yet renounced the faith, to recollect the duty of imparting to their households, what religious instruction they can give. To assist them in what is thus at all times their duty, but at present a duty, to the practice of which they are summoned in a tone so impressive, is the object of the following work: in recommendation of which, the authour has only to add, that if it be read and heard with the same degree of sincerity with which it is written, how many defects
forever

PREFACE.

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soever a critical eye may discover in it, the composition (through the divine mercy) will not fail of producing a most beneficial effect on those who shall become acquainted with its contents.

He cannot, however, close this short Preface, without taking the opportunity of publicly returning his sincere thanks to those few, those very few, who have honoured him with their subscriptions to a work little calculated to attract attention, in an age in which faith is rapidly disappearing from the earth.

N. B. A List of the SUBSCRIBERS will be printed at the End of the Third Volume.

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 11, l. 14, remove the comma from after *effectually*, to
 after *it*.
 14, l. 16, for *the* read *a*.
 24, l. 11, expunge the comma at the end.
 Ibid. l. 23, for *or* read *of*.
 34, l. 6, for *the* , after applications put ;
 47, l. 15, at the end place ;
 52, l. 2, insert *of* after proofs, and read *afforded* for
affords.
 56, l. 21, for *shrub* read *tree*.
 69, l. 23, for *it* read *its*, and for *first*, *most material*.
 Ibid. l. 24, expunge *a*, and for *storm* read *storms*.
 97, l. 14, for *Himself* read *His self*.
 98, l. 24, for *claims*, *claim*.
 100, l. 14, for *horror*, *horrou*.
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 133, l. 18, for *transgressors*, *transgressours*.
 160, l. 17, for *themselves*, *theirselves*.
 163, l. 3, after *too* insert ?
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 205, l. 20, after *charity* expunge the comma.
 210, l. 7, for *submitted*, *committed*.
 222, l. 13, expunge the comma after *this*.
 233, l. 22, expunge the comma after *Lord*.
 249, l. 8, remove the comma after *observe* to after *passing*.
 251, l. 13, expunge the comma after *nature*.
 Ibid. l. 16, expunge the comma after *inference*.
 264, l. 7, for . put ; at the end.
 272, line the last, for *awfulness*, *awefulness*.
 276, l. 11, for *awful*, *aweful*.
 294, l. 9, for . after *are* put ,
 Ibid. l. 11, for , after *much*, put .
 306, l. 15, for *promises*, *premisses*.
 329, l. 8, after *their* insert a comma, and the same in the
 next line after *senfible*.
 334, l. 9, put , instead of the :
 335, line the last, expunge *not*.
 337, l. 14, after *truth* insert ,
 338, l. 19, for *end* read *band*.
 351, l. 10, for the comma after *delivered* put :
 358, l. 9, put the comma after *efficacy* after *connected*.
 373, l. 16, for *practise*, read *practice*.
 374, l. 10, for *desertions*, read *desertion*.

SERMON I.

ON FAITH AS THE GROUND OF ALL
RELIGION.

HEB. XI. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

THE first dawn of religious principle in SERM.
the human mind appears under the I.
general form of a fear of some invisible 
being; and although the conviction thus
manifesting itself of the existence of some-
thing not seen, cannot proceed from experi-
ence, yet it is confirmed by it; and the ob-
servations of the wise and learned on the
frame and constitution of the world, on the

SERM. use, order, and beauty of its several parts,
 I. on the events recorded in the history of
 mankind, as well as on what are called the
 accidents of life, tend to prove, while revelation hath fully confirmed the reality of a just object of this natural dread; the existence I mean, of a Being who made and governs all things, but “whose voice no man hath heard, or seen his shape at any time.”

That the fear now mentioned naturally arises in our breasts, ye yourselves can testify; and ye are conscious, that on occasions of particular solitude and darkness, it is sometimes even difficult to restrain it so far as to prevent its producing uneasiness. Now from its thus naturally attending us, we may presume by reasoning from every other instance of principles and faculties with which we find ourselves endowed, that by being properly applied, and duly cultivated, it may be rendered considerably beneficial to us; while on the other hand, we do in fact see most miserable effects flowing from a
 mis-

misapplication and corruption of it. For SERM.
what are all those terrours, under which the I.
weak and the ignorant so often suffer, of
ghosts and apparitions, of unlucky signs and
evil omens, but the effects of this principle
degenerated into superstition*? whereas,
were men to consider, who it is they ought
to fear, they would at once discover the end
for which this feeling was originally im-
planted in our minds, and learning that
there is one great Being, eternal, immutable,
invisible, the only wise God, to whom all
other beings are subject, and without whose
permission they cannot act, they would, on
the one hand, be freed from the dread of any

* Since superstition does thus appear to be owing merely to a detorsion of the religious principle innate in man, (innate I mean truly, as much as any animal instinct is so, since this is demonstrated by fact) the very existence of it proves that of the principle itself; the recollection of which will enable us to wrest from the infidel one of his most favourite weapons: for all declamations against what men may be led to by superstition, which springs from the misapplication, can be of no avail against religion which arises from the proper use of the principle here shewn to be natural.

SERM. imaginary powers, of any undeserved misfortunes ; and, on the other, by cultivating, not opposing nature, would proceed in a path easy to themselves ; and instead of causing the light that is in them to become darkness, or letting it continue so small in degree as only to lead them to mistake all the objects around them, they would be daily gaining an encrease of it, until “ God himself, who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in their hearts, and give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.”

I have thus stated to you at some length, that religion is absolutely necessary to man, with the purpose of bespeaking your sincere attention to that series of discourses, which I mean to read to you, as occasion will permit, that being convinced it is a subject in which ye are most materially interested, since on the improvement ye really make in the knowledge and practice of it, your own happiness does in truth depend, ye may be
earnest

earnest in your endeavours to take full ad-
vantage of the opportunity ye will thus have
of becoming acquainted with the principles,
the doctrines and the laws of true religion :
whence ye will learn not to mispend your
time in a fruitless search after happiness in
this world, where ye can never find it, but
to live so as to secure to yourselves the favour
of God, who will give you in the next life
unutterable blessings, that shall never be
taken from you. Yet, as neither God His
self, nor the good things he hath prepared
for those who love him, are objects of any
of our senses, and therefore we cannot have
the testimony of either our ears or our eyes
for their reality. If we would please Him,
or gain them, we must begin to act upon
faith ; that is, from a belief of his existence,
and of his intention to reward those who
diligently seek him. And this being the
first improvement of that principle I have
pointed out to you as planted in our breasts
by the hand of our Creatour, it should seem
moreover, on this account likewise, impos-
sible to please God without it ; for when He

SERM.
I.


SERM. hath endowed intelligent creatures with
 I. principles capable of improvement, and furnished them too with means of improving them, can we think, that He will be pleased with those who neglect both? if not, then besides that bar to pleasing God, which the apostle in the text mentions as arising from want of faith as a motive to action, and which springs on the side of man, there is another occasioned by the offence which must arise in the mind of a Being too pure not to disapprove of any iniquity, on seeing his creatures transgress the plainest lines of duty, and infringe the most weighty obligations. Now both these may be considered as belonging to the subject of the present discourse; and I shall accordingly review them more accurately in their order, endeavouring to prove at large to you, first, “that all service of God, all religious conduct, must proceed from faith in him:” and, secondly, “that wherever that faith is wanting, his approbation must be withholden.”

“He

“ He that cometh to God,” saith the SERM. apostle, “ must believe that He is.” The ^{I.} meaning of the phrase “ cometh to God,” will be most completely ascertained by adverting to another phrase of the sacred writings, that of “ walking with God;” for since we know that this is used of those good men who lived in steady obedience to the divine laws, looking up to God for protection from their enemies of every kind, so may we assuredly conclude, that “ to come to God” is intended to express our beginning to enter on this course; when a man fully resolves, and delays not to put in practice his determination to live in the fear and love of God, shaping his whole conduct by the commandments of the Lord, and depending on Him alone for success and happiness. Let me arrest your attention here then for a moment, to observe, that it not only is manifest, that no man would enter into a resolution to deny himself every indulgence inconsistent with God’s laws, from any motive less cogent than a firm persuasion, that the Being whose laws they are said to be,

SERM. does really exist, and attend to the conduct
 I. of the sons of men, that He may recompense
 them according to it; but that it is clear
 too, that under many temptations which
 arise to draw men aside from the strait line
 of duty, and against many crosses which
 they meet to thwart them in it, a strong
 conviction of this kind is absolutely neces-
 sary, to keep them from deviating, and to
 encourage them against whatever might
 drive them from the path they had deter-
 mined to follow. “No man having put
 his hand to the plough,” saith our blessed
 Lord, “and looking back, is rightly dis-
 posed * for the kingdom of God.” But
 what can prevail with a man to relinquish
 things present with him, and bid a final
 farewell to pleasures to which he is accus-
 tomed, under the hope of gaining something
 better hereafter, but a full assurance that that
 superiour happiness is attainable? On any
 other ground it would be unreasonable; it
 would be unjust in the preachers to call us

* *Εὐθετός.*

to seek the kingdom of heaven before all things : and therefore in their preaching their first object has been, and must be, to plant this full assurance in breasts where it existeth not, and call it forth into action where it does : and, consistently with this observation, we find the sacred writers ever insisting upon faith as the first requisite in those who would embrace the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. It was this which rendered the subjects of the miracles of our blessed Lord, and his apostles, *capable* of being healed : it is this with which all the attacks of our bitter and crafty adversary the devil are to be repelled ; and it is by this that we must overcome the world. To raise this in their breasts, the apostles and their fellow-labourers in the gospel, reminded the Gentiles of the “ witnesses which God bears to himself in doing good, giving men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness : and that he is the Lord of both heaven and earth, having made the world, and all things therein.” For the same end they recalled

to .


SERM. to the recollection of the Jews what he had
 I. done for their forefathers; how he performed the promises which he made them; and how he gave them deliverance by means the most unexpected, by instruments the least honoured: and to produce a conviction of the truth of the doctrines which they themselves were sent more particularly to preach, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and that God had appointed a day in which he will judge the world by him; they urged their Master's resurrection from the dead: and that the belief they required of this might not rest merely on the words of men, they exercised the miraculous gifts with which they were endowed, in doing such things as no man could do unless God were with him.

Now those who, considering that the works of the first preachers of christianity not only were far beyond the reach of human power, but moreover done expressly in the name of God, and appealed to as testimony of his commission, concluded, that

that he would not have permitted such miracles to have been done in his name to the deception of thousands, who were ready to obey his will at the expence of every thing dear unto them ; but would have provided means for detecting the fraud, had the preachers falsely pretended to authority from him, did set to their seal, that God “ is true ;” and manifested a belief that he will not forsake those who diligently seek him : and as far as we contemplate the ground of faith on which those who have gone before us thus acted, we shall gain assurance of the truth of it effectually, to encourage us in a conduct resembling theirs. Reflection on the works of creation, and the acts of Providence, those things of God which are seen, will convince us of the reality of those which are not seen, even his eternal power and godhead. The contemplation of the wonders which He wrought for his chosen people, the family of Israel, and of the signs which through them He has given unto mankind, will assure us, that the very same Being, who made and governs

SERM. governs the world, hath also framed a dispensation for preserving the knowledge of himself among men, and preventing their universally giving the honour due unto him alone, to those who are no gods, and the consideration of the testimony born to the truth of the Gospel, by the miracles of our blessed Lord, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed on his first disciples, will satisfy us that the Christian doctrine is indeed from God. And if, on the other hand, we continue ignorant, or unbelieving as to any of these points, the fault must be all our own; since it arises from a want of that serious, earnest, and impartial attention, which we are bound by so many obligations to use in discovering whether any thing we are called to receive as the declared will of our Creatour, be in truth such or not.

The calls, therefore, which we meet with in the Scriptures, to regard the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands; the exhortations to attention which

which they contain, such as, “ he that hath SERM.
ears to hear, let him hear.” The admonitions I.
to fix our thoughts not on those things 
which are seen, but on those which are not
seen, should be received as of the highest
importance. Indeed, on this first step in
our religious course, depends all our future
progress; while even those who have em-
braced the faith, and are sincere in pro-
fessing themselves Christians, will find, that
they are very inadequately provided for the
practice of that self-denial which the Gos-
pel requires, unless their faith be kept alive,
and their hopes of future recompence be
preserved unabated, by frequently calling
to mind the wonders of the Lord of old,
and meditating on those good things which
he hath prepared for those who love him.
For although in the exercise of some vir-
tues, encouragement may be derived from
the countenance of the world, and they are
attended with visible fruits, and immediate
reward, yet the practice of meekness, hu-
mility, and other branches of the great
Christian virtue, charity, often gains from
men

SERM. men only contempt and additional injuries ;
 I. and therefore perseverance in it can rest
 only on the hope of a recompence from
 him, who sees not as man sees ; and since
 that hope must be founded on the belief of
 his being, and goodness, and power, to
 whom it looks for its reward ; as impossible
 as it is that a tree should grow without a
 root, or a building stand without a founda-
 tion, so impossible, naturally impossible I
 mean, is it, that the practice of real righte-
 ousness, should proceed but on religious
 faith ; or that any one should come to God,
 who does not believe “ that He is, and is
 the rewarder of them that diligently seek
 him.”

However sincere, therefore, ye may al-
 ready be, in professing yourselves believers
 in God and Christ ; however manifestly to
 yourselves convinced of the justness of your
 faith, and satisfied of the soundness of the
 ground on which ye have embraced it,
 think it not a needless task to which I call
 you, in requesting your attention to a re-
 view

view of the articles and foundation of it. SERM.
A small inroad made by the teachers of false I.
doctrine on any part of it, which may first
appear likely to produce no evil consequences, may at length prove of the most pernicious tendency; since the whole being supported by the same authority, he who relinquishes one part in defiance of that authority, may relinquish another without offending against any higher authority than that which he had before despised; while, if we shew a mistrust in our Creatour, let the point on which we do so be what it may, his approbation must be withholden from us: which was the second proposition on which I propos'd to speak in this discourse, that I might prove more at large the impossibility of pleasing God without faith.

In the eyes of a Being, whose determinations are the decrees of justice itself, the ungrateful impiety which any creature betrays in mistrusting his goodness, and the blasphemous insult contained in a doubt of the power or wisdom of the Maker of the world,

SERM. world, cannot be acceptable. Again; we
 I. rightly consider it as unjust to mistrust even
 men without cause, how much more so
 then must it be to withhold any portion
 of confidence from perfection itself? View
 the point in this light, and ye will readily
 subscribe to the apostle's assertion, that
 "whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and
 having once seen this, ye will be fully con-
 vinced, that "without faith it is impossible
 to please him who is of too pure eyes to
 behold iniquity." What hope then of fa-
 vour from him can remain to those who
 treat any thing he has vouchsafed to reveal,
 any thing he has been pleased to prescribe,
 as of trifling importance, or of doubtful
 obligation, as scarcely worth knowing, or
 as not necessary to be obeyed? Would men
 give some of their attention to this question,
 we should at least be delivered from many
 shallow remarks, and much common-place
 declamation: it is certainly neither in the
 divine truth, wisdom, nor goodness, that
 men declare their faith, when they say that
 such a doctrine, though made known to us
 by

by God, is as to its reception of little consequence, that this commandment may be transgressed without much danger, and that duty neglected, and no great evil follow. For would perfect mercy lay *needless* restraints on us? or perfect wisdom employ its dictates on *trifles*? Not to notice at length (as not accurately belonging to the present subject, though generally suggested to us by it) the presumptuous absurdity of creatures, among whom not one of a thousand ever seriously reflects on his own nature, taking on themselves at once to decide, that the Authour of it cannot see that any conduct tends to their welfare, but what has its use immediately visible also to themselves.

SERM.
I.

This is not the behaviour we teach our children to practise towards us; on the contrary, we are wont to admonish them to confide in our instructions, until they have sufficient experience to judge for themselves. Shall we then refuse to place a similar confidence in the wisdom and kindness of our
VOL. I. C heavenly


SERM. heavenly Father? Or rather should not, if
 I. it were possible, our reliance on him be as
 much superior to that, which we require to
 be placed on us, as his eternal and perfect
 attributes, are to our limited endowments? And what would be the fruits of this just faith if once entertained by us? Would they not appear in the sincerest practice of those virtues which the divine word enjoins, whether in a ready submission to all the restraints of temperance, purity and content, or in a firm and constant resistance of temptations, or in the exercise of that active benevolence by which we can do good to our brethren, and make them glorify God, when they perceive the faith of his servants thus working by love? And if these fruits be produced in us, shall we not at length receive from the mercy of God the natural reward of a just faith entertained according to his will, the happiness and glory of finding our confidence well grounded; when he in whom we trust shall appear, and acknowledging us no longer as servants, but as friends, we shall see him as he is,
 and


and our faith be swallowed up in knowledge?
SERM.
I.



Thus then it appears that (in the words of St. Paul) “ the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned :” and thus it is manifest, that on yourselves it depends whether ye will cultivate that principle which at first barely suggests to you, that there is an invisible Being to whose power ye are subject, so as to improve it into true faith in your almighty Maker and heavenly Father ; even till ye come to the fulness of stature in Christ, and gaining through him the adoption of sons, no longer continue in the bondage of fear, but with joyful hope look forward to that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for all who believe to the saving of the soul.

To prevail with you, therefore, as much as in me lies, not to neglect this great and everlastingly beneficial work, I shall endeavour

SERM. to set before you, in such method as will
 I.  conduce both to the easier apprehension, and
 better remembrance of the several particulars: first, the grounds of our faith, or
 reasons for believing what we, as Christians, profess to hold, as the truth; then, the objects of it, or the articles of our belief; after which will naturally come to be considered the practice to which such faith leads, or the laws of God, which we are bound to obey; and then the rewards of those who thus use their faculties, powers, and opportunities, as they ought, and the punishments of those who do not: and since these be such that no pains can be more than we should take in obtaining the former, and avoiding the latter, I shall, by the divine permission, and merciful support, proceed lastly to consider before you, the various directions, admonitions, and encouragements, pointed out to us in the sacred writings, to assist us in this our pursuit of happiness, and avoidance of misery in the life of the world to come: trusting that ye will not let me labour alone in this work.
 but

but with earnestness endeavour at that which SERM.
your own interest in it demands, to un- I.
derstand, retain, and reduce to practice, 
what I shall lay before you.

And may our God and Father, to whom all our hearts are open, and Who now sees with what degree of sincerity we are each of us inclined to do our own part, influence your minds to receive with sincerity, humility, and integrity, the lessons which will thus be read to you, taking from you all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of his word, and making you effectually to keep ever in recollection the sentence of our blessed Saviour, that “whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein!”

SERMON II.

ON THE PROOFS OF A DEITY AFFORDED BY
THE NATURE OF MAN.

ACTS xvii. 28.

*For in Him we live, and move, and have our
being.*

IN the discourse already read to you, the SERM.
nature and absolute necessity of faith, as II.
a motive to the practice of religion, were
explained, and a proposal was made to en-
deavour to render it in you both rational and
strong, by proceeding to consider, in their
order, the grounds on which our belief of
the several articles of the Christian faith is
founded. For unless we can assign good
reasons for holding the truths we do, how-
ever unexceptionable they may be in them-
selves,

SERM. selves, we still justly lie under the censure
 II. frequently cast on us by our adversaries, of
 believing we know not why. Neither when
 sufferings are to be undergone, rather than
 deny God or Christ, if the question be
 suggested to us, why we should submit to
 the afflictions? is it likely that we should
 continue resolute to support all with which
 we are threatened, unless, on reflection, we
 find that we have most convincing argu-
 ments for the faith, on account of which,
 persecution hangs over our heads: and, at
 best, those who blindly believe without
 considering, whether there be a reason for
 the faith they embrace, scarcely offer any
 thing better than the sacrifice of fools; since
 with this conduct they are fully as liable to
 be made to believe a lie, as to be converted
 to the profession of the truth. And there-
 fore we may presume it is, that the sacred
 writers charge those, who receive not the
 doctrines of the Scriptures, with crimina-
 lity, on the mere ground of their not at-
 tending to evidence sufficient to prove the
 truth of the things preached unto them.

Thus

Thus too our blessed Saviour His self of the generation who refused to acknowledge him as the Christ the Son of God; “ if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.” And both he and his apostles urged the Jews to examine the Scriptures, and see whether they, in fact, did bear that testimony to the Gospel, which they asserted, or not.

Now apply these things to our own case, and ye will perceive, that they both manifest, that mere credulity, and a confidence without testimony, are not required of us; and at the same time teach us the real criminality of not attending to such evidence as God hath been pleased to give of Himself, and of his will to the world. Of those who absolutely rejected this evidence, our Lord spake, as hating both himself and his Father: but what material difference is there between absolutely rejecting testimony, and wilfully omitting to consider whether it be good or not? Plain it is, that he

SERM.
II.

SERM. he who does not discern the truth, because
 II. he will not pay that attention which is necessary for comprehending it, has nobody but himself to blame for his continuing in ignorance; and whatever advantages he may forfeit, or whatever errors he may fall into, through want of that knowledge which he might have acquired, if he would, may be justly charged to his account. Let this reflection then so influence you, that ye may readily listen to, and duly think on the grounds of our most holy faith, which I shall hereafter set before you; that ye may lose none of those blessings which may be obtained by having, nor fall into any of those faults of which ye may be guilty, through want of the most complete conviction of the truth of every doctrine of the Scriptures, and the fullest confidence in the perfection of God, and his universal providence.


The present state of the world, when infidelity is so prevalent, that faith seems to be very rapidly leaving the earth, and the
 love

love of so many groweth cold, that less countenance is daily given to the sincere Christian, particularly calls on us to look out for supports by which our task may be rendered no more difficult than that of those who went before us; and such we can find, only by reviewing all those arguments to which experience has added strength, and on which the encrease of human knowledge hath thrown additional light.

I shall now, therefore, proceed to investigate before you, the evidence of natural religion, previous to the consideration of the testimony borne either to the revelation given by Moses, or to that which our blessed Lord His self delivered; and in doing this, the method which will best conduce to an easy comprehension of the subject, will be that of examining first the internal proofs (internal with respect to ourselves I mean) of the being of God, those which arise from the existence and nature of man; then the arguments for the same, which the natural


SERM. tural world supplies; and, lastly, those
 II. which may be drawn from the history of
 the human race.

The arguments of the first of the kinds I have thus enumerated, are briefly contained in the words of the text, which are taken from a discourse, addressed by the great apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, to the people of Athens, in which he tells them, that that unknown God, of whose power and goodness they had seen some acts which they could not ascribe to any of the numerous idols, and fancied deities, with whose temples their city was crowded, and to whom they had therefore reared an altar, was the only true God; who had made of one blood all the nations of the earth; and who, instead of affording men any excuse for ignorance of Him, by being a God not at hand, but afar off, is in truth not far from every one of us; “for in him we live, and move, and have our being.” In which last words that great and inspired preacher plainly intimates,

mates, that the life and powers we possess, SERM.
yield a proof of the existence and constant II.
superintendance of our divine Creatour. 

Let us discover then, if we can, the particulars in which this proof consists: some of them, at least, we may hope to descry; and the knowledge of these may, perhaps, clear the way to a future discovery of the rest.

Now, as we cannot give life unto ourselves, so we know from experience, that it is not in our power to retain it beyond the time allotted for our continuance in the body. This too, was the case of our parents, and likewise of theirs, and so of the generations before them, even to the first pair in whom the human race began. For how far backward soever we might, before reference had to the instruction revelation affords, presume the line of mankind to extend, yet somewhere or other we must, at last, acknowledge a generation, which either existed from eternity, having had no begin-

SERM. beginning to their lives, (which is a suppo-
 II.  sition manifestly inconsistent with what we
 know of the nature of man) or were brought
 into existence by some superiour being; so
 that as this last is, of the two, the only
 admissibile position, *our existence necessarily*
implies that of our Maker; and our very
 living does in itself prove, that *by Him we*
live.

At the same time too, the want of power
 we experience to preserve ourselves from
 death, and the promiscuous manner in which
 men are seized on by it, at all seasons, and
 under all circumstances; young, old, and
 middle-aged; by sudden stroke, lingering
 disorders, or rapid disease; frequently taken
 away, when they have every common reason
 to hope, that they shall live; and often re-
 covering from sickness, after they have
 given over all expectations of a return to
 health. These things, I say, demonstrate
 that our Maker has not delegated to us the
 disposal of our lives; and that being thus
 kept dependent on him for their continu-
 ance,

ance, we thus too *live by Him*, manifesting his power, and therefore necessarily his existence, by our visible dependence on Him for the preservation of our own.

SERM.

II.

Having made this first step in our deduction, that since we are neither self-originated, nor independent, there must be some being greater than ourselves who called us into existence, and to whose will we are subject, our farther progress becomes more easy, and by the light we have thus gained, we are enabled satisfactorily to account for that wonderful manner in which we subsist, with knowledge so confined, and powers so limited. So short-sighted are we, as frequently to wish we could order circumstances to take place in a manner which the event afterwards proves, instead of forwarding, would entirely have prevented the consummation which we earnestly desired; greater power, therefore, in our hands, would be like a weapon in those of a child, furnished only to do mischief to himself and others. Or, could we foresee occurrences,

SERM. rences, with the small portion of power we
 II. have to avoid those which are evil, we
 should not only lie under perpetual dread of
 approaching afflictions, but through our
 ineffectual endeavours to shun them, add
 much to our own sufferings, and do no less
 damage to those around us.

The mention of this may, perhaps, raise
 in your minds an imagination, that yet,
 if we could discern, that at the end of
 all the changes in this life, happiness
 alone awaits us at the last; this prospect
 would give us fortitude to meet with
 calmness all the intermediate ills; and by
 that mean both lessen the weight of those
 necessary to be undergone, and enable us
 to avoid others. This thought seems,
 indeed, highly reasonable; but then the
 object of it is no other than what ye
 already possess. Ye know, that if ye con-
 duct yourselves well here, an everlasting
 rest is prepared for you hereafter; and that
 knowing more than this might not over-
 whelm, instead of strengthening our spirits,
 we

we can by no mean determine; while it SERM.
would, undoubtedly, render us careless. II.

Our knowledge and our powers are, there-
fore, mutually proportionate to each other;
and the extent of both is such, as to mani-
fest, that we could not subsist even from
hour to hour without the support of one
mightier than ourselves, under whom we
live, and by whom we move.

But if the limitation of our power thus
necessarily indicates a superiour Being, by
whose gift we subsist; on the other hand,
the extent of what we have, and the nature
of the principles and faculties we possess,
no less evidently prove, that we have re-
ceived them from a hand far transcending
all visible excellence. Let but your own
powers of life and motion be for a moment
the subjects of your reflection, consider
how every limb is obedient to your thoughts;
how wonderful is that power by which the
passions of the mind so affect the body, that
even the countenance will involuntarily ex-
press what the soul suffers; and when danger

SERM. seems near, the hands will so instantaneously obey her call to defence, as to leave scarcely any perceptible time for reflection on the evil which alarmed her. Let the most admirable faculty of thought itself be viewed in all its various applications, mark how by imagination we can figure to ourselves objects which we never saw, and even beings which never existed, enlarge, diminish, change, and alter them as we please; how, by apprehension, we are enabled to understand the meaning of others, receive their ideas, and become acquainted with their sentiments; and that, by reflection, we cannot only make present to our minds that which is past, but, by comparing two truths together, oftentimes discover a third with which we were before unacquainted, and thus encrease our knowledge merely from the stores of our own minds.

If we advert to the noble discoveries, and the beneficial improvements which men have accomplished by these powers of the human soul, we shall perceive, that to them
are

are owed the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and all the progress which most nations have gone through, in their passage from a savage state, to that of refined society. If the ability of the artist then may be judged of from his work, how unspeakably great must He be, who hath implanted such faculties in earthen vessels, and bestowed on us endowments so excellent, that we cannot justly reflect on them without astonishment! We sometimes meet with specimens of human art, on which we think we can scarcely bestow sufficient admiration; yet how great is the distance both in power and in dignity between the most excellent works of man, and man himself. What, therefore, even from the contemplation of our own faculties, ought we to conclude concerning the perfection of our Maker? Or, as the psalmist asks, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? and He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?" So may we demand, Must not He who made us intelligent beings, possess

SERM.
II.
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SERM. a still higher degree of intelligence? He who gave us power to discover truth, have His self more perfect knowledge? and He who enables us to communicate our sentiments to others, have power to make His will known unto us? Further; since no being can communicate an excellence of which he is not master, our moral discernment, or knowledge of good and evil, our natural disapprobation of the latter, and esteem of the former, the distinction which we naturally make of men according to their characters, and that principle of benevolence which appears, no less naturally under the various forms of those tender sympathies that by their effects spread comfort through life, sweeten society, and endear men to each other, prove, that the Being who endued us with such principles, is not only an intelligent, but a moral Agent; whose dictates are the maxims of truth, and His suggestions the deeds of benevolence.

Another

Another testimony of our connection SERM.
with some invisible Being, who hath given II.
us an inward sense of our dependence in
Him, is the very remarkable faculty of
conscience, which bearing testimony to all
we do, shews, by the impartiality of its
decisions, that it holds its office from the
grant of an higher hand than our own:
and in the breasts of all the human race
pointing to a future tribunal, as positively
declares, and as satisfactorily proves, that
we are with wisdom and design formed by
a Being of superiour power and intelligence,
as the connected movements of a watch
shew, that that is a work not made by
chance, but framed with deliberation, and
put together with skill.

To the influence which this faculty has
on our behaviour, or our happiness, inter-
rupting the latter in proportion as it fails to
restrain us in the former, we can all bear
witness: and yourselves know, how often
it has prevented you from doing what would
have been wrong: and in the instances in

SERM. which ye would not listen to its warnings,
 II. how troublesome its rebukes have since
 proved ; how base it has represented your
 conduct to be ; how it has threatened you
 with detection on every accident, and
 painted suspicion in every countenance.
 Nay, at the present moment, on my only
 mentioning its power, it again arraigns
 you, and appears ready to pour in the light
 upon those misdeeds which ye have hitherto
 most carefully concealed.

How finely wrought then, in this respect,
 is the constitution of the human mind ! and
 how potent is the testimony it offers to both
 the greatness, and the goodness of Him,
 who hath so fearfully and wonderfully made
 us ! How many crimes have been prevented,
 how many defenceless persons have been pre-
 served from impending mischiefs, through
 the operation of this one principle ! How
 many of the guilty have been brought to
 repentance, how many souls saved from
 final destruction hereafter, by the effect of
 its reproaches here !

Similar

Similar observations might be made on SERM.
the various other feelings of our minds, as II.
fear and hope, desire and aversion, and the
like; since these all contribute to our pre-
servation or enjoyments: while a very small
number indeed of those who are benefited
by them entertain any idea of their inesti-
mable utility. By these we are not only
deterred from bad, and incited to good ac-
tions, but become more closely connected
in society, and more dependent on, and con-
sequently more favourably affected to each
other. The fineness of the cords with
which we are thus drawn together, bespeaks
the hand which formed us, to be as won-
derful in working, as the extensiveness of
their effects reaching to the whole race of
mankind, manifests His providence to be
unlimited. For can we not, each for him-
self, recollect occasions when our fears have
prevented us from continuing in pursuits,
that we are now convinced would have led
us into evils, of which we entertained not
the least suspicion when we were stopped
by terrors, which, while we yielded to
D 4 them,

SERM. them, we were perhaps inclined ourselves
 II. to condemn, as not sufficiently grounded?

And can we not remember times, when Hope seemed to be the sole encouragement we had ; but when too, unless we had been supported by that, we should for ever have lost advantages, which have since contributed in no inconsiderable measure to our welfare ? The like may be said of the involuntary effects of other passions, from which we frequently derive safety, that we were not likely otherwise to procure. And if they appear productive of much benefit to us, thus severally considered, what fruits do they manifest when viewed in all their various combinations ! Through some of these we are rendered capable of being influenced in favour of those around us, when they stand in need of our good offices ; through others we are armed against the frauds and mischievous designs of men, who would circumvent, or injure us. They act as the bonds of society, and produce those great effects which arise from our acting in concert with each other, and pursuing

fuſing objects of common uſe, and of general benefit. To them may be referred many of the changes which happen in the fortunes of men: when by the kindneſs of friends they are raiſed to proſperity, or by neglect or averſion are abandoned to penury and diſtreſs. Although the variations in theſe do often *more immediately* teſtify the exiſtence of an inviſible Being, under whoſe government we live.

SERM.

II.

The unexpected deliverances we receive; the eſcapes from unforeſeen dangers that we have; the ſudden exaltations, and as ſudden depreſſions, to which we are witneſſes; the alterations in health, and in the ſituations of men, cauſed by various circumſtances which it is not in human power either to bring about, or prevent; all admoniſh us to turn our thoughts to a ſuperiour Ruler of events, Who regulates occurrences with a potency which we cannot reſiſt; and by wiſdom which is too deep for us to fathom. While yet we can perceive, that the viciffitudes in our fortunes tend greatly to our
moral

SERM. moral improvement; mortifying our de-
 II. fires, humbling our pride, checking our
 ~~~~~ avidity, manifesting to us our own imbecility, and warning us in a language sufficiently intelligible, that we stand in need of the patronage of One, mightier than any of the sons of men, to preserve us amidst all the dangers, and defend us against the evils, to which we feel ourselves liable.

Indeed, a certain degree of reflection on the being we have, would manifest to us the perfect truth of the last clause of the text, by convincing us, that both the origin and continuance of the powers of our souls are far beyond the reach of our comprehension. That the soul is the principle of life and action in the body we feel; and that when it leaves them, our bodies become a motionless mass we know: but on what the soul itself rests for support; whence she derives those extraordinary accessions of strength, which she sometimes appears to gain; and on what her natural presumption of continuing in existence after she has left the body

is

is founded, are questions, which, with many others, the more they are considered, the more evidently do they appear to admit of no answer so satisfactory as that suggested by the words of the apostle, that “in God we have our being.”

SERM.

II.

When we speak of the spiritual communications which pass between God and his creatures, we advert to a subject, the reality of which every man experiences; but having nothing to offer in proof of it but their own assertions, the greater part of mankind are, through fear of being laughed at by the thoughtless and profane, deterred from uttering their sentiments. Yet the light poured in, the courage infused, and the comfort spread abroad in our hearts, in return to the supplications of the sincere petitioners of Heaven, prove, that there is One who hears and answers. While our encrease in spiritual strength, and (according to the highest sense of which the phrase is capable) in greatness of mind, does as truly indicate accession from without of ourselves to promote

SERM. note this growth in grace, as that of the  
II. body demonstrates the assumption of food  
for its enlargement. And what in reason  
can we believe of that Being who pours  
into our hearts these streams of the waters  
of life, but that He is, in truth, the foun-  
tain of life, and the source of existence, by  
Whom, and in Whom, we live and move,  
and have our being? Or thinking thus:  
Is there any degree of reverence or fear, or  
gratitude, or love, which we must not ac-  
knowledge to be due unto Him? If not,  
from henceforth, let our lives manifest these  
to be our sentiments; and while the love of  
God dwelleth in our hearts, let us glorify  
Him with our bodies and our souls, *because  
they are His!*

# SERMON III.

ON THE PROOFS OF A DEITY ARISING  
FROM THE MATERIAL WORLD.

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ACTS XIV. 17.

*Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*

**I**N my last discourse, I endeavoured to SERM.  
represent to you, in such a manner as III.  
might contribute to both the comprehension  
and remembrance of it, the testimony of  
the being and government of God, which  
our own existence, powers, and sensations  
supply. My intention in the present is to  
set before you the evidence which our all-  
glorious Creatour hath given of Himself,  
by

SERM. by that merciful provision made for man in  
 III. the formation and government of the natural world, to which St. Paul alludes in the words of the text; addressed by him to the inhabitants of an heathen city, who, on seeing a miracle wrought at his word, immediately concluded, (according to the ignorance that was in them) that he and Barnabas were two of the fancied deities they were wont to worship; and accordingly were preparing to offer a sacrifice unto them; when the apostles, shocked at their idolatrous attempt, dissuaded them from persisting in it, by representing to them, that while they were but men like themselves, they came to preach to them in the name of the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein; and Who, though He had suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, (worshipping as their benefactors, dumb images, or beings equally senseless, and unable to bless or assist them) still He had, by the benefits He conferred on mankind,

given them constant and palpable proofs of SERM.  
His own existence and benevolence. III.



Now to these proofs, neither past nor present generations could seriously turn their thoughts without being stricken with the very forcible evidence they contain; and however men have erred or been misled, in regard to the nature and unity of the Being to whose power and goodness we are indebted for the rain from Heaven, and the fruitful seasons which fill our hearts with food and gladness, they have, with one voice, ascribed these blessings to some superior Being, on whose will they have considered themselves as dependent for them, and, consequently, however remiss they may have appeared in returning thanks for them, yet when they have at any time been withholden, they have considered it as necessary to appease the power through whose anger they conceived the continuance of them was interrupted: thus acknowledging, that however the expression of it might be stifled, still on their hearts was imprinted

SERM. printed a conviction of the existence of  
 III. One above, who was not indifferent to their  
 conduct.

That we should thus owe to our sufferings, or our fears, those sentiments of devotion which ought to arise from gratitude, and a just estimation of the divine perfections, has been noticed as highly disgraceful to our race: and so well founded is the reproach, that to avoid being involved in it would alone be a sufficient motive for turning our thoughts to that witness of Himself, which God ever hath, and doth still bear, in the blessings which by His corn, His wine, His oil, and the other products of His earth, He dispenses among those who dwell thereon; and if proceeding further we consider, that enquiries of this kind will disclose to us the hand of an Almighty Guardian and Protector constantly employed in our favour; the prospect of the consolation, the joy, and the security necessarily arising from the discovery of our being in a situation so advantageous, will inspire us  
 with



with vigour in our researches, and excite in our breasts a spirit of attention, and eagerness for additional information, which will permit us to leave scarcely any part of the world around us unexplored, or unconsidered.

SERM.  
III:  


That we may then enter at once on a subject so congenial to our minds, so interesting to our hearts ; behold all the accommodations, and all the opulence of human life, from the most simple provision to the rarest delicacies, from the most necessary conveniences to the highest ornaments ; whence are they originally obtained, but from the surface, or the bowels of the earth ? Only on this most general view, therefore, we may justly observe, that the products of this globe are most accurately suited to the nature of the sons of men, whose habitation it is. And since, if ye were to see a tract of land well laid out in pastures, carefully watered, and supplied with all the buildings necessary for lodging and sheltering cattle, and with ample store of provi-

SERM. sion for the winter season, ye would justly  
 III. conclude, that these things contained in  
 themselves sufficient evidence, that they  
 were the works of some who were acquainted with the wants of the animals, and were willing to supply them; ye must, by a like course of reasoning, draw the same inference from the manner in which the whole earth is replenished, and acknowledge, that the rain and fruitful seasons, which fill our hearts with food and gladness, bear sure testimony to us of the existence of a Being who timely provideth for our wants, as knowing them long before.

But if, from this general conclusion, we proceed to more particular investigation, our enquiries will be recompensed in proportion to their extent. By joining rain and fruitful seasons together, the apostle evidently alludes to the natural connection which subsists between them; a connection which experience manifests so plainly, that there is scarcely any one so dull as not to have perceived, that rain from Heaven is  
 · abso-

absolutely necessary for the production of SERM.  
the fruits of the earth. Every eye can im- III.  
mediately discern the pernicious conse-  
quences of a failure of the usual supply ;  
the plants droop, the fruits languish, the  
cattle are unable to gather their accustomed  
quantity of food, the fond hope which the  
husbandman entertained of an ample return  
for his labour and his seed, is shaken, and  
if the drought continue, is succeeded by a  
certainty that his crop is past recovery. So  
that no one need to be informed, that if  
the yearly rains did not constantly descend  
in a measure nearly proportioned to our  
wants, the inhabitants of the land must be  
exposed to all the evils of famine ; and,  
therefore, the regular supplies of them  
which we receive, do bear witness to the  
goodness, the wisdom, and the power of  
Him, who furnishes us with them.

Neither ought our reflections on His pro-  
vidence to be confined to the testimonies of  
it which are immediately experienced by  
ourselves. Should we not, on the contrary,

SERM. extend our thoughts to the still stronger  
 III. proofs it affords, by the various manners  
 in which this one blessing of rain is dispensed in the various climes of the earth? For in this such an adjustment is visible, as indicates most amply regulation founded on the knowledge of what is most beneficial to the several regions. In countries where the periods of wet and dry weather so regularly return at the appointed seasons, that the inhabitants know when to expect the changes, those products of the ground on which they chiefly subsist, would never arrive at perfection, had they not a more steady continuance of clear sky and a warm sun than we in this climate are wont to experience: as, on the other hand, the long periods of uninterrupted drought, by which the fruits of the middle parts of the earth are thus brought to maturity, would destroy those from which we in these lands gain our sustenance.

And thus is the earth laid out like a garden, where every compartment is assigned  
 to

to different products, and, consequently, SERM.  
put by the master under a different course III.  
of management; and, as in this case, the  
skill and attention of the gardener is demon-  
strated by the due arrangement, and  
able culture of the several crops, so is the  
providence and the might of the divine  
Governour of the world made known unto  
us, by the distribution of climates, and the  
correspondent assignment of seasons over the  
surface of the globe. Mark but a bed of  
tender plants artificially sheltered from the  
heat of the meridian sun, and ye will re-  
quire no additional assurance of their having  
received this protection from the hand of  
One who was sensible of their approaching  
necessities, and regarded them sufficiently  
to provide against their arrival. And is not  
the same inference to be drawn from the  
admirable provision experienced in some hot  
countries, of the heaviest rains descending  
at the very time when the sun is directly  
over their heads, and consequently would,  
were not the fierceness of its rays thus re-  
pressed, prove insupportable to the inhabi-

SERM. tants? Or, is not the like testimony furnished by those stated breezes with which  
 III. the burning regions of the torrid zone are refreshed, and rendered fit for human habitation?

But the apostle's reflection appears not to be confined to that supply of the necessaries of life which we receive from the goodness of God; he speaks of filling our hearts with gladness as well as with food. Here then we should advert to the unnumbered variety of fruits with which the earth abounds: look to the beauties of the vegetable world; observe the pleasing colours which the plants display, and the grateful odours which they breathe. Consider what multitudes appear to be little else than ornamental, yet what satisfaction may be derived, what improvement gained by man, from the contemplation of them; and ye will perceive, that there are provided for us subjects of joy and exultation extending far beyond that point of gratification to which the supply of needful food and raiment

ment reaches. Unable as we are to estimate SERM.  
the sum of human blifs arising from these III.  
works of our great Creatour, yet may we  
trace, with no small profit and delight,  
various channels through which we derive  
most important blessings from them.

For first, while our natural wants find an abundant supply, there is given in addition to what is sufficient for this, a variety in the productions of the earth, which both prevents the disgust that would arise from a constant repetition of the same food, and contributes, by mixture as well as by change, to preserve the health of our bodies: and if ye call to mind how much our enjoyment of any other good is lessened or increased by the want or possession of this one blessing of bodily health: if ye recollect how weary, stale, and unprofitable, seem all the uses of this world to one, the flow of whose animal spirits is impeded by disease, and with what redoubled relish they are tasted by those who are in all the vigour of health, ye will acknowledge the work

SERM. of a most beneficent hand, in the provision  
 III. which, not only in the healthful variety of  
 food, but in the rain from Heaven too, is  
 made to preserve the purity of the air,  
 through the generation of winds, by which,  
 instead of living in the midst of a stagnant  
 and putrid atmosphere, we are enabled to  
 inhale the wholesome breeze.

The medicinal plants scattered over the earth, by the use of which we so often recover that health which, through our own fault or folly, we had for awhile lost, form likewise part of that mass of evidence which God hath given of Himself to the human race: and the cogency of which is such, that when delivered by means of them from pain or debility, the most unthankful are constrained to bless God in their hearts, for that He hath given to men such things as the root of rhubarb, and the bark of the Peruvian shrub.


Neither any thing less than this is the testimony of the divine foresight employed  
 in



in our favour, which we receive from the SERM.  
effects that labour has on the productions of III.  
the ground. By experiencing the recompence which care and diligence naturally receive, and by knowing how little will be obtained without them; by seeing that “ he that keepeth his fig-tree, eateth the fruit thereof;” and that “ the sluggard who will not plough by reason of the cold, beggeth in harvest, and hath nothing,” are men brought to exert themselves in employments equally necessary to health of body and tranquillity of mind. The misery of a state of idleness in itself, and the more miserable consequences which frequently flow from it, need only to be mentioned to recall to your remembrance sufficient proofs of their reality. The necessity of labour, therefore, is most wisely and mercifully ordained, even for the prevention of great evils to mankind. In truth, had all mankind found they were not obliged to exert themselves to secure supplies of the necessaries of life, the state of degeneracy into which they would have sunk on their encrease after the flood,  
would

SERM. would have proved much worse than that  
 III. barbarism into which a large portion of  
 them did fall, and from which they have  
 since been gradually emerging.

It is by the exertions to which difficulties give rise, that the human understanding is expanded, and our faculties are improved; and though men, who draw their conclusions without attending sufficiently to facts, may imagine, that had the labour which is appointed to man under the sun been less, every salutary purpose might have equally been effected, and still his toil have been more tolerable; yet look but to those ranks of society who enjoying a plentiful subsistence without the necessity of labour, are free to choose, whether they will employ their hours wisely or viciously, and ye will perceive, that very disproportionate indeed is the number of those who will accustom themselves to even an innocent use of their time without constraint. Were the whole world then composed entirely of men under none of those earnest calls to industry which  
 the

the present constitution of things affords, SERM.  
think what a scene of vile debauchery, III.  
ceaseless quarrels, and bloody animosities,   
would ensue; all of which are now chiefly  
perhaps prevented by the greater part of  
men being too much engaged in their own  
necessary business to have time so to indulge  
their passions, and excite their spleen, as  
they would do, did not the various employ-  
ments of life call them off from merely  
pleasing themselves, or observing the actions  
and circumstances of others.

The labour appointed us therefore, being  
thus necessary to preserve the members of  
human society in any tolerable state of so-  
briety and tranquillity, the appointment of  
it is a cogent argument, that the Being who  
ordained it for us, knew our nature, and  
our defects, and acted with wisdom and  
mercy, as well as with power in giving to  
the earth, the place of our habitation, the  
constitution it has; and, consequently, well  
may we admire and praise the goodness of  
the Lord, who hath dispensed the products  
of

SERM. of this globe in such a manner as tends to  
 III. increase the employment of men as their  
 numbers also increase. For by the distribution of various fruits in different climes, that mutual exchange of commodities, which is the basis of commerce, was originally occasioned; and though many are the evils which the pursuit of foreign trade hath brought on the nations, (as what good hath not been abused?) yet unnumbered are the benefits which mankind have received through that intercourse to which trade gives rise. The numbers who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in the great waters, form the smallest portion of the whole multitude, who, through commerce, gain a subsistence. The hands employed in building and equipping the vessels, and in collecting and preparing the materials necessary for them, would not easily be numbered: yet even these are few in comparison with the men, women and children, who are literally kept out of mischief, and who procure their support by raising the different products, or  
 manue.

manufacturing the various articles which are transported from one country to another, for the mutual benefit of all. While, by means of this intercourse, civilization has been extended in the world, the arts and sciences introduced into the different regions of it, and the knowledge of the most important truths, those I mean of religion, by which we are made acquainted with our own nature, with our capacity of everlasting happiness, and the way to secure it, carried through the nations; whence the stock of human enjoyments hath been wonderfully increased, and bliss unspeakable been imparted to multitudes, which no man can number.

Here then we may again put the question, Hath not God borne most evident witness to Himself in thus regarding the sons of men? But should any part of that most absurd evasion of the Epicureans, who wished to persuade themselves that there is no God, suggest itself to your hearts; that the ingenuity and industry of men solely have

SERM.  
III.

SERM. have made such use of the things they find  
 III. on earth, and put affairs into this beneficial  
 train; but that hence no proof can be drawn  
 of any prior intention in the maker of them,  
 that they should be subservient to such purposes: recollect, that it is the nice adjustment I have all along remarked, of the materials to the nature, the faculties, and the wants of those who are to use them, which is insisted on as yielding testimony of the wisdom, goodness, and power of Him, who ordained them all. The brute animals, who have no such faculties as man has to exercise and improve, have their food prepared for them; they have only to gather and consume it; and the little work given them is commensurate with their powers; as the formation of the nests of birds, and the hives of insects, in the structure of which they never improve: but to man, as endowed with higher abilities, a more extensive field of intellectual employment is opened, and he is not only invited, but in some measure compelled, to pursue means that will enlarge his understanding,

and meliorate his mind: and such adjustment, always to be discovered in the cases we can thoroughly investigate, affords a testimony of the existence of an Authour who purposely framed it, little less strong than that which the footsteps of a man yield of his having passed through a path.

SERM.

III.

To be attentive to such testimony, and to learn to know the Lord in his works, is one of the surest means of obtaining happiness that we can pursue. Various points of this evidence we are all capable of observing; and as long as we retain the power of reflection, nothing can hinder our employing our minds on them, when we are disposed so to do; and the longer we continue it, the more pleasing we shall find the task; the more circumstances we shall daily discover so admirable in themselves, that we shall wonder we had, till then, overlooked them; and thus perceiving our attention rewarded by increasing recompence, we shall be led to trace the hand of our Creatour in all things around us, until our  
faith

SERM. faith in Him becomes almost incapable of  
III. being shaken : and seeing the power, marking  
the goodness, and feeling the providence  
of God, we shall know in whom we trust,  
and hence derive a security in all situations,  
and even in that of the approach of death,  
the happiness of which no words can express,  
but of the reality of which we may be convinced  
by acquainting ourselves with Him who “ hath never  
left Himself without witnesses, but hath done good,  
and given us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons,  
filling our hearts with food and gladness.”



# SERMON IV.

POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS THE JUDGMENTS  
OF GOD.

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DAN. IV. 17.

*To the intent that the living may know, that  
the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of  
men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will,  
and setteth up over it the basest of men.*

THESE words are found in a vision SERM.  
shewn to one, who, at the time of his IV.  
seeing it, was the most powerful monarch  
on the face of the earth; and, by the de-  
claration they contain, lead our thoughts to  
those proofs of God's moral government of  
the world, which are perpetually exhibited  
to us in the fates of nations; and which

SERM. come in due course to be considered by us,  
 IV. after that evidence of His being and providence, which were laid before you in the two last discourses, as arising from our own frame, and the constitution of the natural world.

Much of the testimony of the being and constant superintendance of the Lord, afforded us by the predictions of the prophet, from whose writings the text is taken, stands entirely independent of the other proofs of the Jewish and Christian religion, though coinciding with them; for were there neither Jew nor Christian in the world, the regular succession of empires on earth, according to his words, would still prove, that the God of Daniel ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.

It is the short-sightedness of unbelievers that has led them to object to the holy Scriptures, “ that the promise of an universal diffusion of the knowledge of christianity

tianity has not been fulfilled ;” since that promise is not restrained in point of time, and therefore, though not yet accomplished, may still be so hereafter. While the events which lead to its completion are regularly marked out in the sacred writings, and have hitherto taken place in gradual course and due order ; and the parts of the earth mentioned in the Bible as the seats of empire, have become so in a manner most deserving of attention. For what, in the age of Daniel, rendered it probable, that the conquerour of the Persian empire should come from Greece ? or those who should destroy the kingdom of his successors, be, in their turn, succeeded by those who should be the leading powers of the whole world ? Yet, as such, are the present nations of Christendom, different portions of the ancient Roman empire, spoken of, and such have they proved ; carrying their arms, and extending their colonies east, west, and south. While the more populous empires of India and China have generally confined themselves within their ancient limits, and make a very inadequate

SERM.  
IV.  
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SERM. figure in the history of the world. We hear,
 IV. indeed, that such nations exist; and we see,
 by the articles of trade our merchants bring
 from their country, that they are far ad-
 vanced in arts and manufactures, but their
 fleets visit not our seas, nor are their armies
 seen on our shores, as those of Europe are
 on their's.

These grand circumstances are sufficient to awaken our attention to this subject, and convince us, that further enquiry into these points will lead to a discovery of still further proofs of the overruling hand of God being employed in effecting the political revolutions which have taken place on the earth. To such an enquiry, therefore, let me now lead your thoughts, by reminding you of the wonderful manner in which, through events that no human discernment could foresee, nor any earthly power prevent, the fate of kingdoms hath often been determined. In our own times, we have seen the most unexpected changes rapidly take place; and, in particular, been witness to a
 country,

country, that seemed, between nature and art, to have been rendered almost inaccessible to an enemy, having been laid open to invasion by a circumstance, which had not its parallel in Europe for years before. The transaction to which I allude, is the irruption of the French into Holland, which was suddenly brought about by a frost of unusual severity, that at once rendered useless all the dispositions made to defend the country, by laying it under water ; and, in its consequences, overthrew the independence of a nation, whose commerce was most extensive, and whose political consequence was such, as to render this change in their situation of most material concern to the other nations of Europe. Here was a nation subjugated by means entirely independent of human power and contrivance ; and in like manner was our own country formerly preserved, when menaced by the well-known Spanish armada : since that formidable armament received its first damage from a storm ; after which its shattered remains were easily beaten by the force which

SERM.
IV.


SERM. the then sovereign of this land could muster.

IV.  Now, in both these events, so visible is the divine hand, that through them a lesson is given to mankind parallel to that of the text, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and directeth the affairs of it according to his good pleasure.

Yet what are these in comparison with the instances which the more extensive scene of ancient history presents! in which may be discovered unnumbered proofs of the everruling sway of an invisible power controuling the counsels of the great, and disappointing the views of the ambitious, raising up scourges to punish nations for their sins, and suddenly taking away those vessels of wrath, when once they have accomplished the work to which they were appointed. Of such instruments, either good or bad, the names of some have reached the ears of almost all men. For who has not heard of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and Cæsar? in the history of each
of

of whom the hand of Providence may most evidently be traced.

SERM.
IV.


Into subjection to the first of these, Nebuchadnezzar, were given many and powerful states : he found no enemy able to stand before him ; and carried his empire to an extent before unequalled on the earth. Yet, in less than thirty years after his death, was this mighty kingdom overthrown, and the nations subject to it brought under the dominion of the Medes and Persians ; the great instrument in establishing which was the renowned Cyrus ; a man particularly named by the prophet Isaiah a hundred years before he was born, as the very person whom God vouchsafed to appoint to be the deliverer of His people from their captivity in Babylon, and whose life and actions, as it might be expected, make a most prominent and remarkable figure in history. For the character of this very conquerour has been selected by one of the most celebrated writers of the nation, which has surpassed all others in producing writers, as that un-

SERM. der which he could best convey the descrip-
 IV. tion of a perfect prince. That a person
 thus particularly pointed out by a prophet
 in Judæa, many years previous to his birth,
 should afterwards be made the theme of an
 eminent historian in Greece, is one of those
 admirable circumstances which are adapted
 to impress on our minds the absolute cer-
 tainty of the Scriptures having been given
 by the inspiration of Him, who governs,
 as well as made the world, and all that is
 therein; and naturally leads us to enquire,
 what other particulars worthy of observa-
 tion are recorded of this instrument of Pro-
 vidence?

Born in a province at that time under
 the dominion of another country, by a
 course of uninterrupted success he came not
 only to the crown of the realm, to which
 his native land was subject, but extended
 his authority over other kingdoms, until he
 had secured the command of an empire
 which contained no small portion of the
 civilized world. But the most important
 of

of his conquests, the capture of the renowned city of Babylon, was principally attended with such circumstances as manifested Cyrus to be a chosen vessel of the Lord. Not only the river Euphrates, on which that city was situate, but the brazen gates through which the city was entered from the banks of the river, proved no defence against this bearer of a divine commission. The former of these the prophet Jeremiah had declared should be dried up. "A drought is upon her waters, (speaking of Babylon) and they shall be dried up." (Jer. L. 38.) And of the latter the Lord had thus spoken by Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." For these very particular words were by the exertions of Cyrus, in draining off that part of the river which ran through the city, and by the negligence which a great festival produced in it, accurately accomplished;

SERM. plished ; the gates towards the river being
 IV. carelessly left open, so that the Persian army
 found an unobstructed entrance into the
 heart of the city, by which all the treasures
 of that wealthy capital became to him an
 easy prey : and one early consequence of the
 dominion he thus acquired, was the release
 of the Jews on the expiration of that very
 term during which the prophet Jeremiah
 had declared they should continue in capti-
 vity. Which effect of the exaltation of
 Cyrus manifested in the most glowing co-
 lours. to the world, that “ it is the Lord
 God of Israel who ruleth in the kingdom
 of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He
 will.”

The monarchy thus established by Cyrus
 was overthrown by one of character no less
 remarkable, the celebrated Alexander the
 Great : who, though not called by name,
 is nevertheless so described by the prophet
 Daniel, as the conquerour of that empire
 which Cyrus established, that no one at all
 acquainted with the course of ancient events,
 and

and the characters by which they were brought about, can be at a loss to discern at whom the description points. The rapidity of this king's conquests, his remarkable escapes from perilous situations, into which his own rashness had thrown him, and the suddenness of his departure from life, when he had completed the work assigned him by the word of the Lord, all mark him for an especial instrument of Providence. While his empire being afterwards divided into the same number of portions, as had before been particularized in the holy Scriptures, leaves no room to doubt whose overruling hand directed all these things to the accomplishment of His own counsels.

The last ancient conquerour I mentioned as of renown sufficient to be not unheard of by you, was Julius Cæsar, who, from the condition of a private citizen, raising himself through a variety of the most hazardous enterprizes to the absolute dominion of Rome and its dependencies, when he had once prepared the way for the establishment
of

SERM.
IV.



SERM. of that monarchy which has been so important an instrument in the dispensations of Heaven on this globe, fell by a conspiracy, of which he was forewarned, and by an assassination, against which, according to all human appearance, he might most easily have secured himself. And thus, by the history of these conquerours, who have passed through the world with such splendour, is there pressed on our attention the suggestion delivered in the former part of the text, “ that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth to whomsoever He will.”

And for the latter part of it, “ and setteth up over it the basest of men.”—These words evidently allude more immediately to the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar himself to his kingdom, after he had been for some years reduced to that degree of abasement as to be driven from human society to dwell with the beasts of the field, and eat grass as oxen. But in their more distant signification they extend to those
 extra-

extraordinary revolutions by which the SERM.
rulers of nations sometimes rise from the IV.
dregs of the people, and thrones are filled
by slaves. The ancient and haughty nation
of Egypt hath afforded an extraordinary
instance of this, in perfect consonance with
the word of the Lord by His prophet Eze-
kiel, who declared, that it should be the
basest of kingdoms. Subdued and plun-
dered first by the Babylonians, then by the
Persians, she afterwards fell into the hands
of the Grecians, and by a family of these
was she governed, until she became a pro-
vince of the Roman empire, ruled by the
slaves of its prince. And if, after the fall
of this power, she became again for a short
interval under the Saracens, the seat of in-
dependent princes, they were yet of a fo-
reign race; and she has now, for centuries,
been governed literally by the slaves of the
Turk, who, on account of their characters,
no less than their origin, merit the title of
“ the basest of men.”

SERM. Was not, during the great rebellion in
 IV. our own country, the authority of the ban-
 nished monarch seized, and his place sup-
 plied by men who rose from the dregs of
 the people? And in the revolutions that
 have taken place among the French, a
 sovereign of the highest lineage has been
 succeeded in power by those who would
 have been proud to have holden a menial
 office in his palace.

Now these events claim our attention as
 proceeding not merely from those visible
 causes, with the observation of which many
 are satisfied, but from the just indignation
 of God against the nations in which they
 have happened, poured on them in such a
 manner as to reach to all ranks, and extend
 as generally as the wickedness of the people
 that are to be punished. Nor do men give
 to the Lord the glory due unto Him, as
 long as they fail to ascribe these great oc-
 currences to the judgments of the Most
 High, thereby acknowledging, that “ He
 ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth
 it


it to whomsoever He will, and sometimes SERM.
“setteth over it” for the sins of the people, IV.
“even the basest of men.”

But in the history of no other part of the world have these truths been so strongly exemplified as in that of the people of Israel. The first monarch they had was suddenly called to the throne, and for his disobedience to the divine command, had the kingdom quickly rent from him: the second, who carried the dominion of Israel to its utmost extent, was elevated from tending the sheep-folds to be ruler of the people; and, in aftertimes, when the land was divided into two kingdoms, the number of generations in which that of Israel should continue in a particular family, was repeatedly specified, that it might be known by whose decree the revolution was brought about, and whose sentence put down one, and set up the other. Indeed, this of Jacob was from among all the families of the earth, particularly selected, to shew forth the glory of God, and therefore His mercies and his

} judgments

SERM. judgments are especially marked in all that
 IV. befel them, that therein the arm of the
 Lord being made bare, we may understand, it is that which works among all other people; and learn to ascribe the moral discipline, which both nations and individuals undergo, to its real Authour, the God and Father of all, who suffers no man to pass through life without repeated and sufficient admonitions of His universal providence and uninterrupted superintendance.

Thus then it is, by our Bibles alone, that we can be taught to reason properly on what befalls us in the world: by them the good and evil which we suffer will in general be explained; and we may learn from them not to be puffed up at our own prosperity, nor envy that of others; not to be dejected at the crosses with which we may meet, nor judge harshly of others for the ill success that attends them. Not to be elated at success; because, if your elevation be all the ground you have for thinking yourself a favourite of heaven, behold the basest of
 men

men are sometimes set even upon thrones! **SERM.**
Not to repine at others being preferred be- **IV.**
fore you, though their unworthiness be 
manifest to all; because by this you can
know neither love nor hatred. Not to per-
mit crosses to throw you into despondency;
since these are oftentimes sent in mercy as
corrections, and received as such by our-
selves, not uncommonly end, like the de-
gradation of Nebuchadnezzar, in a return
to all the honours of our station; or, like
the affliction of Job, in a still ampler share
of good. Not, lastly, to conclude, that
others are sinners because we see them suffer-
ing: since even the trees which do bear
fruit are by your heavenly Father purged,
that they may bring forth more fruit.

From the same holy Scriptures too we
may inform ourselves, how to reason on the
unexampled political revolutions that have
of late years taken place in Christendom;
not impiously and prophanelly to conclude,
from their success, that the favour of
Heaven attends those wretches, who tram-

SERM. pling under foot every maxim of truth,
IV. every obligation, moral and religious; who
denying the Father and the Son, proceed, with atheistical fury, to obliterate, as far as they are able, every degree of faith, and every vestige of piety, from the earth: but to confess that those days are fast approaching, in which the power and tyranny of Antichrist, rising to its greatest height, shall suddenly be destroyed by the appearance of the Lord, to perform the mercy promised to His people, that "being gathered from all nations, whither He hath scattered them, and delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him." For such I hope to prove to you in the next discourse, is the designation of the stock of Israel; which, though now, as the tree which the Babylonian monarch saw representing himself, it has its branches cut off, its leaves shaken off, and its fruit scattered, shall still bud forth again, and fill the land, extending her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

In

In the mean time, ye, I trust, will not permit to slip from your recollection the instances now set before you, in which the Most High hath so intelligibly suggested to all who hear of them, that “ it is He who ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will ;” but occasionally calling them to mind, learn under all the chances and changes of this mortal life, to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and let Him be your fear, Him be your dread, and make Him your confidence, and your rock of defence !

SERM.
IV.
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SERMON V.

THE DESIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE OF
ISRAEL.

ISAIAH XLIII. 21.

*This people have I formed for myself; they
shall shew forth my praise.*


IT is recorded of our Lord and his SERM.
apostles, that they repeatedly exhorted V.
those whom they addressed diligently to
examine their doctrines, and prove the va-
lidity of the evidence produced in support
of them. Had this exhortation been re-
ceived with a degree of candour any way
comparable to that with which it was urged,
the opponents of the Gospel would not
only have been much less in number, but
the best known and most able among them
would

SERM. would have saved themselves much time
 v. and labour, which they have mispent, in
 framing objections that have no solid foundation. Among other cavils that would by this mean have been prevented, are those which arose at what the preachers of christianity taught, in respect to the particular favour and patronage with which God had been pleased to bless the nation of the Jews. The incredibility of the Deity's preferring, to all other people, one of an origin so mean, of manners so unfocial, and which made so little a figure in the world, and was every way so despicable, was, with earnestness, insisted on by the most learned Heathens. "Why were not," it was asked, "the Greeks or Romans, nations whose greatness and learning had justly gained them the respect of mankind, selected, to have the divine will first communicated to them, rather than the inhabitants of Palestine, who had been continually slaves to their neighbours, and dwelt in an unfrequented corner of the earth?"

Now

Now these objections would not, per-
haps, have been groundless, if it had been
affirmed, either that God chose this people
during the latter ages of their common-
wealth, or that He gave them the prefer-
ence on account of their own merit, or in-
trinſick righteouſneſs. But the contrary of
both theſe things was expreſſly taught:
the Hebrews were ſeparated from the reſt
of men, to be made the particular inſtru-
ments of divine providence, long before the
exiſtence of either Athens or Rome; for
the diſpenſation in which they were to be
employed, required, to the perfecting of it,
a courſe of numerous ages. And the divine
counſel, in appointing the Iſraelites for this
purpoſe, was determined by the favour
which God bare to their fathers; who,
through the alacrity with which they
obeyed his commands, in preſerving them-
ſelves from the pollutions of idolatry, then
daily gaining ground in the world; by the
confidence they manifeſted in his truth and
power, by renouncing their country and
kindred, on the promiſe of greater bleſſings

SERM. from his hand ; and by the zealous attachment they ever shewed to his service, procured to have their seed after them chosen for “ the peculiar people of the Lord.”

v.  And had the writings to which the preachers appealed been examined with fairness, and the discovery of the truth, not that of some plausible ground for objection, been made the object of the search, it would not only have appeared that these things were so, but have been seen too, that every circumstance in the history, and every peculiarity in the constitution of the Jews, indicated the truth more plainly declared in the text, “ that they were first in the person of their great progenitor separated from all other nations ; then gradually increased into a numerous people, and at length most closely connected among themselves, by a code of laws given them from Heaven, and as widely disjoined from the rest of mankind, that they might be instruments adequate to the performance of some great purposes of the divine providence, and while they manifested to the world the glorious attributes of

the


the one true God, and the reality of his interposition in human affairs, they might become a proper mean through which to convey to us any future revelation of his will He might see fit to make.”

SERM.
V.
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For such is the interpretation I would put on the words before us; since every great event that hath happened to that nation, whether adverse or prosperous, hath contributed to shew forth the praise of the Lord, by manifesting either the severity of His justice on the abandoned, or the unspeakable greatness of His mercy towards those who obey His laws: besides that their constitution seems to have been purposely calculated to support the evidence brought for the truth of the Gospel by the singular tendency of it to render a new doctrine, first preached and received by the truly religious among them, more credible than if it had been set on foot in any other nation. For that this was the case will be eminently visible from the brief review of their history, and part of their laws, which I shall now take,

SERM. take, for the purpose of discovering how  
 v. wonderfully consistent they are with the  
 counsel of God thus declared by his prophet, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." And as it cannot but be both useful and entertaining to a rational mind to trace the footsteps of God's wisdom in the moral, as well as the natural world, and observe, that as in the latter He hath endued several animals with instincts, the utility of which to man hath not been discovered till ages after their creation, so in the former He hath made various institutions, the advantage flowing from which hath, like the other, remained long unknown, but like that too, when once seen, been found constituted to endure even to the consummation of all things; I hope your attention will keep pace with my discourse.

First, then, were we to say only, that the circumstances of this people's history are singular, we should speak very inadequately of them, for they are more, they are wonderful.

derful, and extremely interesting to the SERM.  
whole race of mankind. Behold a people v.  
dwelling alone, and not reckoned among   
the nations! whose antiquity is indis-  
putable, and the memory of whose great  
progenitors is, to this day, revered through  
the East, as that of men who were the  
favourites of Heaven. If you demand of  
the ancient western writers an account of  
this race, they can return you none but  
what is intricate and obscure, and at the  
same time worked up with such colouring,  
as too plainly betrays the invidious hand of  
an enemy. If you consult the few scattered  
fragments of Phenician and Babylonish  
histories, which the tyranny of Rome, the  
blind zeal of barbarian bigotry, and the  
ravages of time, have left us; these, in-  
deed, being penned by men who had oppor-  
tunity of becoming better acquainted with  
their history, speak more favourably and  
honourably of the people: but still, though  
you add the testimony of these to that of  
the others, little satisfaction can be gained  
but on this one point, that there was a  
mutual enmity ever reigning between the  
Jews

SERM. Jews and the Heathens, occasioned by the  
 V. difference of their religions; the former  
 esteeming accursed all who would not embrace theirs; the latter holding the Jewish religion to be the most vile of superstitions.


The subject of opinions so opposite as these, one should, at the first view, imagine, had something peculiar in it, and greatly is this presumption justified by the wonderful revolution that hath been since brought about in the world, by which this religion, whose votaries were used to be stigmatized with the names of impious and abominable, is now acknowledged, in all those parts of the world where it was most forwardly condemned, as well as in others, to have been founded on divine revelation; the God of Israel is believed to be the only true God; those cities and nations which were the boldest in denying his power and godhead, and in persecuting his worshippers, are desolated and destroyed, while His people, though in a state of rejection, caused, as they themselves own, by their  
 sins

sins against Him, who so often brought salvation to their fathers, and had given so manifold proofs of His universal and supreme dominion, are still kept separate from the rest of men, and still continue capable of being made, on their repentance, as signal examples of the mercy, as they at present are, of the justice of the Lord, whose name alone is Jehovah. Wherefore there is good reason to mistrust the unfavourable representations made by some, of the origin, customs, and religion of this nation; and since the generality of mankind have given their voices against the truth of their accounts in relation to the last, it would be acting but simply to rely on those they have left us of the others.

Let us then turn to the people themselves, and enquire what information they can afford us; for it is probable that they are at least better acquainted with their own history than strangers are; and as they can produce a long series of publick records, they have assuredly a right to expect that  
we

SERM. we should receive their's with the same candour and readines to believe them, as we do those of any other nation. Their enemies, indeed, object that these their ancient writings contain things so great and miraculous, as to shock a reasonable man's faith; but as it is highly absurd to attempt to overthrow a known fact, by any argument whatever, so it is no less so to deny a well-attested miracle, when it is both ascribed to a hand confessedly adequate to the performance of it, and affirmed to have been wrought for no other end than such as is worthy the interference of such an hand.

Now the miracles related in the Jewish Scriptures are attended with both these requisites, for they are attributed to the power of the Deity himself; and his interposition is said to have been for the support and advancement of truth among men, for the encouragement of righteousness, and for the execution of justice and judgment on falsehood and vice. Thus Abraham, the great father of the race, having, at the command  
of

of God, separated himself from his kindred, SERM,  
that in one family of the earth at least the V.  
knowledge of the real Creatour might be   
preserved, though it were lost in the rest ;  
and he, and his immediate descendants,  
Isaac and Jacob, having shewn their firm  
reliance on the only God, having dedicated  
themselves to the worship of him solely,  
terming themselves his servants, thus testi-  
fying against the impiety of their cotem-  
poraries, who, though not yet advanced to  
the extreme folly of entirely excluding the  
Almighty from their temples, yet had be-  
gun to worship his creatures together with  
Him ; the hand of Heaven was signally  
with them, and the divine protection they  
enjoyed was manifested in that “ when  
they were yet strangers in the land, and  
went from one nation to another, from one  
kingdom to another people, He suffered no  
man to do them wrong ; but reprov'd even  
kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not  
mine anointed, and do my prophets no  
harm !”

Neither

SERM.

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Neither did this particular favour of God to the patriarchs pass unnoticed by the inhabitants of the countries in which they sojourned; *they* observed their advantageous situation, and sought their alliance; yet they had not wisdom enough to preserve themselves from deserting the service of that God, the blessed fruits of whose patronage were so plainly set before them; but proceeded from one degree of pollution to another, till at length the measure of their iniquities being full, the descendants of these very persons, who had been signs unto them, and by whom was set before them a lesson, which, if followed, would have led them to salvation, were, by the hand of Providence, brought forth to execute the justly destined destruction on these incorrigible nations.

While the sins of the Canaanites, however, were gradually rising to that height as to call down the divine vengeance, the chosen race had some preparatory scenes to pass through. First, the watchful care of Providence over them was manifested by wonder-



wonderfully securing them an asylum from the evil which so sorely afflicted their neighbours; for in Egypt they escaped the pressure of famine. There too, as in a favourable soil, their numbers most rapidly increased; until their growing greatness exciting the jealousy of the king, *he*, with the vilest ingratitude, endeavoured to crush that family, which had, a few years before, given in Joseph a favour to his country.

The counsels of the wicked seldom prosper! All that this wretched monarch reaped from his cruel policy was, that he himself soon became, in the hands of the divine justice, a vessel of wrath, fitted to destruction. While the Israelites were brought forth with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm, by the God of their fathers; whose signs and wonders wrought in Egypt, tended to convince all who should hear of them of his supreme power, and were calculated to impress sentiments of awe and gratitude on the minds of the people delivered; whom now, according to

SERM. his covenant with Abraham, he was about  
 v. to put in possession of the promised land;  
 and therefore he now first gave them a  
 settled constitution, and established such laws  
 among them as were well adapted to form  
 them into a “ people fit to shew forth his  
 praise.”

The first part of these laws, or rather the great summary of the whole, the ten commandments, were delivered to all the people assembled together, by a voice from a thick cloud, attended with such awful marks of the divine presence, as filled the congregation with terrour and amazement, and inclined them in future to hear, and believe whatever Moses told them from God: and the sequel of them was given through the mediation of this much-favoured man, containing among many other institutions, in which justice, purity, and wisdom, are eminently visible, some that more particularly claims our present attention, on account of the effect which was clearly intended from them, and which they have had in  
 rendering

rendering a revelation first divulged among that people more credible than if set on foot in any other nation. Among such are to be numbered, first, those laws which inculcated the belief and worship of one only God, and banishing all kinds of idolatry and superstition, restrained them in their intercourse with those nations who were guilty of them; for these laws tended to secure them from becoming dupes to such forgeries as those men, who pretended to be the favourites of particular deities, made to succeed in other countries. Secondly, those which forbade any false pretences to revelation among themselves, giving them marks by which to discern a prophet really speaking by the command of God, from one falsely affirming he did so, and commanding them to punish summarily and capitally all who were guilty of this presumption.

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These laws rendered it evidently very difficult for an impostor to succeed in Israel, as well as dangerous to attempt success; especially after the nation had once (as we

SERM. shall presently see they did) severely smothered  
 V. for their neglect of these injunctions, and  
 were thereby become more attentive to them; for after the law was delivered, the strongest sanctions were added in its support. And when the days of Moses (by whose hand God had led them to the borders of Canaan) drew to an end, he, by the divine command, repeated the whole to the people, promising, on the one hand, the greatest blessings if they observed it, and, on the other, denouncing on them, if they proved disobedient, such curses as cannot be even read without horror. And their history, from that time to the present, is a continued manifestation of the truth of his words; the changes of their situation having constantly followed the alterations in their conduct.

Did they walk in the statutes of their God? He then blessed them in all things, and their enemies were unable to stand before them. Did they, on the contrary, turn aside from his commandments? Then their  
 I prof-

prosperity ceased; and they were spoiled, and enslaved, by those whom they used to spoil. Thus they passed the years with various fortunes, until the age of David; and, when under his government, they steadily applied themselves to keep the law of the Lord, their affairs again became uniformly prosperous; and during the reigns of him and his son Solomon, their empire was carried to the promised extent, and reached from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the river.

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But, on the decease of this last monarch, the ten tribes having separated from those of Judah and Benjamin, the golden calves were set up in Bethel and Dan; and henceforth, in both kingdoms, (for that of Judah soon followed the other in apostacy) things continued, with but few intervals, growing worse and worse; idolatry was almost established; and so great was the corruption, that the prophets prophesied falsely, and the people loved to have it so. The Lord's hand, therefore, was no longer withholden;

SERM. the sister kingdoms were, in their turns,
 v. carried away captive, with this difference
 only, that the subjects of the one were
 dispersed not to return until after many
 days, while those of the other were taken
 away only for a definite time, then to be
 restored to their country.

The execution of this sentence of captivity was (as may be expected in all the dispensations of Heaven) useful not to one only, but to several ends; first, justice was thereby executed on an ungrateful people; the knowledge of the God of Israel, and of the proofs given of his truth and power, was disseminated in various parts of the world, and the nation, who was to be restored, learnt to be in future more cautious of leaving his service for that of idols, of breaking his sabbaths, and of listening to false pretenders to revelation from Him. The scrupulousness of the Jews, after their return from Babylon, in respect to the two former points, is sufficiently known, and in regard to the last, the fear of listening to
 pre-

pretenders to revelation, that probably had some share in the perverseness which was afterwards shewn in the case of a true prophet; and might partly cause that backwardness to believe the evidence our Saviour His self gave of his divine mission, which seems to have reigned, in some measure, in every Jewish breast.

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But whether it sprang from this, or any other cause, the backwardness I mention was, by the wise and merciful ordainment of God, turned to the most excellent purpose, since it gave occasion to Christ to produce such testimony of his truth as none but one authorized by God Himself could give. For God having given his people the note of a false prophet in those words of the law, “ If a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow *not*, nor come to pass, *that* is the thing which the Lord hath *not* spoken; but the prophet hath spoken it *presumptuously*.” It was justly to be concluded from thence, not merely that if the thing *did come* to pass,

SERM. that was a sign of the truth of the prophet,
 V. but that it was moreover a sign allowed by
 God Himself, and which he had, in some
 measure, pledged himself not to permit any
 pretender to assume. When our Lord,
 therefore, to satisfy his disciples, appealed
 to the truth of His prophecies, concerning
 His own death and resurrection, He gave
 them the plainest line by which to form
 their opinion concerning Him; a line which
 admitted of no misapplication on *their* part,
 and of no deceit on *His*.

But further; while the scrupulous caution of the more honest and truly religious Jews helped to make the evidence for the Gospel most complete and unexceptionable, even the obstinacy and perverseness of the abandoned part of them did likewise contribute to the same end. For it having been declared in the law, that God would raise up a prophet among them like unto Moses, to whom if they did not listen, He would require it of them; when one who in so many particulars resembled Moses, as
 . Jesus

Jesus did, appeared, and they did not listen SERM.
to Him, the punishment which overtook V.
them, both testified the lasting truth of the
Authour of their law, and formed a powerful demonstration to all who should become acquainted with these circumstances, that Jesus was, indeed, the prophet promised; and as part of that punishment, the dispersion and consequent misery of the bulk of the Jews, continues to this day, it may be properly said, that *we ourselves* are partly *eye witnesses* of the truth of these things; and therefore of that too of the text, “ that the peculiar designation of this extraordinary people was, that they should be to the rest of mankind, a perpetual monument of God’s moral government of the world; and, by the consistency of their fate with their conduct, be a living testimony of His truth, justice, and mercy; and, finally, a lasting evidence of the great truths made known through the preaching of chosen persons of their nation to all mankind, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world to redeem us, and instruct us in his will, and will
in

SERM. in the end, judge us by the gospel he hath
 v. left: whereof, we may well add, He hath
 given assurance unto all men, in that He
 hath punished, in a manner so exemplary,
 the people who first rejected that gospel.

When I observed, in the former part of this discourse, that the Jewish nation still continue capable of being made, on their repentance, as signal examples of the mercy, as they at present are of the justice of the Lord, I spoke in allusion to those predictions of the prophets and apostles, in which the restoration of that people to the land given to Abraham and his seed for ever, is openly foretold. Thus, by the prophet Jeremiah, it is declared, that their dispersion shall not end in their dissolution, but that they shall be gathered to God, and to their Messiah, (mentioned by the title of David their king, as being the son of David) in the following passage of his thirtieth chapter. “ Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write all the words that I have spoken to thee in a book. For lo, the
 days

days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and I will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel:

SERM.
V.



SERM. O Israel: For lo, I will save thee from afar,
 v. and thy seed from the land of their capti-
 vity; and Jacob shall return and be at rest,
 and be quiet, and none shall make him
 afraid, for I am with thee, saith the Lord,
 to save thee: though I make a full end
 of all nations whither I have scattered thee,
 yet will I not make a full end of thee.”

When our blessed Lord himself foretold the desolation of Jerusalem, He signified, that it should continue only a limited time, by saying, “ Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” And His apostle Paul hath explicitly declared, that as the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, so, though blindness in part has now happened unto Israel, yet the covenant of the Lord with them, “ that there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob,” shall be performed, “ and so all Israel shall be saved.” Consistently with which ye will find, on carefully examining the words of the prophets,

phets, that after foretelling the dispersion and sufferings of their countrymen, they almost universally speak of their restoration, in the last days, to the favour of God, and all the blessings of His mercy.

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This receiving, which St. Paul declares shall be life from the dead, that is, as explained by St. John, shall be accompanied, or immediately followed by the first resurrection, shall be preceded, we are assured, by such a scene of apostacy from the truth, and such daring blasphemy of God, as the earth never before exhibited ; when such a scene, therefore, begins to open in the world, great is the consolation which Christians may derive from recollecting, that however miserable its effects are on them, it is yet preparatory to the glorious manifestation of the Redeemer, when He shall appear to complete the dispensation, by turning away iniquity from Jacob, reigning before His saints, and adding to all His other triumphs that over the last enemy which shall be destroyed, which is *Death*.


SER-

SERMON VI.

ON THE PREDICTIONS RELATING TO THE
MESSIAH.

ST. JOHN I. 45.

*We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the
law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of
Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.*

THOSE who view the testimony which SERM.
God hath been pleased to bear to the VI.
truth of His Gospel, only in its detached 
portions, can have but a very inadequate
idea of that vast weight of evidence which
arises from considering these as connected
with each other, and forming together one
great body of testimony, extending, in
miracles and prophecies, from the fall of

SERM. our first parents to the consummation of all
 VI. things. True it is, that the personal works
 ~~~~~ of our blessed Saviour, and His resurrection,  
 are in themselves sufficient to prove His  
 divine mission; for “no man could have  
 done the works that He did, unless God  
 had been with Him.” But when, in addi-  
 tion to these, we are informed, that these  
 miracles, and this resurrection, were fore-  
 told long before, nay, were made the sub-  
 jects of a course of prophecy; the prepa-  
 ration that God was thus pleased to make  
 for His Messiah, and the warning He thus  
 gave the world of His approach, bespeak  
 a still greater care of Heaven to impress  
 on the minds of the human race the truth and  
 importance of this divine Messenger.

That the Jews were in earnest expectation  
 of this great Person at the very time of His  
 appearance, may, in some measure, I con-  
 ceive, be collected from the words of the  
 text; “We have found, saith Philip, Him  
 of whom Moses in the law, and the pro-  
 phets did write.” For, are not these evi-  
 dently



dently the words of a man who had discovered One for whom he and his friends had long been looking? and the ground of this expectation was, as St. Paul said of one part of it, the promise to Abraham, older than the law; commencing from the hope of deliverance given to Adam, when in the sentence pronounced on the serpent, the Lord God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." For such a promise of future triumph over him, who, by betraying them into transgression, had robbed them of their happy state, must naturally have become to Adam and his wife, and by tradition from them, to their posterity, specifically the most important object of their hopes; and though the consequences of such a victory were not mentioned, we must suppose the earlier generations of men to be very unlike the race at present, if we think they did not draw from this promise of their merciful Creatour, conclusions favourable to their

SERM. own wishes ; and reasoning from what had  
 VI. been incurred by the victory of the serpent  
 over man, the curse of death, did not thence  
 infer, that man's triumph over the serpent  
 might possibly be attended with a restora-  
 tion to life and immortality.

But however individuals might paint the future deliverance of the race, the general expectation of the promised victory must have continued very lively during at least the life of the first man, and that of his immediate descendant Seth ; yet before the decease of this last, the miraculous translation of Enoch took place, and yielded no small assurance, that those who pleased God might obtain a release from the fatal sentence ; arguing on which, those who then continued to serve the Lord, and look for His salvation, drew no far-fetched inference, if they concluded, that the triumph of the promised seed over the serpent would be attended with the glorious consequence of delivering His brethren from the curse of death. The traditional belief of another life  
 after

after this, prevalent among all the nations of antiquity, tends to confirm the idea, that such was the faith delivered by their common ancestor Noah, who had been a preacher of righteousness before the flood: and what St. Paul says of the patriarchs looking for an heavenly country, tends to confirm the same. Though then, indeed, we know the nature of the salvation had been considerably explained; because, after Abraham had been called by God, and received the promise, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, so extensive was the information he received of the future blessing, that our Lord hath said, “Abraham saw his day, and was glad;” and St. Paul, that he received Isaac, (who, as the child of promise, naturally formed a type of the true promised seed, yet could not, by his father, be mistaken for him, since, in the account the Lord was pleased to give him of his posterity, he had postponed the appearance of that blessing till after their getting possession of the land of Canaan)

SERM.  
VI.  


SERM. St. Paul, I say, declares, that he received  
 VI. Isaac in a figure from the dead.

In the blessing too, which Jacob pronounced over his sons on his death-bed, we find a strong and remarkable proof of that patriarch's faith. After declaring that Dan should be a serpent in the way, he exclaimed, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" For how could the thought of a serpent biting an horse's heel, and throwing his rider to the ground, bring to the recollection of Israel the salvation for which he had been waiting, unless the idea of a serpent was, by some way or other, inseparably connected with that salvation? and how can such a connection be so easily and naturally accounted for, as by allowing, that he alluded to the divine promise, that a descendant of his should bruise *the* serpent's head? And already had he, in the blessing of Judah, spoken of this seed; declaring, that his should not cease to be a ruling tribe until the Giver of peace (for such is the meaning

meaning of the word written in our Bibles, (Shiloh) should come: “ the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come.” Gen. xlix. 10. It is, moreover, worthy of observation, that when Jacob thus said, that he had waited for the salvation of the Lord, he uttered no complaint, as if he feared that he had finally missed of it, although he was then on his death-bed: a most pregnant proof this that the deliverance he looked for was not a temporal one, nay, certainly contained in it a rescue from the grave.

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VI.

Thus, then, stood the belief of the faithful, the extent of the promise, and description of him by whom it was to be fulfilled, before the giving of the Jewish law by Moses. Their hopes contained the first wish of the human heart, immortality. The authour of this, it was now ascertained, was to come of the seed of Jacob, of the tribe of Judah; and as the tokens of his person had hitherto been encreased, in proportion

SERM. portion to the additional disclosures made  
 VI. of the benefits He was to obtain for men,  
 so encrease of light continued to be given  
 equally on these two points; that as they  
 became more interested in His appearance,  
 they might be more strongly secured from  
 any mistakes concerning it. The sacrifice  
 of the Lamb at the passover, all the par-  
 takers of which were saved from the de-  
 struction which the angel of the Lord dealt  
 around them, afforded a type to which no  
 one could correspond, who was not slain  
 without having a bone of him broken: and  
 when in the wilderness, the people expressed  
 their terrour at the fearful scene exhibited  
 on mount Sinai, and begged, that God  
 would not again speak with them, lest  
 they should die; in the promise then  
 given that the Lord would raise them up a  
 prophet from among their brethren like  
 unto Moses, in whose mouth he would put  
 his words, and who should speak unto them  
 all that he should command them; while  
 another particular in the character of the  
 great Deliverer was given, that He should  
 be

be a teacher ; the attendant circumstances SERM.  
expressed, that He should be like unto VI.  
Moses, and should speak in the name of  
God, so limited the description, that no one  
could ever answer it but Jesus of Nazareth  
Himself. He, indeed, resembled Moses in  
escaping in His infancy from the cruel  
hands of a sanguinary tyrant. He resem-  
bled him in being forty days fasting in the  
wilderness ere he delivered the words of the  
Lord to the people. He resembled him in  
giving with authority a set of command-  
ments to the people, assuming to himself,  
both by the place from which He spake, a  
mountain, and by the style He used, “ But  
I say unto you,” the character and autho-  
rity of that prophet, like Moses, who it  
was declared should come into the world ;  
and, lastly, (for to go through all the par-  
ticulars of resemblance by no means belongs  
to a discourse like this) He resembled him,  
in miraculously giving bread to the multi-  
tude in the desert, when, with only five  
barley loaves, and two small fishes, he fed  
five thousand men, who yet left twelve

SERM. baskets full of fragments. But in this  
 VI. miracle, indeed, the people themselves discerned the resemblance, and acknowledged it, by affirming, that He of a truth was the long-expected Prophet.

The other circumstance expressed in the description of this prophet was, that He should speak in the name of God; and a very little attention to the words of our Lord will manifest the accurate correspondence that existed between His mode of teaching, and this previous account of it. He seems, indeed, purposely to have stated to His hearers, that all He did, or said, was in His Father's name; thus pointing out to them the distinction between Himself and those who falsely pretended to the character of the Christ, and leading them to the inference, that He was the person spoken of by Moses in the law. Hear Him declaring to the Jews, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me." And "I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent  
 sent



sent me.” Again: “ the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.” And, lastly, “ I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” In the discourse accompanying which rebuke, He exhorted them to search the Scriptures for testimony of Him, thus pointing out to them a characteristick which they could not have failed to have discerned, had they but discharged their duty.

SERM.

VI.



As we proceed in our investigation of the particulars of the then future salvation revealed in the law, we find strong suggestions of the necessity of sacrifice and atonement to be made for sins; yet those openly appointed, the blood of bulls, and that of goats, were evidently unequal to the end; though they still taught the divine acceptance of vicarious sacrifice. Hence the minds of the thoughtful part of the Israelites (and many such there must have been in the schools of their prophets, whose business it

SERM. it was to teach the people what they their-  
VI. selves discovered) were naturally prepared  
to receive and comprehend those declarations which, in course of time, the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah delivered concerning the Messiah's being cut off for the sins of the people. But as this very important part of the office of the Saviour began to be more clearly seen, it was fit that still more particular testimony should be given of His person and actions, such as could not possibly be applied to any other that might appear; and this was most admirably done, first, by such things being foretold of His sufferings as no one would like to have fulfilled in himself; and, secondly, by ascribing to Him such acts as could not be performed without the divine patronage; while other circumstances, not in any man's power to command with regard to himself, were added, to encrease the notoriety of His person. As these last were to happen first, in order of time, let me *first* call *them* to your recollection.

The absurdest enemy of the Gospel will not dispute, that it is out of any man's power to contrive of what family he shall be born; yet the stock from which the promised seed was, according to the flesh, to descend, was limited not only, as I have before noticed, to the tribe of Judah, but to the line of Jesse, and even within that, to the particular family of his youngest son David. “ And there shall come forth (proclaims Isaiah) a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord: and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eye, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears, but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He  
flay

SERM.

VI.



SERM. slay the wicked : and righteousness shall be  
 VI. the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the  
 ~~~~~ girdle of His reins." And, in a still higher  
 strain: " For unto us a Child is born ;
 unto us a Son is given ; and the govern-
 ment shall be upon His shoulder ; and His
 name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
 the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,
 the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of
 His government and peace, there shall be
 no end ; upon the throne of David, and
 upon his kingdom, to order it, and to esta-
 blish it with judgment, and with justice,
 from henceforth even for ever." (Isaiah ix.
 6, 7.) Observe too the words of Jeremiah.
 " Behold the days come, saith the Lord,
 that I will raise unto David a righteous
 branch, and a king shall reign and prosper,
 and shall execute judgment and justice in
 the earth. In His days Judah shall be
 saved, and Israel shall dwell safely : and this
 is His name whereby He shall be called,
 the Lord, our Righteousness." (Jer. xxiii.,
 5, 6.)

But

But in this last text the promised seed is spoken of in a character in which He has not yet appeared in this discourse, that of the Deliverer of the people of Israel in a more especial manner. “ In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.” This particular, which is enlarged on in many other passages of the prophets, naturally attracted the principal attention of the Jews themselves, and made them watchful for every symptom of the promised appearance of their Saviour. Neither should it seem strange that the Redeemer of the human race should prove, in a more particular manner, a blessing to the stock from whence He sprung. Those who live nearest the sun naturally enjoy the greatest share of its benign influence, while such as are removed to a greater distance, have sufficient reason to be thankful for, and rejoice in the light and warmth they receive from it. And the family of Israel being, for their father’s sake, chosen to be the instruments of such a blessing to the world, justly gives them the precedence of all the sons of men; and
though

SERM.
VI.

SERM. though there be no respect of persons with
 VI. God, yet as the punishment for evil, fo
 “ the glory, honour, and peace, given to
 every man that worketh good, shall be to
 the Jew *first*, though also to the Gentile.”

To the above, of being born of the house of David, was added, by the spirit of prophecy, another circumstance, not only extraordinary, nor merely singular, but very miraculous; that the same great person should be born of a virgin. “ Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold a *virgin* shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Is. vii. 14.) Known unto God are all His works from the beginning; and, in mercy to the sons of men, He hath borne a kind of double testimony to some of those which are the most extraordinary; that the natural improbability of the thing on one side might be counterbalanced by the weight of evidence on the other. Thus, when the future victory over the serpent was promised at the fall, by the title of the seed of
 woman

woman in particular, being given to Him who was to obtain it, it was suggested that something peculiar would attend the birth of the Great Deliverer; but what that was remained concealed among the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, at least till these words of Isaiah explained it, by testifying that the Messiah should be so peculiarly the seed of woman only, as to be born of a virgin.

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VI.

The accomplishment of these two predictions in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is related to us by the evangelists Matthew and Luke, in passages too well known to need repetition, as well as that of His being born in Bethlehem of Judah, the prophecy only of which I shall therefore now repeat to you; it is written in the second verse of the fifth chapter of the prophet Micah. “ But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.”

SERM. VI. lasting." Observe here, likewise, a reference to the antiquity of the promise of this great person's coming, "whose goings forth have been from old." For incidental passages like this, though often overlooked, serve to connect the different parts of revelation, and preserve the unity of Scripture, and thus suggest to the reader, that however long (as we count long) a course of time it may require to perfect it, the dispensation carrying on for human redemption is but one, which commenced as soon as the race stand in need of redemption, and will end only when they are delivered from the last enemy that shall be destroyed, which is Death.


The prophetick characteristics of the Messiah which I proposed next to consider, were those sufferings which it was foretold He should undergo, and to which no one, conscious of being an impostor, would willingly have subjected himself for the chance of success. In the twenty-second psalm, David in spirit described the very scene

scene which took place at the crucifixion. SERM.

“ All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: VI.

they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord, that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.” And a few verses after, “ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” A part of the indignities our Lord suffered during His passion, was thus foretold by the prophet Micah; “ They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.” (Mic. v. 1.) But the fullest and clearest account of what this great Person was to undergo, together with the reason of His being subjected, though without offence, to such afflictions, was given by Isaiah: an account, indeed, containing

SERM. taining circumstances which it was naturally
 VI. and utterly impossible should be all accom-
 ~~~~~ plished but in the very Person appointed by  
 God to redeem our fallen race. “ Who  
 (saith this prophet, in his fifty-third chap-  
 ter) hath believed our report ? and to whom  
 is the arm of the Lord revealed ? ” Thus  
 pointedly does he mark the appearance of  
 this subject of all prophecy, as contrary to  
 that which his countrymen would expect :  
 He was not to shew Himself to Israel as a  
 powerful prince, as a mighty warrior, but  
 as the righteous servant of that God, whose  
 strength is perfected in weakness. Even  
 men can sometimes do great things by great  
 means ; but it is the prerogative of the  
 Almighty to effect great purposes by in-  
 struments otherwise totally inadequate to  
 them ; and when in these we discern not  
 the divine operation, to us the arm of the  
 Lord is not revealed, as it was not to those  
 who scorned Jesus for the meanness of His  
 appearance, though the prediction contin-  
 ued, “ For He shall grow up before  
 Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of  
 a dry

a dry ground. He is despised and rejected SERM.  
of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted VI.  
with grief: and we hid, as it were, our   
faces from Him: He was despised, and we  
esteemed Him not."

After this description of our Saviour's reception, so accurately fulfilled in the treatment He met with from the Jews; the prophet proceeds to assign the reason of His being thus exposed to ill usage. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried *our* sorrows; yet we did esteem Him smitten of God and afflicted: but He was wounded for *our* transgressions; he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him; and with *His* stripes *we* are healed. All *we*, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on *Him* the iniquity of us all."

But there yet remained to be announced the chief thing which it behoved the Christ to suffer, ere He could enter into His glory: the types of the law could not be fulfilled,

SERM. the promised victory over the serpent could not be perfect, till the sentence he had brought on our first parents, by his victory over them, was done away; and captivity itself was led captive, by the promised seed's treading death under foot, and returning in triumph from the grave. But to ascend He must first descend, and therefore the prophet goes on. VI. “ He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth, (either to murmur, or to call for assistance which yet He told Peter He had but to pray for, and would receive.) He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? (that is, who will stand forth in that day, and acknowledge that he knows him?) For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken.”

The sacrifice thus offered, what remained to complete the work of human redemption,

tion,

tion, but an incontrovertible assurance, that SERM.  
God vouchsafed to accept the atonement? VI.  
After mentioning his burial, therefore, the  
prophet proceeds: "When thou shalt make  
His soul an offering for sin, He shall see  
His seed, He shall prolong His days, and  
the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in  
His hand. He shall see the travail of His  
soul, and shall be satisfied: by his know-  
ledge shall my righteous servant justify  
many, for He shall bear their iniquities.  
Therefore will I divide Him a portion with  
the great, and He shall divide the spoil  
with the strong, because He hath poured  
out His soul unto death: and He was num-  
bered with the transgressors; and He bare  
the sin of many, and made intercession for  
the transgressors."

Here at length behold those circum-  
stances which I affirmed it was naturally  
and utterly impossible should be accom-  
plished but in the very person appointed by  
God to redeem our fallen race. The Mes-  
siah, as you see, was not only to be cut off

SERM. for the sins of the people, but after He had  
 VI. poured His soul out unto death, He was to  
 justify many ; and to divide a portion with  
 the great, and the spoil with the strong. Now as the former of these circumstances, that of being slain, was in itself such as scarcely any pretender to the character would wish to have verified in his own person, because it would at once cut off all the happiness he might have promised to himself from his success, so had so mad a love of fame seized any one as to make him willing to lay down his life, under the hope of giving lasting credit to his imposture, yet the latter circumstance, that of returning from the dead, he must let alone for ever.

Here, then, was a characteristick appointed for the Christ, which could not possibly be assumed, while by requiring the interference of Him, to whom the sacrifice was offered, it proved, that He had accepted it ; and fully justified the sons of men in believing, that a sufficient atonement  
 WAS

was made for their sins by Him who had SERM.  
risen from the dead.

VI.


After thus mentioning our Lord's resurrection as a proof of His truth, it may seem needless to dwell on the testimony resulting from His other miracles; I will not, therefore, detain you to hear any observation on these now; but in my next discourse I shall call your attention to them, chiefly with a view to shew you the frivolousness of those objections which infidels, either ancient or modern, have made unto them.

In the mean time, let the importance of what has this day been stated unto you, sink deep into your hearts; for, be assured, that after God hath borne such witness to His Son, He will require it of every man, who wilfully shuts his eyes against it, or even carelessly disregards it. Ye have seen that His salvation was promised from the beginning of the world; that the particulars of it were gradually unfolded; and the characteristics of the great Person who

SERM. was to accomplish it, as gradually revealed.

VI. Ye have seen, too, that these last were too numerous to be likely to meet in more than one person, and some of them too nice to be possibly found in any but Him, for whom they were intended. For He must not only be the seed of the woman in a peculiar sense, but a descendant of Abraham, through the line of Isaac, Israel, Judah, and David, born at Bethlehem, a teacher and prophet like unto Moses, speaking in the name of the Lord, yet rejected by his own nation, afflicted, buffeted, led to publick execution with malefactors, and under the scoff of his countrymen, put to an ignominious death, yet, after all, rising again in triumph from the grave. Now, if this be He to whom all the ends of the earth are to look for salvation, what honest enquirer can be at a loss to discover Him? For who but Jesus of Nazareth not only ever bare, but ever pretended to all these characteristicks? He, indeed, foretold His own sufferings and death as necessary circumstances in proof of His being the Messiah; and suffered what  
He



He foretold. He likewise burst the bonds SERM.  
of death, and having ascended into Heaven, VI.  
gave His disciples power from on high to   
preach that gospel whose sound is gone forth  
into all nations, informing them, that the  
promise which God made unto the fathers,  
He hath indeed fulfilled the same, in that He  
hath raised up Jesus from the dead; and we,  
through their words, are now acquainted  
with those things which many kings and  
prophets have desired to see, but have not  
seen them; wherefore (we ought in com-  
mon sense to ask ourselves) “ How shall  
we escape, if we neglect so great salvation,  
which at first began to be spoken by the  
Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them  
that heard Him, God also bearing them wit-  
ness both with signs and wonders, and with  
divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost,  
according to His own will.”



# SERMON VII.

ON THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD.

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HEBREWS II. 3, 4.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.*

THERE is nothing on account of which SERM. VII. the Gospel has been more objected to, than the speculative difficulties that attend on some of its most important doctrines; against these the serious infidel directs his arguments; these the scoffing blasphemer makes the subjects of his jokes. But the argu-

SERM. arguments of the one, and the jests of the  
 VII. other, must be equally vain and ill-grounded,  
 if such difficulties were really to have been  
 expected in a revelation: and that they  
 were so, appears from the nature of revela-  
 tion itself, which is a discovery of the  
 councils and designs of God, as far as man  
 is interested therein, or as his conduct ought  
 to be influenced thereby: for it is not rea-  
 sonable to suppose, that we can fully com-  
 prehend the dispensations of that Being,  
 who, by his unbounded knowledge, fore-  
 sees, and, by His infinite wisdom, provides,  
 against every circumstance of every case.

This, perhaps, ye will allow, but still  
 wish to reply, that no part of the councils  
 of the Almighty, of which we cannot see,  
 and clearly comprehend all the reasons,  
 ought to have a share in a revelation made to  
 us. Were we required to fully understand,  
 or clearly explain the difficulties complained  
 of, this opinion would be just; but the  
 doctrines on which they attend, are not pro-  
 posed as subjects of speculation, but as ob-  
 jects

jects of faith, to be received on the authority of their Authour. How far it may be proper to make trial of our reliance on God, He himself who formed us is, surely, much abler to judge than we are: and since we have no natural right to that happiness of which He makes us an offer in the Gospel; if the conditions on which it is offered are such as we can perform, we cannot have any cause to murmur at them.

SERM.

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The proper subject of consideration therefore is, whether there be good ground for the faith required. Now the word of God, if that has indeed been given, must be unexceptionable. Here then, at length, arises the material question, Whether God hath really spoken? or, in other words, the evidence of revelation appears to be the true subject of enquiry.

To this, then, let us turn our thoughts, and take a view of it in the manner suggested by the text; first weighing the proofs, which our Lord His self gave of

SERM. His own divine commission and authority,  
 VII. and then examining with what fidelity they  
 have been handed down to us: for, by  
 these means, we shall be enabled to deter-  
 mine, “whether we have hitherto followed  
 only cunningly devised fables,” or may (as  
 we boast) justly glory in holding the Gospel  
 of the living God.

1. Our Lord, as He his self hath told us, was not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; that is, the offer of salvation through Him, as it had been particularly promised, was first to be made to the posterity of Jacob. On this account did Christ confine His own preaching, and that of His disciples, until after the ascension to the Jewish nation; and accordingly, the evidence given before that period, was such as was particularly fit to be offered to the Israelites. They had been taught, as has already been stated to you, even from the day in which they were separated from the other nations to be the peculiar people of God, to expect a person, under the several characters,

characters, of the promised seed, the great prophet, and the Messiah, who should teach them the perfect will of God, and whom, on that account, they were commanded to obey. The time of this extraordinary person's appearance, the city in which He should be born, His manner of life, and His mighty works, were particularly described, and much dwelt on, by the chief among their prophets; to the writings of these, therefore, our Lord perpetually appealed for the truth of his pretensions to divine mission. "Search the prophets, said He, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." A fairer trial could not have been proposed. "You acknowledge that the prophets spake by the Spirit of God; they have left you the surest notes by which to discover the Messiah; I am that Person; enquire, and see if all the circumstances of my birth, life, and actions, do not correspond with their descriptions." To a Jew, who accepting this exhortation, discovered, that to Jesus gave all the prophets witness; there

SERM.  
VII.  
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SERM. there was no further proof wanting of His
 VII. being sent from God: and even with any
 impartial enquirer, these things must have
 no small weight; since it being once shewn
 that He is the Christ spoken of in the law
 and the prophets, all the works done by the
 last, and all the miracles wrought at the
 giving, and in support of the first, become
 testimony in favour of Him: for every proof
 of their truth must be one of *His* of whom
 they testified.

But I mean not to dwell longer on this
 part of the evidence: there are other proofs
 still more direct, to which, as proposed in
 the last discourse, I must now call your at-
 tention. The works which our Saviour
 did, testified that the Father had sent Him,
 since they were such as no man could do
 unless God had been with Him. To heal
 the sick at a word, to open the eyes of the
 blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, and
 to raise the dead, are works which the ut-
 most stretch of human power and art cannot
 accomplish. In doing these and such like,
 for

for the benefit of mankind, did Christ spend SERM.
his life. Yet it was his lot then, and still VII.
is, to have the reality of his works ques-
tioned, and be Himself blasphemed. And
although every objection that has arisen
from the publication of the Gospel, even
to the present age, hath been repeatedly an-
swered, so perverse is infidelity, so obstinate
are her patrons and supporters, that the very
same exceptions which, we read in the
history of our Saviour's life, were made by
the Jews, and immediately refuted, are still
insisted on as unanswered and unanswerable.
Thus do we mention the works which Jesus
did, as sufficiently proving, that He was
commissioned from on high. It is urged,
on the contrary, that they were not really
done, but were only the effects of juggle
and conspiracy: the person declared to have
been healed, is supposed to have feigned
himself sick, and, at the word given, to
have shewn himself whole as he was in
truth before.

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VII.

the impartial enquirer to wander in dark-
ness, and in doubt. The subjects which
our Lord chose for his miracles, and the
places and company in which He did them,
not only take away all ground for suspicion,
but render such suppositions absolutely ab-
surd. His works were commonly wrought,
in the most public places, the streets, the
synagogues, and the temple, before the
multitudes, and subject to the inspection of
his most able and inveterate enemies, the
chief priests and Pharisees. These too, it
seems, had once taken up the abovementioned
opinion, and when they were in-
formed that Jesus had given sight to a man
born blind, they doubted whether he had
ever been blind, until calling his parents,
and questioning them, they confirmed the
report of their son's having been born blind,
but were, at the same time, so little in-
clined to favour our Lord in their evidence,
that they would not assert, how he had ob-
tained his sight. In this case the reality of
the miracle appeared beyond dispute: that

the man then saw, was plain: that he had been blind, all the neighbours, and those who had seen him sitting by the way-side, and begging, bore witness: that his blindness could not have been feigned, on agreement with Christ, was evident, from his having suffered under it even from his birth.

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The incontestable greatness of this and other miracles, which our Lord wrought, at length drew from those who had the best opportunities of judging, and were most backward to acknowledge them, a formal confession of their reality. When the chief priests and Pharisees being assembled in council, said, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles: if we let Him alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans will come, and take away both our place and our nation." If, after this acknowledgment, made by his most violent and obstinate opposers, on the spot, and while He was yet working among them, any thing can be added to heighten the

abfurdity of the fuppoſition, it is the nature of ſome of his miracles. Thus, for inſtance, when our Lord fed four thouſand men, beſide women and children, with ſeven loaves, and a few ſmall fiſhes, and there remained of the fragments ſeven baſkets full; and when He fed the five thouſand with five loaves and two fiſhes, and there remained twelve baſkets full of fragments—had the miracles not been wrought, the whole multitude muſt have conſpired together to defraud their own ſtomachs, and deceive the world. Again, when Chriſt rebuked the wind, and ſaid unto the ſea, “ Peace, be ſtill,” and there was a great calm, ſhall we ſuppoſe that the elements were in conſpiracy with Him? that they had agreed to be obedient to his word? But however it came to paſs that they did obey Him, let it be remembered, that ſince different parts of nature thus conſpired, do declare his power, and ſhew forth his praiſe, we have partly the ſame evidence of his greatneſs and authority as we have of the being and attributes of God.

But

But here it is replied, “ that even if Jesus wrought, by his word, such miracles as no human power could perform, yet it by no means immediately follows, that He was empowered by God to do them. There may be other invisible beings, the extent of whose power we know not; nay, whose invisibility only would make their actions appear miraculous to men. By such He might have been assisted, and then we cannot know assuredly whether, instead of God, an evil being was not the authour of our religion.

This objection too, is almost coeval with the Gospel; for when there was brought unto our Lord a dumb man, possessed with the devil, and He cast out the devil, and the dumb spake, the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils, through the prince of the devils. The reply which Christ then made is well worthy of attention, as it furnishes us with the proper answer to every thing of the kind. In it, He first sets forth the absurdity of imagining, that an

SERM. evil being would exert himself for the destruction of evil. “ If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand: and if an house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand: and if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end;” and then represented the absolute necessity there was of admitting, that He His self was assisted by a power superiour to that of all evil beings, since otherwise He could not have exercised such authority over them. “ No man, said He, can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he shall spoil his house.”

When men wish to get rid of a doctrine which militates against their prejudices, or condemns their practice, there is scarcely any inconsistency too great for them to be guilty of. Thus the Jews, rather than acknowledge Jesus to be a prophet sent from God, could suppose, that the Devil would interpose in the cause of religion and virtue,

and

and exert his power to incite men to the worship of their Creatour, and the practice of their duty towards each other. And thus, too, the infidel of our own times would ascribe the miracles of Christ to any power but that of God, in whose name they were wrought; not considering that, as their tendency to promote true religion overthrows every supposition of their proceeding from an evil being, so our Lord's declaration, that He worked by the power of God, is an insuperable bar to imagining that they were done with the assistance of any other good being, since such an one would never have supported a falsity. And repeated falsities, of the most impious kind, must Jesus have uttered, if He was not sent into the world by the Father, and did not act under his commission and authority.

But, lastly, to the evidence of a divine commission given by our Lord, before his crucifixion, must be added, the astonishing miracle of his resurrection; a miracle which, the more accurately it is considered, the

SERM. more fully does it appear to prove, that He
 VII. was, of a truth, the Son of God. As long
 as life remains, a man may, by the assistance of art and wisdom merely human, do much in eluding the power, and baffling the attempts, of his enemies; but if once he give their vengeance full scope, and submit to suffer all that they can inflict, it is plain no earthly power can then restore him: yet this was the case of our Lord. He yielded, without resistance, to the violence of the Jews, and gave himself so perfectly into their power, that they were persuaded, nothing but the divine interposition could rescue Him. “If thou be the Son of God,” said they, “come down from the cross. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him *now*, if He will have Him.” Had Jesus accepted this challenge, and, in the presence of the multitude, descended from the cross, that, I conceive, it will be owned, would have been giving a sure proof of his own greatness, and of his enjoying the favour and protection of Him, who he said was his Father. Why may He not, then, be
 justly

justly thought to have given such, when, SERM. VII.
after having permitted human malice to do its utmost, and poured out his soul unto death, under the hands of his persecutors, He shewed the inefficacy of even their last efforts to crush Him, and rose again in triumph from the grave! That the testimony of the truth of Jesus, afforded by this event, is decisive, we learn from the unbelievers themselves, who do not pretend to argue on this as on some other facts recorded, but are obliged to have recourse at once to an absolute denial of it. How unreasonably, and in opposition to what a cloud of witnesses they do deny it, must be considered at some future opportunity. At present it remains only for me to exhort you to retain in your minds those truths relating to the miracles of our Saviour, which have been now set before you.

Ye have seen that the examination which his works underwent, as well as the nature of some of them, fully evinces, that they were not the effects of flight and conspiracy :

SERM. racy : that mere unassisted man was not the
 VII. authour of them, their greatness declares.

~ The ends for which they were wrought, render it unreasonable to ascribe them to any evil being ; and the claim which Jesus founded on them, excludes the interposition of any others but the Deity Himself. To His interposition, therefore, let them be ascribed ; and if, on no other account, at least on this, that his justice and mercy are pledged for the truth of Jesus. If you doubt in what manner they can stand engaged, consider, that those who first embraced the Gospel (whatever may be the character of its present professors) were undoubtedly in earnest ; they renounced all that was most dear and valuable to them in this world, in obedience to what they thought was the will of God. The ground on which they believed it to be so, was the evidence given of the revelation, which, as we have already seen, was such as fully justified their faith. But if Jesus was an impostor, what shall we say of God's permitting Him to work such miracles as led
 his

his own most faithful servants into an error absolutely invincible in itself, and destructive in its consequences? Can it be thought any way consistent with the character of the Governour of the universe, to suffer the greatest testimony of His own interposition (I mean, works similar to those of creation) to be forged beyond a possibility of detection, for the purpose of depriving those men who were most sincerely devoted to his service, of all ease and happiness in this life, with vain and delusive hopes of another? No, before we admit this, we must disbelieve the providence and moral attributes of God, and though, within ourselves imagining, perhaps, that we hold the religion of reason and nature, in fact deny what reason can demonstrate, and what nature declares through all her works.

SERM.

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SERMON VIII.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES.

HEB. II. 3, 4.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

IN a former discourse on these words, it SERM.
VIII. was proposed to enquire into evidence which we have for the truth of christianity, in the manner suggested by the text; first weighing the proofs which our Lord Himself gave of his divine commission, and then examining with what fidelity those proofs have

SERM. have been handed down to us. In the
 VIII. course of our enquiry at that time, it ap-
 peared that the miracles of Christ were so
 great, wrought in such a manner, and for
 such purposes, that they could not, with
 the least shadow of reason, be ascribed to
 any other cause than the divine interposition
 itself; it now remains to consider, what
 degree of credit is due to the accounts
 which we at present have of them;
 since, after we have proved that the works
 of our Saviour, if wrought as related, must
 have proceeded from the power of God;
 the relation itself may still be called in ques-
 tion, and we may be asked, Whether “that
 was not feigned only to impose on mankind,
 and serve the purposes of the reporters?”

To discover, then, whether any suspicions
 of this sort can be justly entertained, let us
 enquire, “What advantage those who first
 published the Gospel to the world, after the
 death of Jesus, could possibly have proposed
 to themselves, in uttering and maintaining
 the things they preached, had they been
 false?”


falſe?" For it is not to be *preſumed*, that any men would invent, report, and continue obſtinate in affirming a ſtring of falſities, without hopes of gaining ſome advantage to themſelves thereby. But what did the apoſtles and immediate diſciples of Chriſt report unto the world? Why, " that God had raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, and made Him both Lord and Chriſt;" and " that He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that He hath raiſed Him from the dead, of which reſurrection they were witneſſes." Such was their doctrine! Conſider it on all ſides, and name one temporal advantage which ye imagine they could poſſibly promiſe themſelves in preaching it. The nation which they firſt addreſſed, had already perſecuted their Maſter unto death; and the heads of it had left nothing unattempted to ruin his credit with the people. Under theſe circumſtances, what hope could they entertain, that this extraordinary report

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SERM.
VIII.
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SERM. concerning Him who had been crucified
 VIII. would be listened to? Or could they imagine, that those who had slain the Master, would not have both power and inclination to destroy the disciples, who thus daringly accused them of the murder of not only an innocent person, but of a prophet sent from God?

To these questions, your imaginations may, perhaps, suggest various answers, and ye may seem to descry several probable motives for their conduct; but since, in our searches after truth, we must not be led away by fancy, but guided by facts, no motive can be here admitted as the true one but what is consistent with the inference which the disciples themselves drew from their doctrine: And what was that? That they were to have publick honours paid them; or were to be maintained by their converts in ease and affluence? By no means, but “that the people should repent, and be baptized, that their sins might be blotted out.” And as this inference betrayed no
 selfish

selfish design, so neither did their conduct ; SERM.
since we afterwards find the apostles labour- VIII.
ing more abundantly than the rest, suffering 
the most violent persecutions, and passing
through the greatest perils ; and one, He
too by no means the least among them, ac-
quiring his necessary support even by ma-
nual labour. To wish to be distinguished
by sufferings, to be desirous of surpassing
others in misery, is a strange ambition ; and
yet, if the apostles of Christ were prompted
by any other than that of gaining a place
in the kingdom of Heaven, it must have
been of this kind : they put themselves at
the head of a sect which promised, from
the first, to suffer under the hatred and en-
mity of the world : of this they very plainly
were conscious, and they clearly foresaw
the evils which awaited them, but they
foresaw them with firmness, and at length
endured them with patience.

Neither was this their patience under their
sufferings merely the effect of stratagem, for
then it would have been temporary ; and as

SERM. the number of their followers, and consequently the power of their party encreased, they would have endeavoured to extricate themselves from them: but, on the contrary, when they had numerous converts in every city, and even in the capital of the empire; when their doctrines had spread into the court and into the camp, they still taught the same lessons of meekness and forbearance, still commanded submission and obedience to be paid to the civil magistrate: nay, what is more, what is an irrefragable proof of their sincerity, their example still kept pace with their exhortations, they themselves all along suffered without resistance, and, *as* they began their ministry under the scourge, *so* they ended it on the cross.

It must not, however, be dissembled, that in reply to this proof of the sincerity of the apostles, our adversaries produce instances of others who have suffered with equal constancy in support of what they taught; “ and if it be evident from fact, that some
have

have willingly met death in the cause of falsehood, why may not others have done so too." The objection, indeed, is specious, but if thoroughly examined, it will be found to have but little weight; many of those who have laid down their lives for their tenets, have joined the pursuit of temporal goods with that of spiritual, and have tried the fortune of arms, before they have submitted to death; others have been of sects too weak and inconsiderable, to make even a show of resistance; and all have died under a conviction that they suffered for the truth. That the two first cases are inadequate to that of the Apostles, has been already shewn; and with regard to the last mentioned circumstance, it should be observed; that their doctrines were founded on facts of which they pretended to have been eye-witnesses; so that had these their pretensions been false, they must have died conscious of having maintained the most blasphemous untruths. Hopes of reward, therefore, in another state, they could have none; neither could they but have been

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SERM. fible, that the little reputation they had
 VIII. gained here would soon be irretrievably lost,
 since their reports of their Master's works
 were such as might easily be examined and
 refuted. Now take away all thoughts of
 another world, and all hopes of establishing
 a lasting reputation in this, and what prob-
 able motive can ye assign for a man's re-
 signing his life in support of his assertions?
 For as to that false shame and sullen obsti-
 nacy of which the public executions of our
 own country sometimes afford examples, these
 are inadmissible in the other case; since the
 criminal here must, though he confessed his
 crime, still suffer the sentence of the law;
 the disciple of Christ had only to deny his
 Master; and he was pardoned and released.

Behold then the ground there is for sus-
 pecting the apostles of forgery and design!
 They preached doctrines which made them-
 selves hated and despised; they drew no
 inferences from them in their own favour;
 and though they might have gained life and
 security by recanting their assertions, they
 pre-

preferred laying down their lives in support of them, when had they been false, they could have entertained no hopes, either of establishing a reputation here, or of gaining happiness hereafter. SERM.
VIII.

It is needless, however, to dwell any longer on these circumstances, since there is a single question, the decision of which in our favour, (and that I conceive will readily be given) will prove at once all those suppositions and presumptions so much relied on by our adversaries groundless and absurd. The question is this, “Whether the first preachers of the Gospel, had their reports concerning the mighty works of Jesus been false, could have escaped detection?” and the ground on which I persuade myself it will so readily be resolved in the negative, is the following: The scene of our Saviour’s miracles was laid in the cities of Judah and Galilee; they were not said to have been worked in private, but at the great feasts, and in the places whither the Jews always resorted; and lastly, it was

SERM. not at any great distance of time, but within

VIII. two months after the crucifixion of their

Master, that the disciples began publicly to insist on the greatness of his works ; so that to discover whether their relation were true was by no means a work of difficulty ; for unless many of the people could bear them witness, they were by their own confession to be esteemed false ; and that there were numbers who would not let the matter pass without a severe scrutiny, no one can doubt who considers, that to make this was equally the interest of both those who received and those who rejected the new doctrine. The first staked all they had in this world for it's truth ; the others, all their hopes of futurity and real happiness against it. Neither was the reason of men alone concerned in the decision ; their passions also were strongly interested. The apostles of Christ openly attacked not only some of the most favourite traditions of the most prejudiced nation on earth, but the learning, wisdom, and probity of a sect, to whom the body of that people were entirely

tirely devoted, and who were peculiarly jealous of their own character in relation to each of these; such a sect, thus attacked and exasperated, we might well suppose, even if we had no historical testimony of the fact, left nothing undone that might help to crush the Gospel in it's infancy, and ruin the credit of it's teachers. How much more then, when it is recorded, that the Pharisees proceeded to scourge and imprison the disciples, in order to force them to silence, may we presume that they would not have neglected the more obvious and effectual way of stopping their progress, by proving them propagators of falsehood, had it been in their power to do so?

Indeed, this presumptive argument for the truth of the apostles, seems the more convincing the more nearly it is viewed; every point of their doctrine, every circumstance of their conduct giving it additional weight. The first account of their Master's miracles was given at Jerusalem before numbers assembled from every part of the country wherein he had passed his life, and to


SERM. these did Peter appeal for the truth of his
 VIII. own report, when He said, “ Ye men of
 “ Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved
 “ of God among you by miracles and signs
 “ and wonders, which God did by him in
 “ the midst of you, as ye yourselves also
 “ know.” Moreover, the preachers, when
 they began to leave Jerusalem, still confined
 themselves for some time to those parts
 which they had affirmed to be the scene of
 the works of Jesus, affording their enemies
 thereby a still longer space for observation
 and scrutiny. Nay, when they departed
 from Judæa, and went into the distant cities
 of the empire, as if desirous of making
 their reports first to those who were most
 capable of examining their truth, they in
 every city entered into the Synagogues of
 the Jews; and first preached Christ to
 them, who by the constant communication
 which the law obliged them to preserve
 with Jerusalem, were enabled to make fre-
 quent enquiries after the facts related.

But this openness and plain dealing of
 the immediate disciples of our Lord, in-ad-
 dressing

dress-^{S E R M.}ing their earliest relations of his mira-^{VIII.}cles to the Jews, is not the only ground for thinking that they could not but have been detected had those relations been false ; they farther offered the Gentiles such testimony of their truth as was most valid if really given, while their power to give it might be easily known. The testimony I mean is that mentioned in the text,—“ Of divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which they affirmed God bore witness of their truth. Now it is manifest, that in pretending to these they appealed to the eyes and ears of all around them, and what reason have we for supposing that the Gentiles of those days were more backward to make use of their senses in matters of this kind than we are at present ? They certainly were not without that natural curiosity which leads men eagerly to enquire into all extraordinary appearances ; they had their prejudices against the doctrines of the Gospel as well as the Jews ; for if the latter could not believe in Christ crucified ; the former were as little disposed to credit the
Re-

SERM. Resurrection of the Body. If the Pharisees
 VIII. were tenacious of their traditions, the philosophers were no less obstinate in support of their opinions; and lastly, if the Jewish nation were offended at the disciples of Christ for the censures passed on them, the Heathens could be as little pleased at the contempt shewn for their fancied deities, and the rebukes they themselves received for their impurities.

Neither did there reign in that age that darkness and ignorance which in some others have proved so favourable to pious forgeries. It was, on the contrary, like the present, enlightened by the cultivation of literature and science; like the present, it was blessed with the instruction of writers who endeavoured to deliver their cotemporaries from the shackles of superstition, which themselves had broken through. And even if we indulge the unwarrantable supposition, that none of this party—not one of the numberless epicureans dwelling in the different cities, would enquire into the
 proofs

ptoofs of a doctrine entirely subversive of SERM.
some of their own most favourite tenets, VIII.
and that the teachers, by this unaccountable 
supineness of them without were secured
from detection that way ; still the frequent
apostacies there were from the church, even
in the earliest days, renders it morally im-
possible that they should have escaped it in
another. Apostates, we know, are gene-
rally the most bitter enemies of the doc-
trines they have deserted : if these men had
never been witnesses to the exercise of the mi-
raculous gifts so much talked of by the
Christians, would they not, think ye, have
betrayed the secret ; nay, would they not
gladly have seized so fair an opportunity of
justifying their own separation from the
church by proving it's members guilty of
impious vanity and bare-faced imposture.
Yet of such convictions we hear nothing ;
though St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Church
of Corinth, in which there were many divi-
sions, and where his self had several oppo-
nents, speaks of the prophets, miracles,
gifts, healings, and diversities of tongues
which

SERM. which God had given them; though he
 VIII. declares that there had been signs, won-
 ders, and mighty deeds wrought among
 them by himself; though St. Luke in his
 Acts of the Apostles, speaks so fully of
 their miraculous works, yet the enemies of
 Christianity in the first ages were so far
 from obtaining any evidence either from
 those who willingly left, or those who for
 their vicious lives were turned out of the
 church, on which to ground a denial of
 these things, that they took in their oppo-
 sition to it another course, and ascribed the
 works of our Lord and his apostles to the
 power of Magic.

Here then, to conclude, are two ques-
 tions that await your determination: First,
 whose word may reasonably be esteemed of
 the most authority in respect to facts said to
 have happened seventeen centuries ago—
 that of the unbelievers of the present age,
 who contrary to the tenour of history,
 boldly assert that the immediate disciples of
 Christ worked no miracles; or that of more
 early

early infidels, who, though equally inveterate against the Gospel, but having much better opportunities of gaining accurate information concerning it, acknowledge that its first preachers did works beyond the power of mere unassisted men to perform. Secondly. To whom the most credit seems in reason due? To those who affirm, that *that* Gospel which commands men to forsake idolatry and worship the living God; to cease from the commission of impurity and cruelty and practise holiness and charity, was propagated by the assistance of evil beings; or to those who assert, that they had a divine commission to preach it, and were aided by Heaven in the work? Common sense will dictate the proper answer to these questions; and they once given, will naturally lead you to put to yourselves likewise, that of the text: “How shall we
“ escape if we neglect so great salvation,
“ which at first began to be spoken by the
“ Lord, and was afterwards confirmed unto
“ us by them that heard him; God, also,
“ bearing

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SERM. “ bearing them witness, both with signs
VIII. “ and wonders, and with divers miracles
“ and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according
“ to his own will.”

SERMON IX.

ON THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE TO-
WARDS ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

ACTS XX. 21.

*Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the
Greeks, repentance towards God, and Faith
towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

SUSH was the sum of the great apostle SERM.
Paul's teaching! The doctrines he was IX.
authorized to promulge in it were full of
comfort to the human race, fitted to their
situation, adapted to their wants. When
the Gospel went forth from Jerusalem, the
Jews had, by their traditionary figments,
rendered their law, though given from
Heaven, of none effect; and the Gentile
world

SERM. world lay estranged from God, and overrun with error and impurity. To save the former from the impending curse denounced at the giving of their law against all who should forsake it; and to restore the latter to the favour and protection of their Creatour, which they had forfeited by rendering the honour due unto him alone to those who are no Gods, and selling themselves to work all uncleanness with greediness, it was necessary that an alteration should be wrought somewhere. But the Strength of Israel is not a man that he should lie, or that he should repent; the menaces, therefore, pronounced by his authority against the impenitent must have been executed on all who continued such; and as He is also of too pure eyes to behold iniquity, and the perfection of His nature is immutable, it was impossible that His favourable regards should be extended to any who persevered in the practice of Idolatry or impurity; and consequently, among men it was that the change so necessary was to be wrought, by their
 ceasing

ceasing from their evil courses, and becoming obedient unto God, and holy in their lives. SERM.
IX.

Here, then, was ground for the apostle to testify both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, the necessity of repentance towards God, and the want of that merciful interposition through which He and his fellow-labourers in the Gospel were sent to preach every where, “ that men should repent.”


The state of the world manifested the justice of such admonitions : and had any one arisen and urged men to an amendment of their conduct on the common footing of reason, he had fully merited their attention and their thanks. But even had human benevolence been found strong enough in one or two great minds, to prompt to such an attempt, the want of wisdom and power adequate to the work had soon appeared. It was an authoratative call to repentance, supported by a promise of it's favourable acceptance from the Being Him

SERM. self who was offended, that the world
 IX. needed, and indeed in some measure expected. Such a call to repentance the Gospel contains, and the at first divulging it and its circumstances; and since reminding them thereof, is the chief business of the Ministers of Christ. These great particulars of their preaching let us now consider more distinctly and at large, that we may discover how they are applicable to ourselves.

By repentance, then, has been ever intended a thorough change of mind, not only a sorrow for our past offences, but an aversion from them, and a sincere application of mind to a contrary course. By repentance toward God more especially, a conversion of our souls unto him; so that to a disregard of this will, to insensibility to the relation we bear, and the obligations under which we lie to him, there shall succeed an earnest desire to please Him, an uninterrupted recollection that under his government we live, and a perpetual conscioufness

sciousness, that by His providence we are supported. Consistently with this the great herald of the Gospel, the holy Baptist, admonished all who resorted to his baptism to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and in various parts of the New Testament, we meet with similar exhortations delivered in the mention of that behaviour which it becomes Christians to observe. Thus St. James describes the wisdom that is from above as being first “pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” And St. Peter: “Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.” And St. Paul, under the title of the fruits of the Spirit, enumerates “love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” adding, “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,” a cata-

SERM.
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SERM. IX.  logue of which he had before given, shewing by this opposition, on the one hand, what men are while they continue in sin; and, on the other, what if their repentance be sincere, they ought after that to prove. His list of vices is this: “ adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such-like.”

Now the very great difference there is between the practice of these, and the exercise of the virtues which are enjoined in the several passages I before read to you, might, in the breasts of those who pondered on it, justly excite a two-fold anxiety; causing them, in the first place, to be solicitous for the most satisfactory assurance, that God, whose will it was that men should live so righteously, would receive into favour any who hitherto had been guilty of any of those commissions against which His wrath was so strongly denounced;

granting them, on repentance, perfect re-
mission; and, in the second place, to fear,
lest now they were made sensible of the
guilt and danger of their past behaviour,
they should find themselves deficient in re-
solution to continue firm to the purpose
they had formed of leading new lives, and
by falling back, in spite of the warning voice
they had heard to their former evil courses,
should thereby render themselves inevitably
subject to the severest inflictions of the
wrath to come. A remedy for such anxiety,
whether it took one or both the turns I have
mentioned, was contained in the doctrine of
faith towards Jesus Christ. Instruction in
the atonement made by the shedding of His
blood, and the assurance given by His re-
surrection from the dead, of God's accept-
ance of that atonement, (according to those
words of the apostle, "who died for our
sins, and was raised again for our justifica-
tion,") afforded ample ground for resting
satisfied, that faith in His blood would be
imputed for righteousness unto all them that
believe. For when it appeared, that it was
N 3 through

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SERM. through the blood of the Son of God that
 IX. réconciliation was made, no stain seemed
 too deep for that to reach: when in His
 intercession men were called to trust, no
 case could appear desperate; but forgiveness
 seemed necessarily to follow belief.

And to those whose hearts misgave them that they should not be able to stand in the hour of temptation, but by relapsing into sin anew make themselves objects of the divine displeasure, encouragement was holden forth in the promise Christ had given of the Holy Spirit to all who believed on Him; for that must be sufficient for them. Neither could there be a fear, that He, who had already vouchsafed them redemption by means so full of love, would permit them to lose the benefit thereof merely through their own weakness, but would succour their infirmities, and if they grieved not His Spirit, by it preserve them blameless, and as He had called them to it, would be faithful also to perfect their salvation.

Perfect,

Perfect, therefore, was the remedy offered SERM.
to mankind for the state in which they lay: IX.
there only were wanting to forward deliverance, their own perception of their wretched situation, and serious attention to the words which the preachers called on them to receive; to produce which, these last were incessant in their representations, indefatigable in testifying to all men “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;” and in obedience to their instructions, in conformity to their example, the ministers of the Gospel continue to this day testifying the same things, and thus far at least shewing themselves as “embassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by them; they pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” They are able to offer you the same ground of hope, by calling on you to rely on the all-prevailing intercession of our ever-living Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and in your case, as well as in theirs to whom the Gospel was first addressed, the things more particularly requisite to rescue

SERM. you from the dominion of vice, from the
 IX. power of sin, are serious reflection on your
 spiritual state, and earnest consideration of
 the difference there really is between what
 ye are, and what God requires you to be.
 For although the guilt of every crime we
 commit be in us enhanced by our having
 enjoyed the light of christianity from our
 infancy, and having been instructed in the
 pure and righteous laws of true religion,
 enforced on us by our being made acquainted
 with the terrours of the Lord, and bred up
 in certain expectation of a future day of
 judgment; yet I will hope, that there is
 not one among us fallen away to that de-
 gree from which the apostle to the Hebrews
 says, it is impossible to renew men again
 unto repentance,

Many, I am confident, may, in alleviation
 of their various infractions of the precepts
 of the Gospel, justly plead, that although
 they were indeed carried by their parents to
 baptism, and solemnly introduced into the
 covenant of Christ, yet neither those who
 pledged

pledged themselves to see it given, nor those who were most concerned to give it, have since troubled themselves to furnish them with any instruction in the conditions of that covenant: that having no serious thoughts of religion instilled into them in their earlier years, it is no wonder if they have been seduced into the paths of vice, and acquired no relish for graver enquiries, no disposition for the soberer employments of piety and devotion: no wonder, if absorbed in the present scene, to which only they have been taught to look, futurity, and what they may therein expect, have never entered into their minds but when introduced by accidental circumstances. I believe too, that still greater numbers have a right to plead in extenuation of their entertaining many evil maxims, in alleviation of many reprehensible omissions, and of many acts of guilt, in a similar style of argument; and to urge, that those with whom they have chiefly passed their lives, have ever consented to them in these things: How should then their ideas be correct, when

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SERM. when their falsity was never pointed out to them? How should they be conscious of deserving rebuke, when they were never reprov'd? How sensible of offence, when they were never warn'd of it?

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Now all who make such representations seem, as far as they are just, to stand in the situation of those to whom the Gospel hath not yet been preach'd; and may, perhaps, be deem'd, in the various degrees in which they have been kept in ignorance of its laws and principles, unacquainted with christianity, and to have hitherto lain in ignorance, resembling that at the times of which, it is written, God winked. To you, therefore, who are sensible that ye have heretofore thus walk'd in darknes, in whatever degree or manner ye may have done so, let me now testify, that "God calleth on you to repent; for that He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness." What ye have hitherto been blind to, let me now admonish you to take on you the duties and obli-

obligations of Christians. The pleas which I have now supposed ye might urge in excuse of your past unbecoming conduct, can henceforth be of no avail ; and ye cannot evade the call now made on you, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. The recollection of your former misbehaviour should act as an incitement to you to behave otherwise from this time forward ; since, by this mean alone, can ye render the excuses made for the offences ye have already committed admissible. For how shall it be believed, that ye were not before willingly ignorant, if now, that the right road is pointed out to you, ye will not take it ? The Holy Scriptures will furnish you with a perfect rule of life, and by attending to them, ye may learn the truth as it is in Jesus ; and having your eyes open, on the one hand, to the absolute necessity of repentance for your own salvation ; and, on the other, to the certainty of its acceptance with God, if it be sincere, and to the full prospect of all the blessings
affured

SERM.

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SERM. assured to the faithful in Christ, ye will
 IX. perceive how inestimable is the loss suffered
 by all who, putting away a good conscience, make shipwreck too of faith: and discerning the great disparity there is between any pleasures ye may gain by continuing in the practice of wickedness, and the happiness ye can secure to yourselves by obeying the laws of religion; finding, too, that obedience to these does, upon trial, prove a work by no means so disgusting or unpleasant as ye before imagined, ye will hence derive encouragement to proceed in the good course on which ye have entered, and tasting of the heavenly gift, made partakers of the Holy Ghost, tasting of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ye will wonder at, and be ashamed of your past folly, in having wasted so much time about that which profiteth not, and will “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The

The difference which I have thus pointed out as subsisting between the state of a sinner, and that of one cleansed from his guilt, and by holding fast the faith, enjoying the hopes of a Christian, is what may be experienced by you all, from whatever evil courses ye turn. For the state of a true disciple of Christ is not even in this world such, but that it affords sources of happiness, superiour to what any other can supply: and the repentance I am recommending to you is not only such as is necessary for those who have been guilty of the more palpable crimes, of the more heinous vices, as adultery, fornication, theft, and the like; but what is absolutely requisite to the future welfare of all who have hitherto neglected to pay that obedience which the Gospel demands of all its disciples. For consider, how vast the difference between the sober and devout life, which the Scriptures call on us to lead, and that passed by many, who yet, if ye were to talk with them on their hopes of salvation, would tell you, that they had committed nothing

to


SERM.
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SERM. to reproach themselves with, and therefore
IX. hoped they should go to Heaven: as if
exaltation to everlasting life were holden
out to mankind for having been guilty of
no mischief in this. While they totally forget
the obligation that has all along been
incumbent on them, to glorify God with
their bodies and souls, which are God's;
have never acknowledged the call on them
to live as strangers and pilgrims on earth,
looking for a better country; but abandon-
ing all care of futurity, have preferred ease
and pleasure in the present world to either
performing or enquiring after the will of
their Creatour, and their own duty and
destination under it. These therefore, I
say, the dissipated, the idle, the thoughtless
worldling, all stand in need of repentance,
humble and earnest, for having hitherto
shut their eyes to the prospects set before
them, and the lessons given them in the
sacred volume of revelation. For reflect,
who it is that speaks to us therein; consider
how kind an earnestness there is in His
calls; how much goodness in His promises;
what

what terrour in His threatnings ; then ask, SERM.
Whether there be no, or even but a slight, IX.
degree of criminality, in treating these as
meriting only little attention ? in letting the
trifles of life have more frequent place in
our thoughts than they ? Ask whether,
since your Creatour hath been pleased to
deem the work of giving to you, and to
your brethren, the means of securing your-
selves immortal life and happiness, not un-
worthy of His interference in it, it becomes
you to behave, as if ye either esteemed that
life as not deserving your endeavours to at-
tain to it, or thought the means which He
hath declared to be the only means for that
end, to be neither the only, nor the proper
means ? A little recollection will manifest
to you, that such conduct is replete with
criminal presumption, and consequently
convince you, that even those who have
hitherto been only inadvertent in matters of
religion, need repentance.

In this, then, as well as in all the other
various degrees in which it may be wanted,
let

SERM. let me earnestly recommend it unto you.

IX.  There is no one among us who hath not something yet left in his conduct, or his disposition, that requires amendment; something which, if tried by the standard of the word of truth, would be found defective; and there is no point of improvement at which we must needs stop, either on account of our own perfection, or on that of our inability to proceed farther; since our power is not from ourselves, but from God, and to what shall not His spirit suffice? While, if we undertake not this work now, what time shall we appoint for beginning it? Is not that the most proper hour when God calleth us to it? and doth He not do so at present, as it is written, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand:" and again, "Behold *now* is the accepted time; Behold *now* is the day of salvation?" Or "knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of sleep; because now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," ought we not to consider, that, as when the desolation of Jerusalem approached,

proached, the holy baptist warned her children, that now the axe was laid unto the root of the trees, therefore every tree that did not bring forth good fruit should be hewn down, and cast into the fire ; so now, that the days of vengeance are manifestly coming on the apostate Christian world, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will overtake every soul of man that doeth evil ; and that therefore, if we would save ourselves from among this untoward generation, we must “ repent, and be converted, that our sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord ; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you : whom the heavens must receive, until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began,” and “ which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords ; Who only hath immortality,
VOL. I. o dwelling

SERM.

IX.

SERM. dwelling in the light which no man can
IX. approach unto; Whom no man hath seen,
nor can see; to Whom be honour and power
everlasting. Amen!"


SERMON X.

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH
BY THE APOSTLES.

ACTS XIV. 23.


And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

THE persons here spoken of are the SERM.
teachers Barnabas and Saul, who had X.
been sent by the express command of the
Holy Ghost to preach the Gospel in several
provinces of Asia Minor, and in the adja-
cent islands; and the words inform us of a
material step they took towards perpetuating
in the churches they founded, the faith
themselves had preached; by ordaining
elders,

SERM.  elders, or what, by a corruption of the original Greek term, we call priests, in every city : and I shall, from them, take occasion to call your attention, both to the mode in which the apostles of the Lord established a regular form of ecclesiastical government for the congregations of their converts, and the manner in which their institutions have been observed and continued to our own time. Since, by thus deducing them from their origin, many particulars may be explained, and the differences be shewn between real departures from the apostolical institutions, and those alterations which time and difference of situation render either necessary, or becoming ; and ye may be enabled, on the one hand, to stop the mouths of those who strive to justify real corruptions, and, on the other, justly to contend for usages delivered to the churches, by those whom our blessed Saviour His self sent to plant them.

The book of the Acts of the Apostles, compared with their epistles, will give us
a suf-

a sufficiently particular, as well as perfectly SERM.
authentick account, of the order they esta- X.
blished “ for the work of the ministry,
for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
Christians, indeed, in general, seem not
sufficiently aware of the very interesting
information which this portion of the sacred
volume contains, by manifesting the great
outlines of that establishment, by means of
which christianity has subsisted as the law
of a most extensive society, for so many
ages. It is in the sixth chapter of this
book, that we read of the first appointment
the apostles made of officers to assist in
ministering to those who had embraced the
faith. On a complaint of the widows of
the Grecian Jews being neglected in the daily
distribution of necessaries that was then
made, seven men of honest report, full of
the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, were chosen
by the multitude of the disciples to be ap-
pointed over this business, on whom the
apostles, after they had prayed, laid their
hands ; and these, in allusion to the service
for which they were appointed, were called
o 3 ministers,

SERM. ministers, or, in the term which we have
 transplanted into our own language from
 the Greek, *deacons*.

Thus was another order of men below that of the twelve solemnly set apart in the church to take care of those things, to attend to which they could not leave their prayer, and the ministry of the word. Yet neither did this charge prevent the deacons from continuing to act as preachers of the Gospel, since we not only find Philip so doing at Samaria, and other cities, but afterwards see him called by St. Luke, Philip the Evangelist, in the same passage in which he is declared to be one of the seven. (Acts xxi. 8.) As the churches encreased, more deacons were ordained either by the apostles themselves, or by those whom they appointed to the superintendance of them. This appears from the directions given by St. Paul to Timothy, when he wrote to him, as he expressly declares, “ that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God:”
 for

for he then stated of what character the deacons should be, and directed, that they should be first proved before they were admitted to the office; (1 Tim. iii. 8—13.) and he charged him too, “to lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins.” A needless caution, if Timothy had not been invested with authority to ordain.

SERM.
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And here let me point out to you the little variation between the present office of deacons, and that which was originally assigned them. In our own church, indeed, the attending on the daily distribution to the poor has been almost wholly taken out of their hands by the government of the country; but let not the ministers of the church be blamed for that. A tyrannical monarch, who assumed the mask of reformation (as it too often is assumed) for the gratification of his inordinate appetites, so plundered the church of her funds for charity, that there was nothing left for the deacons to distribute. While the collection

SERM. made in the church itself has been ordered
 X. to be distributed by more modern officers ;
 how far consistently with the reverence due
 to the apostolick institution, they who have
 deviated from it must answer. As to the
 other particulars I have noticed from the
 Scriptures—No one is here admitted to the
 office of a deacon who has not first been
 proved, by the bishop's examination into
 his qualifications for the charge, and by a
 solemn testimonial of his character and
 conduct, under the hands of three persons,
 who have themselves already been deemed
 worthy to be entrusted with the cure of
 souls. So that however individuals may
 deviate from the line that has been marked
 out to them, the church of England has
 made provision, that hands shall be laid
 suddenly on no man.

It appears from the text, that the apostles
 ordained another order of men in every
 church, beside the deacons ; and these, as I
 have before observed, were called elders,
 presbyters, or priests, but not merely in
 allusion

allusion to age, (though that was the original source of the title under the Old Testament) but as a name of office, and expressive of authority. It should seem, that they were at first, too, sometimes called bishops, a word literally signifying overseers, though this term was soon restrained to those who succeeded the apostles in the inspection of more churches than one. The priests, in the primitive church, discharged the same functions as are assigned to them at present, and were to be proved in the same particulars. This charge, as to their characters, we find in the third chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy; and as to the soundness of their doctrine, and ability to teach, in the following words of the same apostle's epistle to Titus, "holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainfayers." (Tit. i. 9.) and yet have some found in their hearts to revile our church, because, in compliance with this apostolick direction, she allows no one to be admitted
into

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SERM. into holy orders, who will not declare, that
 X. he holds that doctrine which she conceives
 to be delivered in the Holy Scriptures.
 How reasonably they reproach her with
 this, and how much more justly she might
 be blamed, if she betrayed her trust, and
 suffered her bishops to lay hands on any
 without a previous strict examination, from
 this simple statement of the charge of an
 apostle on the subject, ye yourselves may
 now judge.

We now come to the highest order of ecclesiastical ministers appointed by the apostles, that to which priests, as well as deacons, were subject. The inferiority of these two last appears from the epistles already quoted. In that to Titus we read, that one purpose for which he was left in Crete, was to ordain elders in every city. Now as the authour of the epistle to the Hebrews well argues as to blessing, without all contradiction the less is ordained of the greater, and consequently Titus must have holden a rank higher than that of those he ordained.

ordained. Whether these of this rank were then called by another title, and had that of bishops afterwards restrained to them or not, is a question the resolution of which will never prevail with any but men of perverse minds, to deny, that there were ministers of the church, to whom was committed, by the apostles, the oversight of the elders or priests, and inferior officers, as long as these epistles of St. Paul exist, that are addressed to two persons of that description, giving them directions for the government of these orders: and in the very next age, we have the concurrent testimony of antiquity, confirming the institution of this superior order by the apostles, and appropriating to the ministers of that the title of bishops. So that as the writings of St. Paul prove that there was such an order from the first, those of the Christians of succeeding ages demonstrate, that that was specifically the order of those that have been since called bishops. These were considered as successors of the apostles in their government of the church; through
them

SERM.

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SERM. them the connection of it was traced to the
 X. great corner stone Jesus Christ, the Shep-
 herd and Bishop of our souls : and by com-
 munion with them was the unity of the
 church thought to be preserved. Every
 one who separated from that, destroyed that
 beneficial and beautiful harmony which
 properly belongs to the body of Christ, and
 brought scandal upon the doctrine they had
 learned ; they therefore were, according to
 St. Paul's direction, to be marked and
 avoided. (Rom. xvi. 17.) For this crime
 of schism, though from the frequency of
 it now scarcely considered as blameable, was
 by those who retained the doctrine of the
 apostles uncorrupted, viewed with so great
 disapprobation, that any who assembled
 separate from their bishops and priests, were
 not considered as forming a church. Here it
 will naturally occur to you, that great indeed
 has been the deviation from the manners of
 the primitive Christians, almost every parish
 now having a congregation of separatists.
 But this is not to be charged on the church ;
 she does not cease to testify, that schism is a
 crime,

crime, nor to pray that her members may be delivered from it ; but woe to those who, under pretence of reforming, only divide the body of Christ. It was not thus that our ancestors acted, when they purified their worship from Romish corruptions. It was not merely the discipline that was then relaxed, but the doctrine, that was depraved, and therefore they reformed their practice according to the words of Scripture, and led their congregations to amendment, by the light of christian truth, not to fanaticism, by the presumptuous effusions of ignorance.

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But to return to the bishops of the primitive times : each of them considering himself as having succeeded to the seat of an apostle, acknowledged no dependence on any other farther than what a community of doctrine, faith and charity, required, and consequently the supremacy, since claimed by the bishops of Rome, (now more commonly known by the name of the Popes) was, during the most uncorrupted age

SERM. age of christianity, unheard of: afterwards,
 X. indeed, different circumstances concurring
 in favour of their ambitious desires, they
 were enabled to gratify them to an astonishing
 extent, until they obtained, in this western
 portion of the world, an absolute authority in
 spirituals, joined to a power little less despotick
 in temporals, which continued unshaken to the
 commencement of the sixteenth century; when
 the famous Luther being led to search the
 Scriptures, found the contents of them so
 different in many points from what was
 taught by the ministers of the church of
 Rome, that he determined on translating
 the Bible from the Latin tongue, in which
 it had, till then, been locked up, into
 the language of his own country; that the
 people might, if they would, learn from
 the fountain-head what they were called
 on to believe, what they were commanded
 to practise. This unsealing of the sacred
 volume, forwarded the work of reformation,
 in which our own country took a noble part,
 conducting her measures with a mixture of
 courage and temper-

temperance scarcely, if at all equalled, by any church in christendom; and stating, in her homilies and articles, what she had ascertained to be the doctrine of Scripture on the chief points then brought into controversy, and, by their assent to which articles, she now proves the soundness of the doctrine of those whom she admits to any sacred office.

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Neither was the care of our reformers confined to bringing back the doctrine of the church to the true standard: they endeavoured also to clear the rites and ceremonies of it from every ostentatious and superfluous addition, from every thing that might lead the mind from true devotion and real righteousness, to trust in show, and rest in empty forms; for this end the practice of the Christians of the three first centuries was taken as an ensample; and while endeavours were used not to depart from the apostolical maxim, that “no man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God,” by permitting no one to minister

SERM. minister in the church, who has not declared before her elders, that he believes himself so called, and is, on such declaration, duly ordained to his office, what seemed mere parade in sumptuousness of vestments was laid aside, and her formulary of devotion reduced to the simplicity of the early rituals. How little the service we still perform on the Lord's day differs from that which our earliest predecessors in christianity were wont to pay, ye may judge from the following short account, copied from an eminent historian, who has taken it chiefly from what is left us by one of the primitive martyrs. " In these assemblies, (speaking of those of the church) the Holy Scriptures were publicly read, and for that purpose were divided into certain portions, or lessons. This part of divine service was followed by a brief exhortation to the people. The prayers, which made a considerable part of the publick worship, came in at the conclusion of these discourses, and were repeated by the people, after the bishop or presbyter, who presided in

in the service. To these were added, certain hymns, which were sung not by the whole assembly, but by persons appointed for that purpose, during the celebration of the Lord's supper and the feasts of charity. Such (continues the historian) were the essential parts of divine worship, which were observed in all christian churches, though, perhaps, the method and order in which they were performed were not the same in all." (Mosh. Cent. 1. p. 2. ch. 4.) Behold then here particularized the lessons, the prayers, the sermon, and the psalms, which are still continued in our religious assemblies; and observe, how little the service of our own church differs from that of the purest ages; a circumstance well worthy of admiration, after the revolution of so many centuries, and calculated to call to our minds the promise given to the disciples of our blessed Master, when He gave them commission to preach the Gospel to all nations; "And lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world."

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We have thus far seen what provision was made for the appointment and establishment and continuance of teachers and rulers in the church. Let us next enquire how they were impowered to support the authority thus submitted to them? Our Lord had directed, that wherever one Christian transgressed against another, the last appeal of the brother offended should be to the church, and if the transgressor would not listen to the admonition or sentence of that, he should be treated as an heathen and a publican. And, in consonance with this precept, St. Paul, writing to Titus, first bishop of Crete, says, “ A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject : knowing that he which is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” Tit. iii. 10, 11. From hence arose that practice of solemnly putting obstinate offenders out of the communion of the church, by what is called excommunication : the weight of which censure, when justly and duely passed, may be estimated by the words of Christ, after those in which he

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he commanded the church to award it. SERM.
“ Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. xiii. 18.)
Than which I conceive scarcely any terms can more strongly express the ratification of every righteous sentence of his church, by our Father which is in Heaven.

Let us therefore no longer imagine, that either drawing on ourselves, or deserving the censure of the church, is a matter of light consequence, otherwise the neglect of a first and second admonition would not have been followed by rejection, and an heretick would not have been put on a footing with an heathen, who is a stranger to the covenants of promise. For it should ever be remembered, that heresy specifically consists in that wilfulness, by which a man, after being duly admonished both privately and publickly of his error, persists in maintaining it. In all cases, therefore, where this obstinacy has been shewn, those

SERM. guilty of it are justly denominated hereticks ;
 X. and however angry they may be at being
 described under it, when not applied from
 strife or wantonness, they can, in equity,
 blame themselves only for the disgrace they
 suffer from the name. Numerous are the
 distinctions, and almost endless the evasions,
 by which those who have swerved from
 the doctrine, once delivered to the saints,
 yet endeavour to prove, that they hold the
 truth as it is in Jesus ; to meet these, it is
 necessary that we not only produce the
 words of Scripture, but that we often shew
 too, that we take them in the very same
 sense in which those who enjoyed the
 benefit of the traditional explanation of the
 apostles themselves understood them. On
 this account it is, that the works of the
 christian writers of the three first centuries
 after our blessed Lord's nativity, are so often
 appealed to in theological controversies ; and
 that it is necessary that the teachers of the
 church should be acquainted with eccle-
 siastical history, that they may be able to
 teach others whence the prevalent errors
 arose,

arose, and point out to them the distinction SERM.
between the real christian tenets, and those X.
which assume only their appearance. For 
is not the very great success which sectaries
of every kind meet with among us, in-
much that there is no novelty in faith or
morals started in the nation, but it soon
gains followers; is not this, I say, in no
inconsiderable part of it, owing to the igno-
rance of those with whom the propagators
of sophistry and misrepresentation are able
to prevail? And how is this ignorance to
be remedied, unless the established teachers
of the church are able to give the necessary
information to those entrusted to their gui-
dance? But, surely, such ability is not to
be expected from any who are put into the
order of the clergy by their parents, because
they apprehend that they have not powers
to succeed in other professions; or from any
who, having met with disappointment, or
perhaps even incurred disgrace in other
lines, take refuge in this; and make the
altar of the Lord, to which no blemish

SERM. should approach, a receptacle for the weak,
 X. the sick, the halt, and the blind?



But severe as are the censures merited by those who are thus guilty of profaning the house of the living God, it is to be remembered, that on the other hand, numerous are the clergy who have given attendance to reading and to doctrine, and whose lips keep knowledge: while those who should seek the law at their mouths, prefer the risk of transgression to submitting to that confession of ignorance which a request of information implies; and if the unity of the faith, the preservation of which is, by the apostles, strongly urged as an indispensable duty, be broken by such; if they cease to listen to those who are set over them in the Lord, and will not endure sound doctrine, but, as described in the spirit of prophecy, after their own lusts, heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and be turned unto fables, on whom is the destruction of such to be charged, should they perish in the gainfaying of Korah?

Suffici-

Sufficiently explicit is the command of our Lord, that we should listen to his apostles, as invested with his authority :
“ He that heareth you heareth me ; and he that despiseth you despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me.” (Luke x. 16.) Nor are the directions which his apostles have left us, as to the attention we ought to pay to the ministers they have established in the church, less intelligible. Thus the apostle to the Hebrews : “ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves : for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief : for that is not profitable for you.” (Heb. xiii. 17.) And ye have seen, that the very orders that still rule and minister in the church, were originally appointed by the apostles to wait on these very things. A succession of such was provided for when St. Paul charged Timothy, “ the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach

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SERM. others also." (2 Tim. ii. 2.) And it was
 X. pointed out too, how they should be sup-
 ported: "Let him that is taught in the
 word, communicate unto him that teacheth
 in all good things. Be not deceived; God
 is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth
 that shall he reap. For he that soweth to
 his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption;
 but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of
 the spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi.
 6, 7, 8.) And to the Corinthians, "Do
 ye not know that they which minister about
 holy things, live of the things of the
 temple? and they which wait at the altar,
 are partakers with the altar? Even so hath
 the Lord ordained, that they which preach
 the Gospel, should live of the Gospel."
 (1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.) And again to Timothy,
 "Let the elders that rule well, be accounted
 worthy of double honour, especially they
 who labour in the word and doctrine: for
 the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle
 the ox that treadeth out the corn. And
 the labourer is worthy of his reward."
 (1 Tim. v. 17, 18.) So that, as ye have
 seen

seen by the deduction I have now led you through, the foundation of the establishment, in its several parts, was laid by our blessed Redeemer and his apostles to the end, that all the building being fitly framed together, might grow unto an holy temple in the Lord.

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That by the sinful perverseness of men, the progress of this edifice hath been impeded, and by their corruptions, the beauty of it much defaced, is but too visible; and since there can be no doubt of the sinfulness of thus opposing the merciful dispensations of God, and as little of the punishment of those guilty of it, does it not most highly behove all who would be esteemed by our Lord as members of his church, to “remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do the first works;” to imitate the earliest professors of the Gospel, in striving to preserve the unity of the church, by not separating themselves from its assemblies, by attention to its rulers, by participating in its rites, and “marking them  
which

SERM. which cause divisions and offences, contrary  
 X. to the doctrine which we have learned, and  
 avoiding them." By a conduct like this, we might hope, in some measure, to revive that mutual, steady, and close attachment, that formerly existed between the priests and the people, and see the first tenderly watchful over the flocks, and the latter, not as now, either carried away with every wind of doctrine, or else caring for none of the things which pertain unto religion; but consulting their spiritual pastors, whenever a doubt arose in their minds; in sickness, calling for them to pray by them; and in health, walking together "worthy of the vocation with which they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, and growing up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. To whom, &c."

# SERMON XI.

ON THE UNITY OF GOD.

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I COR. VIII. 6.

*But to us there is but one God, the Father,  
of whom are all things, and see by Him.*

**I**N the preceding verse the apostle had SERM.  
said, that many there were called gods XI.  
and many lords, herein alluding to the nu-  
merous fancied deities, the worship of one  
or more of whom had been set up in almost  
every nation under Heaven, instead of the  
service of the one true God. Whether this  
deviation from truth and reason manifested  
itself among mankind before the flood or  
not, it either broke out anew, or originally  
began within a very few ages after the  
earth was recovered from that divine chas-  
tisement;

SERM. XI. tishment; and it so increased during the course of years, that the world gradually became, as it were, peopled with imaginary gods: every nation, every city, nay, every house, had its peculiar idols; every mountain, every river, every grove and spring, was supposed to be under the protection of some invisible being; and a man landing on a strange shore, could not cut a branch from a tree, nor kill a beast, but superstition suggested the violation of some local divinity. Nor was this all, for the general opinion having once taken such a turn, the crafty and designing soon discovered and made use of the means of imposition thus offered to them, and every fact they were ashamed to confess, every deed they wished to conceal, was laid to the charge of those whom they adored: and then, practices which were thus ascribed to the gods soon ceased to appear heinous in the persons of their votaries, until at length the very vices were consecrated, and prostitution itself was made an act of religion. To prevent this apostacy from universally prevailing, the family

family of Abraham were, as you have been apprized, separated, at the commencement of it, from the other families of the earth. But while the primeval faith of one God was, by this mean, continued among them, to the rest of the nations a new publication of it was requisite, and therefore did the apostles of Christ go forth in the power of the Lord, calling upon men to renounce these vanities, and turn from idols to the living God; and teaching, in the words of the text, that to the truly faithful “there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things.”

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It is to this fundamental doctrine of true religion that I mean now to call your attention, purposing, in the present discourse, to speak of the unity of God, as forming the ground of some other of the divine attributes; and then to consider the specifick character of the Father, under which He is mentioned in the text.

The

SERM. The arguments which were set before
 XI. you in proof of the being of a God, will,
 with very little alteration, suffice to demonstrate, that there is none other but He : and had those who pretended to wisdom among the ancient Heathens so far done justice to themselves, as to pursue their enquiries into the nature of God, as far as their faculties would have permitted them, they might, from premises of which they were already in possession, have fairly, and without difficulty, arrived at the conclusion, that God is one. To this, every part of nature bears testimony by the harmony that reigns throughout it : with regularity uninterrupted, do the heavenly bodies move ; on earth, “ seed time, harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night,” keep their appointed seasons. The analogy in structure, and mode of subsistence, the gradual subordination, and profitable subserviency, that exists between different portions of the world, speak the same language ; and while we observe, that the ground supports the plants, the plants the
 2 animals,

animals, and the other animals man, and that man, in his turn, tills the ground, our foolish hearts must, indeed, be darkened, if in this circular chain of connection we descry not an unity of design, an identity of operation, which demonstrates, that “it is the same God who worketh all in all.” We see that the same principles of divine government prevail throughout the world: in the east as well as the west, an overruling hand putteth down one, and setteth up another: virtue and vice are attended with certain consequences in the northern as well as in the southern hemisphere; and it is manifest, that neither the wicked nor the righteous receive their final recompence in either. If we enquire of past generations, and examine the writings of those who have gone before us, we may trace, for thousands of years, the same effects attending on human conduct; temperance and intemperance, probity and iniquity, have the same tendency to produce health and disease, comfort and distress, in the present day, as they have had from the beginning of history. And what

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SERM. what is the conclusion naturally resulting
 XI. from all this, but that these several parts of
 the universe are subject to the uncontroled
 command, and sole supremacy, of Him
 whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 and whose dominion endureth throughout
 all ages? and these arguments of the divine
 unity might, I say, have been observed by
 those who professed themselves wise among
 the ancients; but they attended not to the
 obligations incumbent on them, to honour
 their Creatour, and therefore He gave them
 up to the dishonour of the most disgraceful
 debasements: yet, in the tenderness of His
 mercy, again manifested His glory to the
 nations who had so grossly fallen short of
 it, by making known to them His sole
 godhead, through direct and plain assertion,
 supported by works, which have been pur-
 posely so conducted as to prove, that there
 is no being who can contend with Him in
 power, or rival Him in greatness. That
 this was repeatedly signified through His
 prophets to be His intention, in making
 known, long before what He would bring
 to

to pass, that it might from facts be seen, SERM.
that there is no power in the universe XI.
capable of invalidating His word, or coun-
teracting His purpose, I scarcely need re-
mind you; the sublime passages in the book
of Isaiah on this point, if once heard, can
hardly be forgotten. “ Thus saith the
Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer
the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am
the last, and besides me there is no God.
And who, as I, shall call and declare it, and
set it in order for me, since I appointed the
ancient people? and the things that are
coming, and shall come? Let them shew
unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid:
have I not told thee from that time, and
have declared it? Ye are even my wit-
nesses. Is there a God besides me? Yea,
there is no God; I know not any.” (Isaiah
xliv. 6, 7, 8.) Again: “ I am the Lord,
that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth
the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the
earth by myself; that frustrateth the tokens
of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that
turneth wise men backward, and maketh
their

SERM. their knowledge foolish ; that confirmeth
 XI. the word of His servant, and performeth
 the counfel of His messengers ; that faith
 to Jerufalem, thou shalt be inhabited ; and
 to the cities of Judah, ye shall be built,
 and I will raife up the decayed places
 thereof." (If. xlv. 24, 25, 26.) And in
 the xlvith, " Remember the former things
 of old, for I am God, and there is none
 else ; I am God, and there is none like me,
 declaring the end from the beginning, and
 from ancient times the things that are not
 yet done, faying, My counfel shall stand,
 and I will do all my pleasure." And in still
 fuller terms in the xliiid chapter ; " Let all
 the nations be gathered together, and let the
 people be affembled : who among them can
 declare this, and shew us former things ?
 Let them bring forth their witneffes, that
 they may be justified : or let them hear and
 fay, it is truth. Ye are my witneffes, faith
 the Lord, and my fervant whom I have
 chofen : that ye may know and believe me,
 and understand that I am He : before me
 there was no God formed, neither shall there
 be

be after me : I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour. I have declared, I have saved, and I have shewed when there was no strange God among you : therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before the day was, I am He ; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand : I will work, and who shall let it ?”

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Now as the exclusive dominion and sole godhead, claimed by the Lord God of Israel in these declarations, and demonstrated by what He has asserted, should be brought to pass, never having been prevented, and what He has declared should not be done, never having been accomplished, prove the divine unity ; so from this by easy, and indeed necessary inference, may be deduced the eternity, the omnipotence, the incomprehensibility and spirituality of God. For if there be no other besides Him, He must be the Being of which infinite time, and boundless space, are the accidents ; whose days have been from everlasting, and whose

SERM. presence filleth heaven and earth. With
 XI. Him too, who is before and above all who
 shall contend? or what cannot He do who
 has the power of creation? He is therefore
 Almighty. And, lastly, since we know so
 much of the properties of matter or body
 as to perceive that two bodies cannot exist
 in the same place at the same time, it ne-
 cessary follows, that that Being, who is
 always every where, must be of an higher
 nature, and consequently that, according to
 the words of our blessed Saviour, " God
 is a Spirit."

Having thus spoken of the unity of God
 as forming ground on which to demonstrate
 His eternity, omnipotence, incomprehen-
 sibility and spirituality, the specifick charac-
 ter under which He is mentioned in the
 text as the Father, of whom are all things,
 is next to be considered.

On the propriety with which He, who
 is the Authour and Maker of all things,
 might, on that account alone, be called the
 Father

Father of all, I need not enlarge. This SERM.
endearing appellation was wont to be given XI.
by the ancient idolaters even to the imaginary
beings from whom they expected, or fancied
they had received, protection. And how
much more justly may the true God be re-
garded as a parent by those to whom His
wondrous works have made known the re-
ality of His superintendance, and whom
His merciful provisions have convinced of
the constancy of His providence. If ye
have but duly reflected on the instances of
the loving-kindness and tender mercies of
the Lord, which have been pointed out in
the discourses I have already read to you,
ye will be inclined to acknowledge His
parental goodness in terms no less warm
than those which the prophet Isaiah em-
ployed in his supplications for his afflicted
country: “ Doubtless thou art our Father,
though Abraham be ignorant of us, and
Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord,
art our Father, our Redeemer: thy name
is from everlasting.” For your attention
has been called not only to those proofs of

§ERM. the fatherly kindness of God, which arise
 XI. from His having provided a place meet for
 our habitation, and furnished it with every
 necessary for food and raiment, with many
 means of delight, with various sources of
 instruction, but to those stronger testimonies
 of paternal care, afforded us by the remedies
 for the consequences of our folly, and even
 for some of those of our faults, which are
 prepared in different productions of the
 earth; and yet to the still higher instance
 of love shewn to mankind, in seeking us
 when we were lost, and receiving us, though
 we were prodigal children, by the glorious
 gospel of Christ. In this, indeed, not only
 the character of a Father is exhibited to us,
 by that most irrefragable proof of His
 pitying us as a man pitieth his own chil-
 dren, His sending His only begotten Son
 into the world to ransom us from death;
 but we are more particularly called on to
 consider Him in it; and to confide in His
 dispensations as those of an affectionate
 parent, whose study it is to promote the
 lasting welfare of His offspring. “Blessed,
 faith


faith St. Peter, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath *begotten us* again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And St. Paul: "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. *Wherefore*, continues he, *Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*" St. John too: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

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Thus did the apostles inculcate the doctrine of God's having vouchsafed again to prove Himself a Father to the human race, by appointing them as His sons to an inheritance in the realms of light; and, in consonance with this, we are, in many

SERM. places of the New Testament, admonished
 XI. to place the fullest confidence in His fatherly
 goodness. “ Wherefore, saith our Lord,
 if God so clothe the grafs of the field,
 which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into
 the oven, shall He not much more clothe
 you, O ye of little faith: therefore take no
 thought, saying, What shall we eat? or
 what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall
 we be clothed?—For your heavenly Father
 knoweth that ye have need of all these
 things.” And again: “ What man is there
 of you, whom if his son ask bread, will
 he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish,
 will he give him a serpent? If ye then,
 being evil, know how to give good gifts
 unto your children, how much more shall
 your Father, which is in heaven, give good
 things to them that ask Him?” And that
 He will thus give us all things, His having
 already given His Son for our redemption,
 is urged as a pledge. Hear this in the
 forcible language of the apostle of the
 Gentiles: “ He that spared not His own
 Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how
 shall

shall He not with Him also freely give us SERM.
all things." In truth, this pledge forms in XI.
itself a commencement of the gift; since, 
by having reconciliation made for us, we
are put into a state to receive every good
thing, even immortality itself, by which
the merciful work of the Lord will be com-
pleted in us, by making us conformable to
the image of His own Son, who hath no
end of days. And this suggests to our
consideration the other sense in which God
is, in the sacred writings, mentioned by the
name of the Father.

That man must, indeed, be without re-
flection, who can have read the New Testa-
ment, and not have observed, that the first
of that eternal and ever-blessed Trinity,
whose names have been called over us,
and to whose service we have all been dedi-
cated in baptism, is, as the fountain of the
other two divine persons, and more parti-
cularly as the Father of our Lord, in His
divine nature, termed *the Father*. Thus
we read in the fourth chapter of St. John's
first

SERM. first epistle: “ We have seen, and do testify,
 XI. that the Father sent the Son to be the
 Saviour of the world.” And in the eleventh
 chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel are these
 words of our Lord Himself: “ No man
 knoweth the Son but the Father; neither
 knoweth any man the Father, save the Son,
 and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal
 Him.” And, in the fifteenth of St. John’s
 Gospel, our Saviour saith most appositely to
 the distinction before us, “ He that hateth
 me, hateth my Father also. If I had not
 done among them the works which none
 other man did, they had not had sin: but
 now have they both seen and hated both me
 and my Father. But this cometh to pass,
 that the word might be fulfilled that is
 written in their law, they hated me with-
 out a cause. But when the Comforter is
 come, whom I will send unto you from the
 Father, even the Spirit of truth, which
 proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify
 of me.”

It was in the name of this His Father SERM.
that our Lord delivered His doctrine, in XI.
His name He wrought His miracles, thus
revealing to us the will and the power of
Him whom no one hath seen, or can see;
and to His glory He referred whatever He
did; herein giving us an example to keep
perpetually in our minds our relation to the
invisible Sovereign of the world, and to
comply with His own precept, “to let our
light so shine before men, that they may
see our good works, and glorify our Father
which is in Heaven.” Some of the obli-
gations incumbent on us to do this, natu-
rally arise as inferences from what has been
laid before you in the present discourse, and
with a statement of them I shall close it.

After what ye have heard from the words
of the prophet Isaiah, that “besides the
Lord there is no Saviour,” how can ye pos-
sibly be guiltless, if ye trust for safety or
ease, or for success in any thing but His
protection? When He hath vouchsafed to
declare Himself the Authour of the good
and

SERM. and evil which befall us, and deigned to
 XI. call on us to look up to Him as our Pro-
 tectour, can we, without shewing a mistrust
 of His faithfulness, or a doubt of His
 power, hope to encrease our comforts, or
 lessen our sufferings, by any thing separate
 from His service? How vainly, therefore,
 do they labour, who, casting all remem-
 brance of God behind them, think to ob-
 tain happiness by pursuing any course in
 which they cannot continue under His
 patronage! Ye may gratify your inordinate
 desires, by revelling in present pleasures:
 by the indulgences of vanity, ye may soothe
 your pride; and by unjust gains, ye may
 encrease your substance. But who can
 secure you from the diseases to which the
 first will naturally expose you? Who pre-
 vent the bitter mortifications to which the
 second will as naturally render you liable?
 or who defend you from the losses that may
 strip you of the last? And, above all, who
 can relieve your souls from that worm to
 which each of these courses will necessarily
 give birth? If there be (and ye now know
 there

there is) but One who can do these things, and yet He will not clear the guilty; is it not madness not to keep innocence, and take heed to the thing that is right in His eyes?

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Again: since we are informed of the universal and uncontrouled dominion of the Lord our God, is it not acting inconsistently with the instruction thus vouchsafed us, to permit the fear of any other being to torment us? To suppose wicked spirits can, without this commission, wreak their malice on us; or the ghosts of the departed return to earth to terrify us? Or is it less than prophanation to imagine, that He whose word is a law to the universe, will convey His decrees by the mouth of a hag, to be revealed for a penny, or make some of the most abandoned of mankind His messengers? Henceforth, therefore, beware of giving way to superstitious fears, so contrary to the faith of a Christian; and of making yourselves partakers of other men's sins, by encouraging those presumptuous wretches,

SERM. Wretches, who wander from door to door,
 XI. pretending to an insight into futurity!

When ye are apprized, according to what ye have heard in the former part of this discourse, that out of the hand of the Lord God of Israel no one can deliver, does it not behove you to attend to the caution of His apostle, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; and, consequently, to avoid provoking His just wrath and indignation, by neglecting to render what is due unto Him as a Father, and as a Master. Here the words of the prophet Malachi demand our attention: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If, then, I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name." If we deem it reproachful to men not to honour their fathers of the flesh, how much rather shall we deem it so not to render the honour due to the Father of spirits, who
 . hath

hath begotten us not to sufferings and to death, but to the blessed hope of everlasting life and glory? Ye can scarcely be ignorant, that among the first things intended by honouring a parent, is imparting of our substance to his wants: but what can we perform towards our heavenly Father that is parallel to this? He stands not in need of our offerings, nor requires gifts at our hands. But does He not esteem what is given to our poor brethren as offered to Himself? Does He not consider every thing done for their assistance as ministered unto Him? In these things, then, behold a portion of the honour He requires! And recollect, that as far as ye have neglected to communicate to the necessities of those who want, in proportion to your own ability to relieve them, so far may it be demanded of you in the name of the Lord, “Where is mine honour?”

I am aware, that by the limitation I have now expressed, there is considerable space left for evasion, and that where the will is wanting,

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XI.
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SERM. wanting, men will strive hard but they will  
 XI. find pleas of inability. But this, alas! is  
 but deceiving themselves. From Him who requires the honour, no power of paying it can be concealed; and for every man there is an easy and most apposite method of examining his own sincerity. Let him but put the question, if he his self were in narrow circumstances, and had a son capable of assisting him, what pleas for neglecting so to do would he think sufficient from his mouth? Would he deem him justified by urging, that if he assisted his father, he must visit the theatre so many times less in a season, or should be obliged to diminish the expence of his entertainments? I conceive not. How can ye yourselves then be justified, if your means of relieving the distressed be impaired by what is wasted in dissipation and useles pomp? If, in this point, therefore, ye would be blameless, fairly compare what ye expend in mere pleasure and the indulgences of vanity, (whether those indulgences consist in the parade of sumptuous entertainments, the  
 often-



ostentation of costly garments, or the exhibition of a splendid equipage) with what ye distribute to the necessities of the indigent: assured, that unless the balance be considerably on the side of what ye gladly communicate, ye cannot be without rebuke.

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As, in our earthly fathers, there are many particulars beside their immediate pecuniary wants, in which our assistance may be requisite, so likewise as to those to whom whatsoever attention is shewed our heavenly Father will esteem as paid unto Himself, various are the modes by which we may most importantly help them: these require, however, the application of time, and that of a little exertion. And should we not deem it hard to have these refused us by our children? Or what should we think of that son who would be perpetually letting the trifles of life, (cards, I will suppose, or assemblies, parties of musick, or trivial conversation) draw him aside from the discharge of the sacred duties of life? Here, therefore, let me, as before, exhort you to

SERM. call to mind what portion of your time is  
 XI. consumed in the uselefs avocations I have  
 enumerated, that might more advantageously,  
 and ought more properly to be employed,  
 in contributing to the ease or benefit of your  
 brethren ; and that ye may deal fairly in  
 the accompt, recollect that ye must pass it  
 again before the throne of God !

Another portion of the honour due to a  
 parent, is a decent attention to his instructions ; and heavy are the chastisements  
 threatened in the Scriptures, to those who  
 treat the lessons of a father with contempt.  
 And yet, I beseech you, what respect do  
 they shew to the lessons of our heavenly  
 Father, who are either negligent in going  
 where they know they are to be delivered,  
 or are guilty of the most listless behaviour  
 when they are there, or treat what they  
 have learned of them as of so little import-  
 ance, that the least trouble is esteemed suf-  
 ficient to prevent their performing them,  
 and the least temptation a justification of  
 their disobedience ? Still we hear men,  
 when

when defending their conduct, urge that they do no harm to any body, and other the like pleas, as if to that particular of their misbehaviour, which is of the deepest criminality, their transgression of the divine injunctions, no guilt at all were attached. Henceforth let it not be so with you, but let this truth never depart from your minds, that whenever we sin, be our offence what it may, our crime is of inevitable necessity, heightened by the guilt of trampling under foot the instructions of our Father which is in Heaven.

I shall make but one more observation on our conduct to God as our Father: the generality of mankind unite in condemning those children who scruple not to hurt the feelings of a parent; and is not what we are so strongly cautioned against in Scripture, "grieving God's holy Spirit," analogous to this? Without entering into any abstruse speculations on the purity of the divine nature, that all sin is most highly offensive unto God, we have a most convincing

SERM. vincible assurance in the inestimable price  
 XI. paid for man's redemption. There must be  
 a peculiar malignity in that stain, which  
 nothing less than the blood of the Son of  
 God could wash out. But if sin be thus  
 hateful in the sight of our heavenly Father,  
 shall we pretend to honour Him, while we  
 persist in the practice of it? Or will the  
 stale purpose of future amendment repair  
 the dishonour we continue to offer Him?  
 Or, in truth, what does this purpose prove  
 when executed, but giving ourselves to God,  
 when we can no longer enjoy the world?  
 and is not this offering to Him the lame and  
 the blind, and the sick? Should ye be  
 pleased with your own children, were they  
 to bring you presents like these? Offer  
 them now unto your earthly governours,  
 will they be pleased with you, or accept  
 your persons?


# SERMON XII.

ON 'THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.


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NUMBERS XXIII. 19.

*God is not a man, that He should lie, neither  
the son of man, that He should repent:  
Hath He said, and shall He not do it?  
Or hath He spoken, and shall He not  
make it good?*

**W**HETHER it proceeded from observ- SERM.  
ing what passed in the world, or XII.  
from a traditional idea of the divine per-   
fections, there manifestly existed among the  
ancient Gentiles such a notion of the never-  
failing truth of the word of God, that they  
considered the decrees of Fate as immutable  
and uncontroulable. For although the true

SERM. meaning was afterwards, in great measure,  
 XII. forgotten, and there became attached unto  
 it a confused idea of an unintelligible necessity considered as a cause in itself, that is, an obligation arising from nothing, it is plain, from the very term “ Fate,” which is a literal translation from a Latin word, signifying “ that which has been spoken,” that the persons which originally employed it, meant by it neither more nor less than a divine decree : and the sense they thus entertained of the immutability of what proceedeth out of the mouth of God, is perfectly consistent with our best notions of our Creatour’s greatness, as taught in the sacred volume of Revelation, wherein we are told, that with Him, there is “ neither variable-ness nor shadow of turning ;” or as the same thing is expressed in the text, that “ God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent : Hath He said it, and shall He not do it ? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good ?”

It is to this attribute of the Lord, His SERM.  
truth, that I now mean to speak, arranging XII.  
what I have to offer to your consideration   
concerning it under two heads, the one  
comprizing what relates to the perfection  
itself, the other containing the inferences  
that may be drawn from it more particularly  
interesting to ourselves.

1. The reasons immediately suggested in  
the text, why it is impossible that God  
should either lie or alter His decrees, are  
grounded solely on a most obvious truth,  
that He is far superiour to any thing like  
human infirmity. For not to descend to  
those falsities, which being intentional, pro-  
ceed from a wicked heart, men are fre-  
quently misled, by their want of foresight,  
to promise what in the event they find  
themselves totally incapable of performing :  
as, on the other hand, though having it in  
their power to accomplish their promises,  
they are not seldom prevented from so doing  
by other motives of action presenting them-  
selves, different from those by which they

SERM. were swayed when they engaged their  
 XII. words. Now neither of these obstacles to  
 truth can ever take place with respect to the  
 Deity. Every possible circumstance of every  
 case is, and has been visible to Him from  
 all eternity; no alterations, therefore, can  
 become necessary in His provisions, no  
 change can be requisite in His dispensations.  
 Far removed from all imperfection, there  
 is no mutability in His purposes; He is  
 absolutely the same in will, as well as in  
 essence, from everlasting to everlasting:  
 and as there is no variability in Him, so  
 the transcendancy of His power secures,  
 against all opposition, the execution of His  
 decrees; and the unalterable laws of the  
 universe are the eternal prescriptions of His  
 will. How abhorrent, then, from the na-  
 ture of such a Being, must be every degree  
 of fallhood; all recourse to which does, in  
 fact, proceed only from weakness, and al-  
 ways brings with it an opprobrious self-  
 conviction of being necessitated to recur to  
 base means for the accomplishment of our  
 purposes. Indeed, this feeling of shame,  
 so



so naturally arising in our minds on every departure which we make from truth, yields another proof of the odiousness of falsehood in the sight of our Creatour; since it is not to be believed, that He would have implanted in us a repugnance and contempt for aught but what was displeasing before Him. And therefore we may observe, in passing that what some persons, who for the most part merit a worse epithet than that of weak, are wont to affirm, that some untruths are innocent, is totally groundless; as no creature can ever be guiltless who commits what is inconsistent with the natural dictates of its own mind when yet uncorrupted, and abominable in the eyes of his Maker. If it be in a serious matter that these defenders of unrighteousness recur to misrepresentation, what faith do they manifest in the Lord, who, instead of trusting for success to Him, put their cause at once out of His patronage! and if it be for amusement that they thus exercise their invention, how contemptibly shallow must be their information, how confined their know-

SERM.  
XII.



**SERM.** knowledge, who cannot find sufficient subjects for common conversation, nor sufficient means to relax their minds from severer pursuits, without turning to lies for their diversion! On the attention of such in particular should the words of St. John be pressed, “that no lie is of the truth:” and on the hearts of all should be imprinted those passages of holy writ which support the reasoning I have now set before you, by declaring, that every thing which partakes of falsehood is totally inconsistent with the perfection of God, and contrary to the glory of His nature. In that song which the Lord commanded Moses to teach the children of Israel, as a witness for Himself against them, He declares Himself to be “a God of truth:” (Deut. xxxii. 4.) and by the prophet Jeremiah it is still more pointedly pronounced, “the Lord is God of truth.” (Jer. x. 10.) In conformity with which, St. Paul, writing to Titus, uses the phrase, “God that cannot lie.” And every thing that favours of falsehood, is declared to be hateful unto Him; “Solomon,

mon,

mon, in Proverbs the viith, ſays, that “ the Lord hateth a lying tongue:” and in Proverbs xii. 22. “ Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.” And another ſource is, by our bleſſed Saviour, aſſigned for lies; even the Devil, who, “ when he ſpeaketh a lie, ſpeaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

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XII.

2. Thus our Almighty Governour not only being far removed from every degree of imperfection which might lead to a deviation from truth, but from the holineſs of His nature, having in abomination whatever is falſe, it of courſe follows, that in all His diſpenſations, truth will everlaſtingly prevail: an inference, containing confequences of the utmoſt importance to ourſelves. For firſt, ſince this is the caſe, “ Hath He ſaid, and ſhall He not do it?” are not all His menaces againſt ſin, which the ſons of men are wont ſo madly to dare, intended to be executed? Look then into your Bibles, and there ye will find Him declaring, that however merciful in pardon-  
ing

**SERM.** ing those who sincerely repent, however  
**XII.** extensive His forbearance to those of whose  
 amendment there remains an hope, He will  
 yet by no means clear the guilty. Ye will  
 there find indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, denounced against every  
 foul of man that doeth evil. What hope  
 of escape, therefore, for transgressours from  
 punishments, for the execution of which  
 stands thus pledged the truth of Him who  
 cannot lie! What ground can present im-  
 punity yield to look for a final release!  
 Various, ye will say, are the arguments by  
 which men encourage themselves to hope  
 for this. But whatever may be their variety,  
 they may all be obviated by the single posi-  
 tion, that the word of God is true. Let  
 us suppose, for instance, that an offender  
 in respect to the personal vices, (since they  
 are they for which these pleas are most  
 usually urged) should say, that the general  
 menaces against sinners reach not to him,  
 for his commissions hurt no one but him-  
 self; would his assumed innocence with  
 regard to others, (for it is, in fact, only  
 assumed,

assumed, being far from real) preserve him SERM.  
from the condemnation threatened in the XII.  
sentence, “ without holiness no man shall  
see the Lord?” Or, in other words, if  
this last declaration be true, is it not im-  
possible, that those who will not purify  
themselves, should enter into the kingdom  
of Heaven? This, indeed, ye may reply, is  
what very few will acknowledge. But  
“ let God be true, and every man be a liar.”  
The reasonings of His creatures cannot  
reach the fixed certainty of His word; and  
when once that can be produced for confir-  
mation, there is an end of all reasonable  
debate. Be it allowed, that your offences  
appear venial to yourself: be it granted,  
that to you the penalties seem dispropor-  
tionate to the transgressions; shall your self-  
partiality render null the divine award? Or  
shall your imaginations cause His truth to  
fail?

Did we call you to go on to perfection  
on lower authority than we do; did we in-  
sist on your renouncing the world and the  
flesh,

SERM. flesh, and produce not the command of God  
 XII. for it, ye might perhaps be at liberty to  
 say, that a prize less high than that we  
 propose would content you, provided less  
 exertions were necessary to gain it : and this,  
 possibly, is one reason why the divine au-  
 thority is interposed. But since it is on  
 that we address you, if ye listen not to the  
 call, ye must suffer the threatened inflic-  
 tions ; because the word of Him who has  
 denounced them cannot fail.

To whatever other pleas, whether of  
 temptation or infirmity, men may advance  
 for impunity to their sins, the same reply  
 may still be made : for He who knew long  
 before all that can be urged in their excuse,  
 has yet thought fit to permit the sentence to  
 go out of His mouth ; and “ hath He said  
 it, and shall He not do it ? ”

Great, indeed, if properly considered,  
 will appear the presumption of those who  
 endeavour to palliate any practices which  
 Revelation condemns, or to fortify them-  
 selves

felves and others againſt thoſe terrours SERM.  
which it holds out to all who continue in XII.  
them: for what leſs do ſuch perſons do,  
than controvert the truth of the divine de-  
clarations? Yet very numerous is the gene-  
ration who ſcruple not to deal in theſe pro-  
fane babblings. Conſider, for a moment,  
whether ye yourſelves have never been  
guilty of this. Have ye not, at times, ar-  
gued, that offences which ye yet know are in  
the Goſpel ranked among thoſe which pre-  
clude men from everlaſting happineſs, are  
yet ſo common, or ſo trifling, that it can  
hardly be ſuppoſed, that God will viſit for  
them. Abſurd as it may appear on repeti-  
tion, recollect, if you have never made uſe  
of the argument, ſurely there can be no  
harm in what every body does. Or that  
equally prepoſterous one, it cannot be be-  
lieved, that a Being of infinite mercy will  
punish everlaſtingly the crimes of ſo ſhort-  
lived a creature as man: if ye have, now  
call to mind, how directly contrary is this  
your doctrine to that of Him who ſpake the  
word of the Father, and ſaid, “ Whoſo-  
ever,

SERM. ever, therefore, shall break one of these  
 XII. *least* commandments, and shall teach men  
 so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven :” (St. Matt. v. 19.) and farther declared, that those who are cast out of that kingdom, shall “ go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

To awaken our attention to the truth of this, and all the other divine menaces, and convince us by the testimony of facts, that if the Lord hath said, He will do it, many of His judgments in the earth have been foretold long before they took place ; but those most obvious to your observation, and of the actual infliction of which ye can most easily obtain the proofs, are the evils with which He threatened His own people of Israel, if they obeyed not the law which Moses set before them. Other instances of these ye may seek in your Bibles : I shall select only one for your consideration at present, but that such as is peculiarly fitted

to



to prove, that the severity of the threatened judgment is by no mean a ground for hoping that it will not be executed. In the xxviiiith chapter of Deuteronomy, there is recorded a menace of the bitterest affliction, which, it should seem, can well fall to human lot, that of a mother being driven by famine to devour her own children. “The tender and delicate woman among you,” saith Mofes, “which would not adventure to fet her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tendernefs, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things, secretly in the siege, and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates:” ver. 56, 7. And thus we read, that in the siege of Samaria, when, on a woman’s crying for help to the king of Israel, he asked, “What aileth thee?” She answered, “This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that

SERM.  
XII.  
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SERM. we may eat him to-day, and we will eat
 XII. my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son,
 and did eat him: and I said unto her on
 the next day, Give thy son, that we may
 eat him: and she hath hid her son.”
 (2 Kings vi. 28, 29.) And we learn from
 the Jewish historian Josephus, that in the
 last siege of Jerufalem, recourse was had to
 the same shocking mode of support: for
 he relates, in his sixth book of the Jewish
 war, that a woman, remarkable both for
 family and wealth, being repeatedly robbed
 both of goods and provision, by the wretches
 who then tyrannized over that devoted city,
 was at length reduced by despair, to put
 her sucking child to death, and having
 dressed it, she ate one half, the other she
 concealed; when a party of those who had
 thrown the city into confusion, and made it
 a scene of anarchy, entered her house, and
 smelling the scent of her abominable repast,
 threatened to murder her if she did not dis-
 cover what food she had prepared, on which
 she shewed them the fragments of her
 horrid

horrid meal, the yet uneaten remains of her slaughtered infant.

SERM.

XII.



And now having before you these instances of the severity of God on those who continue in sin, consider seriously what, consistently with the truth of the menaces of the Holy Scriptures, must await the disobedient part of the sons of Adam; and to give this consideration its due effect, keep the words of the text deeply infixed in your minds, “ God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent: Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”

Blessed, however, be His holy name. The immutability of His purposes is not more manifest in His visitations on our iniquities than in the duration of His mercy. To this His prophet doth, in His name, bear witness; “ For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” In testimony of this the psalmist

SERM. had before quoted the experience of His
 XII. people, in that affecting hymn in which
 every verse is closed with this assertion of
 the Lord's never-failing goodness, "for
 His mercy endureth for ever." And this
 the apostle teaches, when he says, "the
 gifts and calling of God are without re-
 pentance." (Rom. xi. 29.) For He had
 promised Jacob, in the day that He revealed
 Himself unto him in Bethel, "that He
 would not leave him until He had done that
 which He had spoken to him of;" and,
 therefore, though by the time of our Savi-
 our's appearance, the number of the chil-
 dren of Israel was as that of the stars of
 Heaven, and yet very small was the rem-
 nant that had not gone out of the way, He
 turned not away the presence of His anointed,
 but the election obtained what they sought
 for, and through them the salvation of the
 Lord was made known unto the Gentiles;
 and thus the first fruit being holy, the lump
 is also holy, and in God's good time, that
 blindness, which hath in so great part hap-
 pened unto Israel, will be taken away, and
 "the

“ the Deliverer coming out of Sion, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” A strong pledge of which is given to the world before our own eyes in the Jews yet continuing separate from all other people of the earth, and therefore capable of being restored according to the prophecies gone before concerning them, while there is now actually accomplishing on them that of the prophet Hosea ; “ For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim :” as preceding the completion of the words immediately subjoined ; “ Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king ; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” (Hof. iii. 4, 5.)

When, therefore, we thus see that the promises of God in Christ are Yea, and in Him, Amen, what trust ought we not to have through Him to Godward? Wonderful,

SERM. ful, indeed, are the things which He hath
 XII. done for us, and inconceivably great those
 which He hath promised yet to do; but
 for the reality of both we have His word; and He is not a man, that He should vaunt benefits He hath not conferred; nor a son of man, that He should utter promises never to be realized. Yet since He has spoken, do not they, in fact, charge Him with the former, who will not receive, in its fullest extent, all He has revealed concerning the mystery of human redemption? and do not they suggest the latter, who will not believe all He hath spoken concerning that kingdom of righteousness, which He hath commanded the faithful to expect? I will not say it is a feigned humility under which men act, when they plead their own unworthiness for doubting the representations given us in holy writ of what God has done, or will hereafter do for us; but, surely, it would be more becoming gratefully to receive, or thankfully expect a blessing, than to dispute the unbounded

goodness, or controvert the perfect truth of SERM.
Him from whom it proceeds. XII.



“ Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Such are the encouraging terms in which we are animated by the divine Captain of our salvation, to look up for protection under the greatest dangers with which we can meet. And can ye, after this, suppose yourselves to be deserted of God, because ye find that ye have perils to encounter, and difficulties with which to struggle, without disputing His truth? All the disciples of Christ are taught to take up their cross, and follow Him, who, through sufferings, made His way to glory. As long, then, as ye confide in God, can ye doubt whither tend the trials ye are now made to undergo? Do Him but the justice to believe, that He has truly described

SERM. the principles of His own government of
 XII. men, given a fair account of the end fought
 in the discipline to which He has subjected
 us, and promised us no greater rewards,
 than He has really prepared for those who,
 by patient continuance in well-doing, seek
 for the glory He has set before them.
 Render him but what is due, in acknow-
 ledging that all things work together as He
 hath declared they should, for good to those
 that believe, and ye will unfold to your-
 selves such a comment on what befalls you
 in the present state, gain such an explanation
 of what is passing in the world, and open to
 yourselves so sure a prospect of honour, hap-
 piness, and immortality, ready to be revealed
 before men and angels, as soon as the small
 remainder of the line of prophecy He hath
 been pleased to give, shall be accomplished,
 as will not only encourage you to bear up
 with firmness against the evils of the pre-
 sent troublous times, but filling your hearts
 with all joy and peace in believing, cause
 you to haste unto the coming of the day
 of the revelation of Jesus Christ, of which
 ye

ye have received an infallible pledge in the word of Him, who “ is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should repent ;” but “ the Lord, holy and true, who keepeth his promise for ever.”

SERM.
XII.

SERMON XIII.


ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

JEREMIAH XXIII, 24.

Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

THERE is no divine attribute of the SERM.
reality of which men seem more gene- XIII.
rally sensible than they are of that here re-
ferred to, the universal presence of God. For
though there may be, in the account we have
of some tribe of savages, mention of their, at
times, covering the object of their worship,
that it may not see what they do, idolaters,
as well as others, have, with very little
exception, ever considered it impossible to
conceal

SERM. conceal their actions from the eye of Heaven. Hence, in every age, the restless terrors of the guilty, and the anxious appeals of injured innocence, to an invifible Judge. XIII.
 And as there is no impreffion on the human mind more general than this, fo is there fcarcely any more difficult to be eradicated. We read, indeed, of men fo hardened by vice, as to fay, “ How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Moft High?” and blasphemous fpeeches of the kind may not be uncommon among the profane effufions of a debauch. But when folitude or diftreff, by diminishing the redundancy of the animal fpirits, gives the genuine fentiments of the foul opportunity to exert themfelves, not a particle of what was uttered in the hours of intemperance, but is acknowledged to be recorded before the Lord, and to ftand as evidence againft the guilty. Considerable is the check that libertinifm hence receives, and not lefs falutary the encouragement derived from hence alfo to truth and virtue. Wherefore it becomes us to preferve fo beneficial an impreffion on
 our

our minds, by taking into our consideration SERM.
the reality of what it suggests to us, and I XIII.
shall accordingly make it my business, in 
the ensuing discourse, to set before you the
certainty of God's omnipresence; as mani-
fested both by arguments founded on the
divine perfection, and by the declarations of
Scripture.

Now when we speak of God's being present every where, we do not mean to say, that He is witness to our words and actions only, but that He penetrates likewise into the most secret imaginations of our hearts; and though it may be difficult, nay, perhaps impossible, for us truly to comprehend an excellence so high, yet the essential perfection of the divine nature necessarily embraces this, as well as every other particular, of which the absence would imply any the least degree of imperfection. For no being can be absolutely perfect who could, in any possible case, need the assistance of another; which might happen to one, without whose immediate
know-

SERM. knowledge any thought could, at any time,
 XIII. pass in any mind. Again; if we acknow-
 ledge not the reality of this attribute of
 God, we must suppose, that in His creation
 He did not provide for the most perfect
 government of His creatures, but left some
 of them the power of planning evil to
 others, and of making their own minds
 storehouses of impurity, without being
 liable to His inspection. Nay, we must
 deny Him the power which is most neces-
 sary for the improvement and exaltation of
 His moral creatures, and absolutely requi-
 site to complete the character of the Judge
 of all the earth. And as the consideration
 of the divine perfection thus manifests to
 us the certainty of the omnipresence of
 God, so His own declarations, made through
 His prophets, confirm it. Thus by Jere-
 miah, in the words of the text; “ Can
 any hide himself in secret places that I shall
 not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill
 heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” And
 by David, in his admonition to his son
 Solomon; “ For the Lord searcheth all
 hearts,

hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever.” (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.) And before, in those well known and beautiful verses of the thirty-ninth psalm: “ O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there: if I make up 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

SERM.

XIII.



SERM. hold me. If I say, Surely, the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." And again, by the prophet Jeremiah: "I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." (Jer. xvii. 10.)

After hearing these declarations, does there not arise in your minds a sentiment analogous to that expressed by Jacob, when he awaked from his miraculous dream; "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not:" and he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place." The reflection, that the eyes of the Sovereign of the universe are ever upon us, those eyes which are too pure to behold iniquity without being offended thereat, naturally suggests an anxious enquiry, how far our conduct is capable of enduring such inspection? and manifests the awfulness of the situation
in

in which we stand, while, with all our im-
perfections, the unerring judgment of the
Lord God is incessantly exercised upon us.

SERM.
XIII.


This consideration, in the first place, en-
creases the reproach of every injurious,
every unbecoming act. If the oppressor
plunder the helpless, or afflict the destitute,
does it not add to the heinousness of his
crime, that it was perpetrated before the
face of Him, who has declared Himself to
be the Avenger of all such? If the dis-
obedient, or unruly, insult their superiours;
if the arrogant and intemperate revile their
equals, is it not a circumstance of addi-
tional guilt, that these breaches of the di-
vine law were committed in the very pre-
sence of the Lawgiver Himself? And how
much more is this the case in those offences
which are peculiarly levied against the
Deity Himself? acts of impiety, I mean,
and speeches of profaneness! The fear
justly entertained by the tender-hearted, for
the horrible fate of those wretches who do
what in them lies to deprive the Almighty
of the honour due unto His name, will be

SERM. greatly increased, if there be taken into
 XIII. contemplation this aggravating circumstance
 of their conduct, that their ceaseless efforts to deprive Him of the homage of His creatures are exerted under His own eye. And the horror raised in sober breasts, by the blasphemous effusions of scoffers, will not reach its greatest height, unless it be recollected, that He, against Whom they so madly wag their tongues, is a present witness to the dishonour offered to Himself. Highly salutary would be the tendency of similar reflections on those who are engaged in meetings of festivity, or scenes of dissipation. For, surely, gluttony and drunkenness, lasciviousness, pride, and folly, would receive a check by the recollection, that an observing eye, and attentive ear, let neither deed nor word pass unregarded; and particularly in many scenes of at best idle amusement, a much more becoming proportion of the sacred order would probably be seen, were they to call to mind that He is looking on them, Who, if He rebuked them in the style in which He, by
 His

His prophets, reprov'd those who formerly waited at His altar, might mark their characters in terms like these, "Such are thy watchmen, O Zion!"

SERM.

XIII.



Capable, however, of striking us with terrour, as is this attribute of God, it is no less calculated to raise in our minds the most animating confidence. How full of consolation is the thought, that He is not only our refuge and strength, but a *very present* help in time of trouble! That He not only looketh on our affliction, but on the plots of those who are planning evil against us; and while He beholds their mischievous intentions, sees too the means of defence which we possess. Hence are the counsels of the wicked often so suddenly overthrown; hence are men frequently rescued, when their situations appear even desperate; and many times delivered from imminent dangers of very existence of which they themselves were insensible! How futile are the most deep laid schemes of policy, how useless the most vigorous preparations

SERM. for war, unless favourably regarded by that
 XIII. eye which thus watches over all ! And how
 easily may those, in whose favour it wakes,
 triumph over their adversaries, and be ex-
 alted above all that would oppress them !

But if the recollection of the uninterrupted presence of God in general, tends to affect our minds in the manner now mentioned, that of His more especial regard to particular places, is a subject of consideration neither less awful nor less encouraging. “ Where two or three, saith our Lord, are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. xviii. 20.) And ought we to think lightly of the sanctity of assemblies thus hallowed by the gracious attention of Him, “ in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ?” Or could men, who think as they ought to think of the situation in which they stand, when appearing in the church of Christ, permit themselves to be guilty of any irreverend, any careless behaviour ? Consider, when ye enter into the house of
 the

the Lord, the eye of God Himself is examining the worth, the sincerity of your sacrifice. Before that which judges perfectly, even the demeanour of the offerers cannot pass unobserved. When in the presence of those who are your equals by nature, and superiour to you only in temporary rank, if you perceive the eyes of one of them fixed on you, does it not immediately produce a fear, that there may be something in your conduct or appearance, that attracts such attention; and are you not sensible of uneasiness and anxiety as long as they continue unremoved, and solicitous, lest you should be guilty of a gesture, or a look, that may be considered as improper in your situation. Indulge, then, but this feeling of nature in the more important case; consider yourself, when you are in the church, as having the eye of Him, for whose worship you repair thither, constantly bent on you, and marking the degree of propriety, attention, and reverence, with which you behave; and you will not easily suffer yourself to be betrayed into either of the species

SERM.

XIII.



SERM. of misbehaviour which disgrace our religious assemblies, by, on the one hand, neglecting your own, and disturbing the devotions of others, by conversing or looking around you ; or, on the other, by a listless demeanour, which manifests, that your resort thither is merely on account of custom, or repose. And if your worship be thus freed from what must render it unacceptable before Him who judgeth righteously, what degree of encouragement may ye not derive from knowing that He to whom ye address yourselves is not afar off, but present to receive your supplications, and regard the sincerity, the humility, and the ardour with which ye prefer them. That no article of your petitions passes unheard, no plea ye use fails of attention. Reflect but on these truths, and ye will be convinced, that opportunity of entering these assemblies thus blessed with the particular presence of the Lord, is not only not to be neglected, but to be prized most highly, and improved most earnestly.

But

But while enquiring into this attribute of our divine Creatour, ought we not further to consider, that the accuracy of the inspection we undergo must be estimated by His perfection? and, consequently, that neither the closest privacy of retirement can hide us from His sight, nor the utmost craft of dissimulation conceal our thoughts from Him? “ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord.” “ Hell and destruction are before the Lord: How much more, then, the hearts of the children of men?” (Prov. xv. 11.) How little, alas! is the knowledge of this intimate presence of our Judge cultivated by the sons of men! Otherwise, could the world furnish the very numerous instances it does of crimes brought to light, which the guilty imagined they had so secretly committed as to be secure from detection? When the midnight thief, under covert of the darkness, goes forth to plunder, saying, “ No eye shall see me;” would he not, oftentimes, be checked in his nefarious purposes, were it to occur to him,

SERM. that every step he takes, every turn he makes, he is still closely watched by Him, who hateth ungodliness and wrong? When the faithless servant pilfers from his master, and thinks the trifle he steals will not be missed from the heap from which he takes it, could he, with so little apprehension, dare to break the eighth commandment, were he at the time aware, that however his transgression may remain concealed from others, yet the Maker of the law will hereafter convict him of the breach of it under his own sight? Neither, in other cases, where the groundless hope of concealment yields encouragement to sin, could it well fail to operate as a restraint on the guilty, were they to recollect, that the inmost chambers cannot conceal their deeds from the sight of Him, who hath declared, that “there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the
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the house tops." (Luke xii. 2, 3.) On the other hand, under afflictions which the sufferers are unwilling to disclose, because they have little reason to hope, that their case would meet with commiseration in the world, what consolation may be drawn from knowing, that He who seeth not as man seeth, has an eye upon all their sufferings, and an ear open to all their complaints! And thus, though the injured and the oppressed have none on earth to whom they can venture to disclose their sorrows, though the mourner is constrained to vent his tears in private, yet neither do the distresses of the former pass unregarded; nor do the griefs of the latter go unnoticed: since they have both a sure refuge in Him that is higher than the highest. It is an observation of Solomon, applicable to the point before us, that "all the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits." (Prov. xvi. 2.) For must it not be confessed, that men are not only capable of imposing on others, by feigning motives of action different from those by
which

SERM.
XIII.

SERM. which they are really swayed, but able
XIII. likewise to deceive themselves, by assuming
worthy reasons for their conduct, when in truth they have been led by others far from laudable; and under the persuasion, that their estimate is just, to stifle all remorse for what would otherwise have naturally produced it. Yet what avails this species of deception before Him who weigheth the spirits? Present even to our thoughts, He sees the duplicity which we ourselves succeed but too well in overlooking; and though the pretenders to virtuous motives may support their false claim until they themselves believe it, the corrupt source from whence their actions flow continues visible to Him. This lesson, therefore, should never depart from our minds, that God penetrates to the inmost recesses of our hearts, constantly observing whether that truth exists there, which He requireth in the inward parts. Since, as the recollection of this will teach us not to content ourselves with making a few feeble exertions against temptation, and if it give not way
to

to them, supposing we have yet performed our duty ; as it will instruct us not to conclude, that the task of conquering our evil affections, and vicious habits, is impossible, because it is difficult : so will it console us under those cruel misinterpretations which ignorance or malice may put upon our conduct ; by assuring us, that our real motives are noted before Him whose mercy will vindicate the innocent, and rescue His servants from reproach.

SERM.

XIII.

Thus does this attribute of our great Creatour yield equal ground for fear and for consolation ; and the due consideration of it will impress upon our minds the justice of those exhortations by which the sacred writers, on the one hand, admonish us to be circumspect in all things, preserving purity even in our thoughts ; and, on the other, calling on us not to permit any dangers, however imminent, to diminish our confidence in the divine protection. For if we be thus subject to incessant, and the most intimate inspection, does it not behove

us

SERM. us to strive to make ourselves able to endure
 XIII. it? Or what are our reasons for concealing
 ~~~~~ our vicious inclinations, and hiding from  
 the world our evil deeds? Is it not to avoid  
 either disappointment, shame, or punishment? But are we not exposed to these as  
 long as the Judge of all the earth is acquainted with our intentions, and our  
 works? How little the advantage, then, of  
 being able to keep them from the know-  
 ledge of our fellow-creatures? Is wicked-  
 ness less abominable in His sight than in  
 their's? Or, do they possess better means of  
 bringing the guilty to punishment than He  
 doth? Surely, then, no safety can be found  
 in concealment, That can be secured by in-  
 nocence alone; and the impurities of the  
 intemperate, the frauds of the impostor, the  
 robberies of the thief, the petty dishonesties  
 of the pilferer, and the malicious falsehoods  
 of the slanderer, will all be published be-  
 fore men and angels, unless the sincere re-  
 pentance of the guilty prevail through the  
 mediation of their Saviour, to cause their  
 iniquity to be forgiven, and their sins to be  
 covered.

covered. Or why, when surrounded by difficulties, and menaced by greater distresses, are our spirits cast down, and our hearts ready to faint under our afflictions, but because we know of no friend at hand powerful and willing to relieve us? Yet unless the Lord's ear is heavy that it cannot hear, or His hand shortened that it cannot save, of what importance is the want of any other friend? Is not He alone able to deliver us? Or is any thing too hard for Him, Who, while He dwelleth in the high and lofty place, abides with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit?

SERM.  
XIII.

Let us then seriously consider with whom we have to do; with One, to transgress whose laws, in any particular, is to offend Him to the face; to doubt whose almighty power, or to mistrust whose perfect goodness, is to insult Him little otherwise than personally: for we cannot here, as we frequently do, when, conscious of having been guilty of some misbehaviour towards men, console ourselves with saying, " Well, I  
am

**SERM.** am glad he did not see it!" Nor, as in  
**XIII.** heavier offences, "It is well it was not  
found out!" And, therefore, on account  
of this attribute of the Lord, no less than  
on that of any other, it behoveth us most  
anxiously "to keep innocence, and take  
heed to the thing that is right."

# SERMON XIV.

ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

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MATT. VI. 34.

*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.*

**T**HE beneficial alteration which would SERM.  
necessarily take place in the world, XIV.  
were this precept of our blessed Saviour  
universally obeyed, is scarcely to be esti-  
mated: for to what is to be attributed, not  
only a very considerable portion of the frauds  
and dishonesty practised among men, but  
the clashing of interests, and the strife for  
gain, which occasion so many animosities,  
consume so much time, and embitter so  
many

SERM. many tempers, nay, harden so many hearts,  
 XIV. but to a too great anxiety to secure a reserve  
 of treasure for the morrow? Were this  
 solicitude removed, how void of care would  
 be the breasts of many, how would their  
 hearts be enlarged, how free from restraint  
 would become their conversation, how plea-  
 sant their society! Can, then, our all-  
 glorious Creatour have so constituted the  
 world, as to render necessary a degree of  
 anxiety which corrupts the individual, and  
 derogates from the general comfort? and is  
 it in this fordid sense that every man is in-  
 structed to look to his own ways? Or does  
 not, on the contrary, the frequency with  
 which this carefulness misses its end de-  
 monstrate, that it is not the method in  
 which the Maker of the race hath ordained,  
 that we should secure the things that are  
 needful for us here? The strong and re-  
 peated admonitions we thus receive, plainly  
 indicate to us the superintendance of an in-  
 visible hand more powerful than our own,  
 and afford a convincing argument, that the  
 sons of men are intended for religious  
 beings,



beings, whose it is to look for support and protection in the power and goodness of their divine Governour : in conformity with which lesson of nature, and in elucidation of it, the Holy Scriptures teach us to place the most implicit and ample confidence in the providence of God ; and particularly in the words of our Lord Himself we are instructed to argue from the visible provision which our heavenly Father has made for inferiour animals, that our necessities are not overlooked by Him, and consequently to divest ourselves of all anxious solicitude as to future supplies of them. “ Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? ” (Matt. vi. 26.) And again, as to dangers with which we are threatened : “ Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings ? and not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore ; ye are of

SERM. more value than many sparrows." (Luke  
 XIV. xii. 6, 7.)

Now against the trials of adversity, against the threatening appearances that the world around us sometimes exhibits, what consolation so encouraging as that of knowing that the goodness of God takes our case into consideration, and that, in the words of the psalmist, "the angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear Him." That we may not be without this consolation, when we stand in need of it, let us now consider, what is properly to be understood by the providence of God, and what the sacred writings teach concerning the exercise of it.

The providence of God, is that care of His creatures which necessarily results from His universal knowledge, His almighty power, and His perfect goodness: for since no circumstance, however small, no event, however distant in futurity, is unknown to  
 Him,

Him, since no case of distress, however SERM.  
complicated, is too hard for Him to relieve XIV.  
it even with a word, and His moral attribute of mercy is no more limited than His natural ones of knowledge and might, where but from the ill deserts of the object can there be a case to which His interposition will not extend? The objections which have been raised against this doctrine of the universality of the divine Providence, are founded in unworthy conceptions of the perfection of God. Some of the ancient Heathens, consistently with the blindness that was in them, imagined, that any regard to human affairs was incompatible with that uninterrupted happiness in which all acknowledge the Deity must ever dwell: others allowed the interference of Heaven in the more important transactions of mankind, as the rise of states, the fall of kingdoms, and the like, but thought that their supreme God had not leisure to attend to matters of less consequence. Such opinions, I say, accord well with the times of pagan ignorance; but that they should be received

SERM. and propagated (as they have been) among  
 XIV. any who pretend to christianity, is matter  
 of little less wonder than regret. The truth  
 of a particular providence has, in a work \*  
 read by too many at an age when they are  
 neither aware of the tendency of its maxims,  
 nor armed against its sophistry, been stig-  
 matized with the epithet of partial, and the  
 power of the Almighty to deliver His ser-  
 vants, has been measured by the shallow  
 conception of a human brain. Yet, in the  
 name of common sense, how can that be  
 perfect in which any thing is wanting?  
 And is there not something wanting in  
 knowledge and power that are not universal?  
 and in goodness too, which does not act in  
 every instance where it is accompanied with  
 power so to do? Behold, then, to what  
 the denial of an universal Providence ex-  
 tends; even to that of the divine perfection!  
 and turning from the confused babblings of  
 men, who distinguish not between general  
 and universal, or partial and particular, to

\* The Essay on Man.

the sure light of revelation, mark both in SERM.  
the records and lessons of that the most XIV.  
satisfactory assurances, that the providence  
of our heavenly Father extendeth with no  
less effect to the concerns of individuals,  
than that with which it reaches to the fates  
of nations and of empires. When, through  
the exaltation of his son Joseph, Jacob and  
his family were, during a long dearth,  
nourished in Egypt, we acknowledge the  
hand of Providence in preserving the fathers  
of a nation. And when the servant of  
Abraham, who was sent to procure a wife  
for his master's son from among his kindred,  
preferred his prayer to the Almighty, that  
He would send him good speed, and shew  
kindness unto his master Abraham, in grant-  
ing that the damsel who should courteously  
answer his request to give him to drink,  
should be the same that He had appointed  
for a wife to Isaac, we see the same hand  
directing the enquiry, and diminishing the  
labour of an individual.

SERM.

XIV.

When, by the mouth of Elijah, the land had been smitten with a drought, the prophet himself was supported by the ministry of ravens. But is this, ye would say, an instance for general encouragement? An apostle quotes the prevalence of the same prophet's prayers as an example for us, observing, that Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are. In proof that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, why may we not then, by parity of reasoning, argue from the provision thus made for him to God's care of all His servants? The same prophet declared to the widow of Zarephath, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail." (1 Kings xvii. 14—16.) This, likewise, was an extraordinary mode of relief; but was there in it any thing more difficult to the hand that gave it, than exists in the ordinary course of His providence?

Con-

Consider the subject well, and ye will find, SERM.  
that the miracle consists more in the singu- XIV.  
larity of the work, than in the superiority  
of the power displayed. Recollect how  
many parts of the material world necessarily  
co-operate in producing the meal and the  
oil we use, the sun, the earth, the air, the  
rain; and in the creation and support of  
these, is less power to be supposed than in  
causing the barrel to waste not, and the  
cruze to fail not? Or, reflect on the course  
of most men's fortunes, and how often does  
it happen, that supplies, which at first ap-  
pear entirely inadequate to their wants, are,  
in a strange manner, eked out beyond all  
reasonable expectation, until the Lord send-  
eth, as it were, rain upon earth.


Ye have heard of the afflictions of Job,  
and how that before the Lord turned away  
his captivity, he was bereft of all his pro-  
perty, and appeared destitute of every pos-  
sible mean of recovering it. Yet was this  
man more wealthy at the end of his life  
than at the beginning, and died full of days

SERM. and honour. Nor was he of the stock of  
 XIV. Israel; but his history seems to have been  
 recorded and preserved to inform us, how those who had no other source of instruction than the traditions derived from Noah, and their own observation, were wont to argue on the government of God, and the events that took place among men. Nor are the sinking to a low estate, and afterwards being exalted higher than before, circumstances in their kind peculiar to Job, but such as are frequently exemplified on the extensive theatre of the world, and mark the operation of His hand, “ who (in the language of the psalmist) raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.”

And while the instances recorded in Scripture thus encourage every individual to rely as to his own case, on the never-failing providence of God, we are taught, by the most direct lessons of the same holy writings, to consider it as our duty to do so.

“ Commit



“Commit thy way unto the Lord; SERM.  
(saith the psalmist) trust also in Him, and XIV.  
He shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord,   
and wait patiently for Him.” (Psal. xxvii.  
5—7.) And One greater than David:  
“Which of you, by taking thought, can  
add one cubit unto his stature? And why  
take ye thought for raiment? Consider the  
lilies of the field, how they grow: they  
toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I  
I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all  
his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.  
Wherefore, if God so clothe the grafs of the  
field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is  
cast into the oven, shall He not much more  
clothe you, O ye of little faith. Therefore  
take no thought, saying, What shall we  
eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-  
withal shall we be clothed? (for after all  
these things do the Gentiles seek) for your  
heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need  
of all these things. But seek ye first the  
kingdom of God and his righteoufness, and  
all these things shall be added unto you.”  
Whence His apostle’s charge to the Philip-  
pians;

SERM. pians: “ Be careful for nothing ; but in  
 XIV. every thing, by prayer and supplication,  
 with thanksgiving, let your requests be  
 made known unto God.” And that too of  
 St. Peter ; “ casting all your care upon  
 Him, for He careth for you.”

The confidence which by these lessons we are taught to have in the providence of our heavenly Father, extends, you see, to all points: “ in every thing let your request be made known”—“ Casting all your care on Him.” Various are the evils with which men are threatened, different are the dangers in which they stand ; some are apprehensive of want ; others are fearful of ill treatment ; some dread the loss of friends ; and others the effect of malicious tongues. Under all these we are encouraged to look up to Him, Who knowing what would be our situation long before, has secured an event suited to our conduct, and with the danger has already made for them, who surely trust in Him, a way likewise to escape. What, then, prevents Christians  
 from

from using this source of consolation, this mode of securing to themselves deliverance? Is it want of reflection on the power, or ignorance of the promises of God? Or does it arise from the influence of the cavils started by the unbelieving and the profane? Or proceeds it from a fear of their own unworthiness? Or, lastly, is it occasioned by a conjunction of some, or of all these causes? The first of these causes can hardly operate in your breasts, after what has been stated to you in this and other discourses. As for the second, the vanity of our enemies' reasonings are obviated by all the miraculous facts wrought in support of the law and the Gospel, since these demonstrate the truth of that doctrine which commands us to pray, and faint not; to trust in the Lord, and fear not. And for our own unworthiness, did not He who gave the lesson, know to what frail beings He was giving it? Or were our deserving them made the condition of the divine gifts to us, which should we retain? Surely, if on this condition alone we hold them, those which make us capable  
of

SERM.  
XIV.



SERM. of the others would be withdrawn. Yet,  
 XIV. is not the life more than food, and the body  
 than raiment? As long, therefore, as God  
 vouchsafes us these greater gifts, may we  
 not well trust in Him for the rest?

If, indeed, we ask with an evil heart; if we desire plenty only to consume it on our lusts; or if, being entrusted with it, we shall certainly do so, though by no means purposing at present so to do, it certainly will not be granted; and manifest it is, that it will be much better for ourselves that it should, in these cases, be refused. But if, with penitent hearts, we apply to Heaven for relief, if we sincerely amend our conduct, and cry to God for mercy, we entitle ourselves to the benefit of His promises to the returning sinner; and His unspeakable and unsearchable mercy hath, in this case, provided a remedy for our past evil deserts, by imputing to us faith for righteousness; and the loss of innocence, in itself naturally irrecoverable, is repaired by the christian's  
 being

being allowed to plead the merits of the SERM.  
Son of God in his own behalf. XIV.

Here, then, we are provided with a remedy, when assaulted by impatience under sufferings, by the dread of distress, or by anxiety for the morrow. These belong not to the disciples of Christ, who have the sure pledge of their Master's word, that if they first strive to perform the task He hath given them, their heavenly Father will never forsake them. And, in truth, though so small be the degree of earnestness with which most of us seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as by no means to entitle us to having all these things added unto us, yet few there are, I will venture to say, among us, who, if they carefully review the various incidents of their lives, will not find some circumstances in which they must acknowledge, that their safety or relief was manifestly owing to the kind providence of God: and many, I am confident, will, with grateful hearts, recollect unexpected occurrences, by which they have  
been

SERM. been timely saved from afflictions, that  
 XIV. would have stung them to the soul.




Neither is it merely to past deliverances of individuals that we may look for assurance in the providence of God, since not only the more publick proofs of the divine interposition, and the greater acts of His moral government of the earth, but the material world, and the regular course of wonders He has therein established, yield, if duely considered, sound arguments for the firmest reliance on His ready help. When almost tempted to despondency, by the greatness of his sufferings, the psalmist took this way of re-animating himself. "I will remember," saith he, "the works of the Lord: surely, I will remember thy wonders of old. Thou art the God that doest wonders. Thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast, with thine arm, redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph." The power and goodness manifested by these deliverances, reminded him, that there was one able and  
 merciful

merciful to deliver from difficulties as great SERM.  
as those under which his self was suffering; XIV.  
nor did their having been wrought for a  
whole nation appear to him an objection to  
reasoning from them to his own case: in  
the rescue of the people, the prayers of in-  
dividuals were answered, the calamity that  
menaced individuals was averted. Neither  
can the divine Providence be well placed in  
a stronger light than it is by the prophetick  
dispensation: by that, events are foreshewn  
which require a long action of overruling  
power to bring them to pass; and, through  
opposition of every kind, are means pre-  
pared for verifying declarations uttered  
thousands of years before the time intended  
for their accomplishment. Yet, by this  
extensive system, it is the happiness of in-  
dividuals that is sought, the salvation of  
every particular person, that shall be found  
worthy of admission into that kingdom,  
which has been so long announced. The  
existence, and circumvolutions of the hea-  
venly bodies, the uninterrupted vicissitude  
of the seasons, the suitableness of the pro-  
ductions

SERM. ductions of the earth to the support and  
 XIV. comfort of its inhabitants, all indicate a  
 providential care of that race which has the  
 greatest share in these blessings. But were  
 we to presume, that this care extends no  
 farther than to our outward accommodation,  
 the system would appear as a fine fruit, de-  
 fective at the heart, or as a watch-case  
 richly decorated, but unprovided with the  
 still more important work of the movements  
 within: and therefore we cannot give glory  
 to God, we cannot think worthily of Him,  
 unless embracing the whole doctrine of  
 Scripture, we believe His Providence to be  
 perfect: and that the high and holy One  
 which inhabiteth eternity, not only hum-  
 bleth Himself to behold the things which  
 are done in heaven and earth, but dwelleth  
 also with him that is of an humble and  
 contrite spirit.

Here behold then, what they lose, who,  
 disobeying the injunction of our Lord to  
 seek first the kingdom of God and His  
 righteousness, deprive themselves of the  
 claim



claim He has allowed to the having *all these* SERM.  
*things* added unto them ! Behold, too, what XIV.  
 consolation, what support under difficulties,   
 they put from them, who, refusing to trust  
 the divine goodness for the supply of the  
 morrow, with anxious hearts hoard what  
 they have, or labour, with solicitude, to en-  
 crease their store ! And, after ye have con-  
 sidered the loss such men thus suffer in the  
 present state, reflect further, how little it  
 is to be compared to the contempt to which  
*they* must awake in the next, who have pre-  
 ferred the good things of the earth to the  
 honours and the happiness of that ; who,  
 after experiencing every day the divine  
 mercy, in continuing to them the gift of  
 life, were yet afraid to trust in God for  
 those things which are necessary to preserve  
 that life from becoming in itself a curse.  
 And let these reflections produce in you  
 another mind, that so far from being tempted  
 by fear of want to trespass on, or covet the  
 property of others, ye may not even be un-  
 easy as to the success of your honest endea-  
 vours to obtain support, but trusting in  
 VOL. I. x Him,

SERM. Him, who is the Saviour of all men, and  
 XIV. especially of those that believe, argue from  
 the power of Him on whose protection ye  
 rely to your own security: "Truely my  
 soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh  
 my falvation: He only is my rock and my  
 falvation: He is my defence: I shall not be  
 greatly moved: The Lord is my helper,  
 and I will not fear what man shall do unto  
 me." And from past instances of His mercy  
 to His future kindness: "He that spared  
 not His own Son, but delivered Him up for  
 us all, How shall He not with Him also  
 freely give us all things?" And, lastly,  
 conclude consistently with these promises,  
 to obey the injunctions of your Redeemer,  
 and "take therefore no thought for the  
 morrow: for the morrow shall take thought  
 for the things of itself. Sufficient for the  
 day is the evil thereof."

# SERMON XV.

ON THE SON OF GOD.


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HEB. I. 1, 2, 3, 4.


*God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds ; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

**W**HEN our blessed Lord had, at a SERM.  
word, calmed the tempestuous waves, XV.  
those who were present at the miracle natu-  
rally

SERM. rally asked, “ What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ?”

XV.  And as naturally might we when reading, that “ He is our advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, exclaim, “ What manner of person can this be, that He should even intercede between God and His creatures, and have merit enough to become an acceptable sacrifice for others, and to procure salvation for the world ?” The text, with other parts of holy writ, solve this question ; and, by revealing to us the natural dignity of the Saviour, justify us in believing, that He is able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto Him : and, at the same time, suggest to us the weight of the obligation we lie under not to neglect so great a salvation ; since, if “ he that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy, of how much forer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God ?”

Manifest

Manifest it is, that those who are induced SERM.  
by their prejudices, pride or passions, to re- XV.  
ceive only those parts of revelation which   
do not contradict their preconceptions, or  
oppose their inclinations, by rejecting this  
doctrine of the divinity of Christ, detract  
much from the weight of obligation on  
themselves to adhere under every difficulty,  
and spite of every temptation to His words:  
and, conscious of this, (as the children of  
this world are wiser in their generation than  
the children of light) those enemies of all  
righteousness, who, in a neighbouring coun-  
try, laboured at a plan to destroy christianity  
from among men, in their instructions to  
their emissaries, speak of those who deny  
the divine nature in the Saviour, as little  
else than friends to their plot: giving herein  
a fearful admonition against this departure  
from the faith once delivered to the saints,  
by their considering it to be a sure step to-  
wards compleat apostacy from the Gospel.  
After such a warning, then, from the enemy  
himself, is it not peculiarly incumbent on us  
to recollect the lessons of Scripture on this

SERM. important doctrine, and to enquire (as I  
 XV. purpose now to do before you) into what  
 the Scriptures teach concerning the divine  
 nature of the second of those persons in  
 whose names we are baptized.

Here, however, do not fear that I am going to lead you into any abstruse speculations, more calculated to amuse the thoughts than inform the mind; however exalted be the natural dignity of our Redeemer, that Holy Spirit, which searcheth the deep things of God, has so expressed as much of it as it is necessary for us to know, that no man of fair mind can doubt of the infinite worth of the atonement offered for his sins, nor the perfection of the Mediatour, who liveth for ever, to make intercession for him.

In that most interesting conversation, which our Lord held with His disciples the night before His crucifixion, on His saying, “ I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again; I leave the world, and go to the Father;” they answered,

swered, “ Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, SERM.  
and speakest no proverb:” a reply which XV.  
sufficiently proves, that they understood their  
Master’s words in the most literal sense :  
and what would a plain man conclude from  
them thus understood, but that He existed  
as really with the Father, before He came  
into the world, as He would do after He  
had left it? He had taught the same thing,  
indeed, when He said, “ I am the living  
bread which came down from Heaven ;”  
but the similitude then used might prevent  
His words from being at that time con-  
sidered as decisive ; they contained, in the  
language of the apostles, “ a proverb.”  
But whatever obscurity attended them, or  
any others, of which He had made use on  
the same subject, it was cleared away by  
these direct terms in which He spake when  
about to leave the world ; and accordingly  
we find, in the writings of apostles, the  
most explicit assertions of the same fact.  
Thus St. John, in the fourth chapter of his  
first epistle: “ We have seen, and do testify,  
that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour

SERM. of the world. Whosoever shall confess that  
 XV. Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in  
 him, and he in God:" and, at the commencement of the same epistle, " That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life ; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)." And St. Paul, in like manner, writing to the Philippians : " Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." (Phil. ii. 6, 7.)

But there is, ye may observe in this last passage, not only a declaration, that the Redeemer of mankind existed before His appearance on earth, but that He existed as  
 God,



God, as truly as He afterwards was found in fashion as a man; “ Who being in the form of God—took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.” The same truth, too, is amply taught by the beloved disciple, in the beginning of his Gospel: “ In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God: the same was in the beginning with God.” And, in the fourteenth verse of the same chapter: “ And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.”


Plain, however, as these passages are, and cogent as are a multitude of others, to the establishment of the same doctrine, it was not to be dissembled, that there have been, and yet are, who, though pretending to receive the Scriptures as the revelation of God, deny that the divinity of the Saviour is herein taught. To expose the awkward evasions, and refute at large the presumptuous  
sophistry

SERM. sophistry of these corrupters of the Gospel, would be taking up your time unnecessarily; since, on all questions of this kind, we must finally be determined by the words of revelation, and these we can investigate without attending to the endless observations of disputative men.

XV.


Is the doctrine, then, which seems to be so expressly taught by St. John and St. Paul, inconsistent with any other parts of holy writ, so that, to preserve the mutual agreements of its several portions, it is absolutely necessary to discover (if such could be discovered) some other meaning of their words? True it is, that it is written in the law, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. vi. 4.) And by St. Paul: "To us there is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him." (1 Cor. viii. 6.) And, agreeably to these passages, the unity of God is constantly inculcated throughout the sacred writings; so that unless the Son

is

is one with the Father in so strict a sense as SERM.  
not to derogate from this unity of the God- XV.  
head, these last texts will be at variance   
with those I have before quoted. But that  
there existeth in them an unity to which  
we should in vain look for a parallel in the  
creation, and that in this, as well as in other  
respects, for the Deity there can found no  
manner of similitude, we are taught, by the  
words of Christ Himself, who said to the  
Jews, "I and my Father are one," (John x.  
30.) And when they accused Him of  
making Himself God by this declaration,  
He interpreted it as no more than equivalent  
to saying, that He was the Son of God.  
On another occasion He declared, "No  
one knoweth the Son but the Father: nei-  
ther knoweth any one the Father save the  
Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will  
reveal Him." (Matt. xi. 27.) And again:  
"As the Father knoweth me, so know  
I the Father." (John x. 15.) When ac-  
cused of making Himself equal with God,  
because He said, "My Father worketh  
hitherto, and I work;" He did not deny  
the

SERM. the charge, but replied, “ Verily, Verily,  
 XV. I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of  
 Himself, but what He seeth the Father do :  
 for what things soever He doeth, these  
 doeth the Son likewise.” (John v. 19.)

And in His discourse at the last supper, is the following most remarkable passage, which ought to be constantly retained in the mind of every christian, who would think justly of His Saviour : “ If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also : and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father ; and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself ; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me : or else believe me, for the very work’s sake,

fake. Verily, Verily, I say unto you, he SERM.  
that believeth on me, the works that I do, XV.  
shall he do also: and greater works than   
these shall he do; because I go unto my  
Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in  
my name, that will I do, that the Father  
may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall  
ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”  
(John xiv. 7—14.) When, too, Judas (not  
Iscariot) said unto Him, “ Lord, How is  
it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us,  
and not unto the world? Jesus answered,  
If a man love me, he will keep my words:  
and my Father will love him, and *we* will  
come unto him, and make our abode with  
him.”

Now the positive declaration made in the  
first of these passages, and the very peculiar  
characteristics described in the others,  
evince an unity which we cannot perfectly  
conceive, much less find words to express;  
and yet, if we look back into the Old  
Testament, we shall perceive, that it is only  
by this doctrine of the subsistence of more  
than

SERM. than one person in the unity of the God-  
 XV. head, that several passages and facts *there*  
 recorded can be explained. In the account  
 of the creation, we read, “ And God said,  
 Let us make man in our image, after our  
 likenefs.” Some Jewish interpreters, not  
 being able otherwise to account for the use  
 of the terms us, and our in this passage,  
 with satisfaction to themselves, supposed  
 that they were spoken to the angels of the  
 Lord, an imagination directly contrary to  
 the words of God by His prophet. “ I  
 am the Lord, that maketh all things, that  
 stretcheth forth the heavens alone, and  
 spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.”  
 (Is. xlv. 24.) “ Who hath directed the  
 Spirit of the Lord, or, being His counfel-  
 lor, hath taught Him? with whom took  
 He counfel?” (Is. xl. 13, 14.) And no less  
 inconsistent with these declarations is the  
 fancy of more modern interpreters, who  
 have conceived, that Moses hath here re-  
 presented God as speaking in a manner long  
 since adopted by earthly monarchs, but of  
 which style there is not to be found,  
 3 throughout


throughout the Old Testament, a single real instance: while, moreover, as he is recording a fact, strange indeed must be that man's idea of an inspired writer, who can presume, that where so material principle as the nature of the Deity is concerned, he would merely copy terms that might tend to mislead, and write, that God said, "Let us make man," when God had not said so.

SERM.  
XV.  
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These evasions, rather than interpretations, refuted, the passage itself remains inexplicable; but by what has since been more fully revealed unto us, that the word was in the beginning with God, and was God, and that without Him was not any thing made that was made; and that the Spirit, which proceedeth from the Father, knoweth the things of God, even as the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man. But holding, as it appears from their remaining works, that the primitive christians did, that it was this Word with this Spirit that was thus addressed, those similar passages, "the man is become as one of us,"  
(Gen.

SERM. (Gen. iii. 22.) and, “ Go to, let us go  
 XV. down, and there confound their language,”  
 have also their meaning explained. By the  
 same means will be solved the difficulty  
 which arises from the apparent disagree-  
 ment between those passages of Scripture,  
 which declare that no man hath seen God  
 at any time, and the others, which assert,  
 that the Lord appeared unto the patriarchs  
 and others. “ No man (saith St. John)  
 hath seen God at any time.” (John i. 18.)  
 “ Ye have neither (saith our Lord, speaking  
 of the Father) heard His voice at any time,  
 nor seen His shape.” (John v. 37.) Yet  
 various are the passages of the Old Testa-  
 ment, which affirm, that God appeared, and  
 spake unto different persons; to Adam, to  
 Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, and  
 to the elders of Israel. Since then the  
 Scripture cannot be broken, Who was it  
 that thus vouchsafed to converse, from the  
 first, with the sons of men, since it was not  
 the Father? Hear the beloved disciple to  
 this question: “ The only begotten Son,  
 which is in the bosom of the Father, He  
 hath



hath declared Him." Hear, too, that Son SERM.  
Himself. "Not that any man hath seen XV.  
the Father, save He which is of God, He   
hath seen the Father." (John vi. 46.) And  
hence probably it is that St. Paul, in his  
epistle to the Colossians, calls Christ the  
image of the invisible God. But farther;  
if there can be such a thing as positive de-  
claration, it was positively declared by the  
prophet Isaiah, that the Lord God should  
come to Jerusalem, and visit His people,  
and perform among them such miraculous  
works as would manifest His presence.  
"O, Zion, that bringest good tidings, get  
thee up into the high mountain: O, Jeru-  
salem, that bringest good tidings, lift up  
thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not  
afraid. Say unto the cities of Judah, Be-  
hold your God! Behold the Lord God will  
come with strong hand, and His arm shall  
rule for Him: Behold, His reward is with  
Him, and His work before Him. He shall  
feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall  
gather the lambs with His arm, and carry  
them in His bosom, and shall gently lead  
VOL. I. x those

SERM. those that are with young." (Is. xl. 9, 10, 11.)

XV. And in the third verse of the same chapter :  
 " The voice of Him that crieth, In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low : and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain : and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." And in the thirty-fifth of the same prophet : " Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, Fear not : Behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, He will come, and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." These passages speak positively, I say, of what we may not improperly term a personal appearance of God ; yet are they  
 applied

applied in the New Testament to that of SERM.  
our blessed Saviour: and, indeed, in no XV.  
other way have they, (perhaps I might say) can they be fulfilled. He declared Himself to be the good Shepherd; He pointed Himself out as He at whose coming the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard: and, in addition to these tokens, said, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me,” when it had been by the prophet proclaimed, that “the Lord of Hosts Himself should be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.” (Is. viii. 13, 14.) Nay, when asked by the Jews, “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?” did He not reply, in a stile which was, at the call of Moses, peculiarly consecrated to the divine use, “Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I am.” (John viii. 58.) Which, it should be remembered, the Jews so plainly understood to be a claim to divinity, that they would have stoned Him, had He not miraculously concealed Himself from them.

SERM. And now, to strengthen and complete  
 XV. this deduction on the natural dignity of our  
 Redeemer, let us consider, what His apostles, after they had received that Spirit which was sent expressly to lead them into all the truth, taught concerning the person of their Master; and see whether they, in fact, reasoned from the ancient Scriptures to His pre-existence as God; at all in the manner that has been followed in this discourse? After the words I have before quoted from the beginning of St. John's Gospel, in which that great apostle asserts the divinity of the word, he proceeds to declare His presence at the creation, and His actual operation in it. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." In the text, we are expressly informed, that the Son, by whom God hath, in these last days, spoken unto us, is He "by whom also He made the worlds: the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." And, in the first  
 epistle

epistle to Timothy, we read, “ And with-  
out controversy, great is the mystery of  
godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,  
justified in the spirit, seen of angels,  
preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in  
the world, received up into glory.” (1 Tim.  
iii. 16.) To Him who was thus manifest,  
is applied in the chapter of the text, not  
merely by accommodation, but expressly  
affirmed to be addressed to Him, those words  
of the psalmist, “ Thou, Lord, in the be-  
ginning, hast laid the foundation of the  
earth, and the Heavens are the works of  
thine hands. They shall perish, but Thou  
remainest: and they all shall wax old as  
doth a garment: and as a vesture shalt Thou  
fold them up, and they shall be changed:  
but Thou art the same, and thy years shall  
not fail.” (Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.) And in  
his epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul de-  
clares, that “ in Him dwelleth all the ful-  
ness of the Godhead bodily.” (Col. ii. 9.)  
So that without adding several other texts  
that might be produced to the same purpose,  
here is sufficient apostolick authority to  
justify

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SERM. justify the application of those passages of  
 XV. the Old Testament to our blessed Saviour,  
 which stand in need of such an application  
 to remove their inconsistency with any other  
 parts of Scripture, however strongly they  
 express the divine nature or attributes, and  
 consequently the guidance of the Holy Spirit  
 to the acknowledgment of the truth, that  
 God was in Christ reconciling the world to  
 Himself.

Having thus ascertained, from the infal-  
 lible oracle of the word of God, the pre-  
 existence and divine nature of Him who  
 took flesh to redeem us, does it not now  
 become us to ask ourselves, “ How shall  
 we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”  
 A salvation, into the depth of the mercy of  
 which even angels desire to look? And shall  
 we not neglect it, if we either overlook the  
 greatness of the sacrifice offered for us, not  
 “ corruptible things, as silver and gold, but  
 the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb  
 without blemish, and without spot?” or  
 lightly esteem the purpose for which such a  
 sacrifice

sacrifice was made, “ to redeem us from all iniquity, and obtain for us an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of God?”

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These are points to which our attention is particularly called in the epistle to the Hebrews, the authour of that calling on us to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Jesus Christ, who was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house; and declaring, that “ it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” If, with these exhortations, we compare the very inadequate estimation in which many, who are yet sincere in their belief of the Gospel, hold the wonderful things done for them in the work of human redemption, we must acknowledge that they neglect this great salvation, even if it be only by not giving it that attentive consideration which it so justly demands. If there are, who doubt

SERM. the power of Christ, to save to the utter-  
 XV. most all those who come unto God by Him,  
 or who deem the conditions of life which  
 He has set before us, inefficient or unnecessary; these, of course, must neglect the salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord. And since He has declared, that  
 “ He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after Him, is not worthy of Him,”  
 What must remain for those who will not take the trouble to enquire into the importance of His words, or the full meaning, obligation and tendency of His commandments? Had we not the experience of every day in testimony of the fact, incredible would it appear, that men could trifle, as they do, with the offer of everlasting life, or deem the prospect of perfect and interminable happiness in a future state unworthy of earnest attention. Anxious as they generally appear to preserve themselves from distress of every kind, scarcely would it be believed, that they would carelessly risque the accumulated misery of the loss of felicity unspeakable, and of the suffering  
 all



all the punishments that must flow from SERM.  
the curse of a justly offended Deity. Is it XV.  
that in other cases great advantages are  
usually obtained without great exertions?  
or imminent evils avoided by carelessness?  
Or, is it that in this case in particular men  
are not required to be earnest in their efforts  
for victory? The contrary of all this ye  
must be sensible is truth. Success is the  
natural reward of labour and vigilance:  
miscarriage and distress as naturally follow  
idleness and carelessness; and the Gospel  
calls on us to work out our salvation with  
fear and trembling; and promises, that we  
shall reap on no other condition than that  
we faint not. Let us, therefore, remem-  
bering the very great difference of character  
there does, according to the same Gospel,  
exist between the disciples of Christ and  
the children of the world, endeavour to  
adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in  
all things, and prove, that we are not in-  
sensible of the love which the Father hath  
bestowed on us, in sending His only-be-  
gotten Son, that we might live by Him,

SERM. nor of what the Son hath done in dying for  
XV. us, while we were yet sinners, by conti-  
nuing faithful in His words until He shall  
return from where He now sitteth, on the  
right hand of the Majesty on high, to  
overwhelm with destruction all those who  
will not that He shall reign over them, and  
to gather His faints into that kingdom,  
where they shall reign with Him for ever  
and ever.

# SERMON XVI.

ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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I COR. XII. 4, 5, 6.

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

**T**HE doctrines which more peculiarly SERM.  
distinguish christianity from every other XVI.  
system of religion, are the incarnation of  
the Son of God, that He might make expi-  
ation for our sins, and the existence of three  
persons in the divine nature. The revela-  
tion of the last of these, indeed, seems to  
be only a more perfect discovery of what  
the ancient Jews, as well as other nations,  
had

SERM. had learned by tradition from the earliest generations of mankind. But both of them being far beyond the reach of human investigation, and yielding, too, particular inferences to the absolute necessity of holiness of life, they have met with numerous opponents, who have assaulted them with all the obstinacy with which men will naturally contend for the hopes of life, or against the fear of condemnation. That particular portion of these which the passage of Scripture I have now read to you suggests to our consideration, is the existence of the Holy Ghost as a person distinct from the Father and the Son, which some of our gainfayers have denied, under an imagination, that the texts which teach it may be explained, by saying, that they relate only to an influence, or a disposition; as when we say, a man's pride taught him so to behave; or, "they were led by a spirit of opposition to do such an act." To confirm you in the conviction that these are but the misinterpretations of misguided men, I shall, in this discourse, state to you some of those declarations of Scripture

Scripture

Scripture which teach us, that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, before I proceed to speak of what is revealed concerning His operation on the minds of the christians, and the absolute necessity in which we stand of His assistance to forward and complete the work of our salvation.

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When our blessed Lord was about to ascend where He was before, He said unto His apostles, “ I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ; the Spirit of Truth.” And a little after, “ But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” And yet again, in the same discourse, “ Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak : and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me :

SERM. me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall  
 XVI. shew it unto you." (John xiv. 15, 16—26.  
 and xvi. 13, 14.) Now if ye recall to  
 mind the terms in which our Saviour before  
 spake of Himself, ye will see, that they  
 are nearly the same which He here employs  
 in speaking of the Holy Ghost. Of Him-  
 self He said, " For I have not spoken of  
 myself, but the Father which sent me :  
 He gave me a commandment what I should  
 say, and what I should speak ; whatsoever  
 I speak, therefore, even as the Father said  
 unto me, so I speak." (John xii. 49, 50.)  
 Of the Spirit He said, " For He shall not  
 speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall  
 hear that shall He speak." Can we then  
 doubt that, as He spake of a person in the  
 first of these passages, He did so in the  
 last ? The same acts of hearing and speak-  
 ing are ascribed to both ; and since there  
 clearly is no figurative personification in the  
 first, Why are we to suppose it in the  
 other ? The same questions might be re-  
 peated with regard to the passage of text,  
 wherein diversities of gifts are ascribed to  
 the

the Spirit in the same manner as diversities of administrations to the Lord: nay, a few verses onward, the apostle, after enumerating various gifts, writes, “ But all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.” (1 Cor. xii. 11.) Thus ascribing to the Spirit that which belongs specifically to a personal and intelligent being, Freewill. SERM.  
XVI.

To the same purpose might it be urged, that in the commission given the disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations, they were commanded to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any mark of distinction whatever, either as to the service to be rendered, or as to the nature of those whose names are thus called over us. For is it to be imagined, that in forming a solemn covenant with the human race, the Father and the Son would order to be joined with their own names that of a mere faculty; or, indeed, that of any other than a person who was not equal to take part with them, in giving

SERM. giving falvation to all the fons of Adam,  
 XVI. who would be converted and live?

But as it was not with a view to raife your indignation againft the perverseneſs of men, on whom ſuch clear manifeftations of the truth are loſt, but to awaken your caution, and arm your minds againft their errors and miſrepresentations, that this diſquiſition was entered into, I ſhall only add to theſe proofs of the perſonality of the Holy Ghoſt, that it is written, that He ſpake, as unto Philip the deacon, ſo unto Peter, while he was thinking on the viſion he had been ſhewn from Heaven, and ſaid unto him, “ Behold three men ſeek thee. Arife, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have ſent them.” (Acts x. 21, 22.) And again, to the teachers of the church of Antioch, to whom, as they miniſtered to the Lord, and faſted, ſays the ſacred hiſtorian, “ the Holy Ghoſt ſaid, “ Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.” (Acts xiii. 2.) And that, at  
 the



the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ, “ He SERM.  
descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon XVI.  
him.” (St. Luke iii. 22.)

Having thus stated to you, that from the scriptural accounts of His office, His acts, and His appearance, it is evident, that the Holy Spirit is really a divine Person. Let us now turn our enquiry to those operations on the human mind, which the sacred writings ascribe to Him. These are two-fold, ordinary and extraordinary; from the first arise, in general, every good inclination, every real virtue and amiable quality; and, in particular, the love of truth and faith in God and Christ, with all the graces which are consequent on it: and, from the second, those miraculous powers with which the ancient prophets and first preachers of the Gospel were endowed, as tongues, prophecy, and the discerning of spirits.

If ye would now ask, How dispositions and powers so different from what we naturally possess, are produced in our minds?

SERM. We can answer only in the words of our  
 XVI. Master, “ The wind bloweth where it  
 listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof,  
 but canst not tell whence it cometh, and  
 whither it goeth : so is every one that is  
 born of the Spirit.” Ye see, indeed, the  
 effects of this Holy Spirit’s inspiration in  
 the virtues or powers of those with whom  
 He vouchsafes to dwell ; but how these  
 powers or virtues arise, or how far they  
 will extend, not even those who possess  
 them can tell. A remarkable proof of this  
 we have, as to the miraculous gifts of the  
 Holy Ghost, in the fact of the prophets not  
 always knowing the full extent of the pre-  
 dictions uttered by themselves. From  
 various passages of their writings, it should  
 seem, that the apostles thought that the end  
 of all things was much nearer at end in  
 their age, than it has in the event proved to  
 be, though they spake of the previous cir-  
 cumstances that must necessarily come to  
 pass. And may we not conclude, that  
 somewhat similar took place with respect  
 to the ancient prophets, from the following  
 words

words of St. Peter : “ Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into.” (1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12.) And as to the more common influences of this divine Spirit, if the mode of their operation was discoverable by us, every real christian could trace, better than some weak enthusiasts now pretend to do, the descent of the Holy Ghost into his mind, and all his motions therein, and the question I have supposed would be needless. As it is, that new birth on which all our hopes of an heavenly inheritance depend, is carried on

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SERM. imperceptibly to ourselves, except in the
 XVI. consequent alteration in our views and in-
 clinations, and habits; when the produce
 of our natural birth, the lust of the flesh,
 the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,
 with all our anxious thoughts and premedi-
 tated plans for securing ourselves easy and
 pleasurable situations to the end of our days
 here, are changed for the true love of
 God, and earnest exertions to obtain, before
 all things, His kingdom and His righteouf-
 ness.

That such a purification of our minds,
 and amendment of our dispositions, is abso-
 lutely requisite for our admission into the
 kingdom of Heaven, we may not only pre-
 sume, from considering both how incapable
 of pure happiness in himself, and how un-
 likely to refrain from disturbing that of
 others, would be a man with all, or any of
 his evil affections, and uncorrected habits
 about him, but surely conclude, from the
 positive declaration of our Lord made to
 Nicodemus, “ Verily, Verily, I say unto
 thee,

thee, Except a man be born of Water, and SERM.
of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the king- XVI.
dom of God." That likewise the divine
assistance thus mentioned is absolutely ne-
cessary to the cleansing of our hearts, and
the improvement of our inclinations, is
manifest from its being the corruption of
nature, which we have derived from the
fall of our first parents, that renders us thus
prone to evil: For who can restore the na-
ture of man once depraved by the entrance
of sin, to its original state of purity and
righteousness, but He who at first made
him upright? The necessity of such a re-
generation to the happiness of man, has
been by many, in various regions, and dif-
ferent ages, seen and acknowledged; but
human means alone being inadequate to the
work, the employment of them has often
either degenerated into base hypocrisy, or
produced a spiritual pride by no means con-
sistent with real righteousness; and it re-
mained for the Saviour of the world to
procure this gift for the race, whose re-
demption He vouchsafed to undertake.

SERM. When, therefore, His disciples went forth
 XVI. to preach among the nations, repentance
 towards God, and faith towards our Lord
 Jesus Christ, He not only wrought with
 them, by confirming their word with signs
 and wonders, but through the operation of
 the Holy Ghost, the hearts of their hearers
 were opened to receive their lessons, and re-
 pentance unto life was given to the nations.


“ Having then begun in the Spirit, Can we be made perfect by the flesh ? ” Can we, with the natural powers of our souls, proceed (as we are, in our baptismal office, told we are engaged to do) in all virtue and godliness of living ? If there be any sufficiently conceited of themselves to imagine they can, these plainly are deficient in one Gospel virtue than which there is not any more becoming, or more necessary to the well-being of such a creature as man, I mean lowliness of mind, one of the gifts of that Spirit whose assistance they are mad enough to reject : and, by that deficiency, thus prove the very truth they presume to controvert,

controvert, “ that of ourselves we can effectually do nothing.” The weakness of our nature is sufficiently expressed by the acknowledgment and plea so often heard from the mouth of those who have done wrong : “ I confess it was not right, but I could not help it at the time.” For though, had the persons who thus own themselves to have done evil, earnestly fought, and honestly made use of the divine assistance, they would have conquered in the trials under which they fell ; yet, without that assistance, “ the evil which they would not, that they did,” and they will continue “ to do what they allow not,” until they obtain, by humble and sincere petition, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that Holy Spirit, Who alone can effectually work in us both to will and to do.

This is a point that both merits and calls for our most serious and devout attention, since, as long as we can gain power to do the will of God, it is our own fault if we do it not, though the deficiency itself proceed

SERM. ceed immediately from want of the power
 XVI. which we might have had if we would.

But here is the point of self-deception ; men feel their weakness, and thence argue, that they cannot be criminal in what they do, as it proceeds from imbecility ; while, were we to call ourselves to a strict account on the measures we have pursued to procure the additional strength we want, and which is so fully promised, and of our need of which we are so repeatedly reminded in the Scriptures, we should most of us, I fear, find, that instead of soliciting the aid of Heaven for counteracting our evil inclinations, cleansing our hearts, and vanquishing the temptations which occur by the means prescribed by the word of God, we, by our sinful compliances, and wilful impurities, offend that Holy Spirit, on whose co-operation with us, all our hopes of victory depend. Merciful as is our Creatour, we are not to presume that He will always strive with the perverseness of His creatures : great as is His long-suffering, it cannot extend to aught that would serve as
 encour-

encouragement to despise His authority: SERM.
nor were we without any express informa- XVI.
tion on the subject, could we suppose, that 
God would dwell with the obstinately sin-
ful. When, then, by reiterated rejections
of His admonitions; when, by repeatedly
refusing to do what something within us
tells us we ought to do, we grieve this
Holy Spirit, can we be surprized that He
withdraws Himself from us, and that we
no longer feel an inward repugnance to con-
duct, under the practice of which we were
at first uneasy, and full of misgivings of
heart?

And how fearful is such a state! The
more secure we appear to ourselves to be in
it, the greater is our danger; and we see
no harm in what we do, because the true
light is taken from us.

But here, perhaps, ye would ask, “ How
then can we ever be secure that we are not
in such a situation, since the ignorance of it
makes part of its danger; and unless some
criterion

SERM. criterion be named, by which a judgment
 XVI. may be made, we must continue exposed
 to the most tormenting uncertainty as to
 our spiritual state?" This is a question
 which experience proves to be of great im-
 portance, since many have suffered from
 despondency on the subject of it; yet by
 no means from the Scriptures not containing
 a sufficient rule of determination. The
 faith and the works of a christian are there
 laid down as proofs of our being led by the
 Spirit of Christ. Thus, in the verse im-
 mediately before that of the text, the apostle
 says, with manifest earnestness, " Where-
 fore I give you to understand, that no man
 speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus
 accursed: and that no man can say, that
 Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."
 As far, therefore, as we are sincere in the
 belief of the Gospel, so far we may justly
 hope, we are led by this Holy Spirit: and,
 on the other hand, as far as a man thinks
 lightly of the Saviour of the world, and
 despises the message sent from the Father
 by Him, so far has he withdrawn himself
 from

from the guidance, so far has he thrown himself out of the protection of the Spirit of God. Again; we read in the epistle to the church of Galatia, “ But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:” and, consequently, while these are found in our breasts, we have encouragement to think, that we also have the Spirit of Christ; but when our conduct proves that these exist not within us, then have we but too much reason to draw the melancholy conclusion, “ that in reality we are none of His.”

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Every approach to a desertion of the faith, every departure from those virtues which are His gifts, must grieve that Spirit who would, if we would but comply with His suggestions, conduct and support us through the work of our salvation, and, consequently, must put us in greater danger of finally losing His assistance. Let this truth be duly considered, and then ye will see the utter unreasonableness of esteeming any

SERM. any breach of the divine law, any wilful
 XVI. omission of duty as of trifling importance.

For what can escape His universal inspection? The integrity of every deed, the sincerity of every purpose, must be weighed by Him, and the deficiency of our judgment, and the slowness of our feeling with regard to them, cannot be pleaded in our excuse, because we might have obtained the assistance of a Comforter, who could lead us into all the truth, and bring to our remembrance every obligation.

Behold here, then, how great reason we have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, since it is the God of Judgment that worketh in us both to will and to do! Behold what a call to care in the conduct of ourselves, to circumspection in guarding against impurity, since the body of every true disciple of Christ is a temple of the Holy Ghost! and what great cause not to sin against our own bodies, since he who defiles the temple of God, him will God destroy. Observe, too, how great occasion

caſion is thus given us for humility in our-
ſelves, ſince our whole ſufficiency appears
to be of God : and, at the ſame time, what
great encouragement for exerting all the
powers we have, ſince, with our heavenly
Patron, we may, if we will, be in all things
more than conquerours. What a majeſtick
idea, too, is given us of the diſpenſation,
in the bleſſings of which we are called to
partake, when we are aſſured, that the Son
of God is become our High Prieſt, and
having entered into Heaven, ſitteth at the
right hand of the Father, ever ready to
make interceſſion for us, while the Holy
Spirit dwelleth with us, to lead us into the
path of life, and raiſe us whither the Cap-
tain of our ſalvation is gone before ! And
what a pledge of future glory do they re-
ceive, with whom God thus deigneth already
to make His abode ! And ought not theſe
conſiderations to render us careful to keep
ourſelves from both the ways of the ſcoffers,
and the practices of the profane ? Of the
inevitable condemnation of thoſe who blaſ-
pheme the Holy Ghoſt, we are apprized :
and

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SERM. and must not every approach towards a
 XVI. crime which so heavy a sentence attends,
 expose us to proportionate punishment? Can they who scoff at the dictates, or ridicule the suggestions of the same Spirit, hope to escape chastisement? And are not they guilty of this who treat with irreverence either the words or the doctrines of holy writ? As, on the other hand, they surely profane His holy name, who ascribe to His illumination the fancies of an overheated imagination; and while guilty of walking disorderly, of protracting schisms, and speaking evil of dignities, boldly affirm, they are guided by that wisdom which St. James describes as “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

SERMON XVII.

ON BAPTISM.

ST. JOHN III. 5.

Jesus answered, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

NICODEMUS, a ruler of the Jews, SERM. XVII. convinced, by the miracles of our blessed Saviour, that He was a teacher come from God, enquired of Him privately concerning His doctrine, and on that occasion was the declaration of the text delivered, in which we are explicitly informed, that no man can become a member of that kingdom, which our Lord, and His messenger John the Baptist, preached, unless through the

SERM. the baptism of Christ he be born anew.

XVII. Of this baptism the words distinguish two parts, the ritual and the spiritual; the former being that by which believers are visibly admitted into the church, and outwardly purified with water, in signification of the inward purification wrought by the latter, through the power of the Spirit of God: His promise of which to those who sincerely embraced the faith, is sealed by this sacrament being administered to them in the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Ghost.

There could scarcely be produced a more flagrant instance of departure from that consistency of conduct, which reason and sound understanding prescribe, than is exhibited in the very different manners in which the generality of christians treat those two sacred institutions of their divine Master, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The latter they hold in the most awful reverence; nay, often have such a dread of its sanctity, that although called thereunto, they dare not
be


be partakers of it: but the former they frequently appear to esteem little more than a mere ceremony, at which they attend in a most negligent, and, I might say, indecent manner, seeming totally ignorant either for what, or before whom, they are assembled! Yet was this rite appointed by the same authority as the former; and though we may justly, perhaps, be more stricken with a solemnity, of the whole of which we ourselves partake, than with one of which another is the principal subject, yet the recollection of the characters in which we appear at this last, as members of the church; and that we were formerly dedicated to the service of God and of Christ, by the same means; and that we pretend to continue in the faith now professed, and have taken on ourselves the performance of the same vows that are now made, and that we are, at the time, expressly calling on the Lord to ratify and perfect what we are doing in His name, should surely induce us to attend with seriousness, and a reverend

SERM.
XVII.


SERM. demeanour, at the admission of a fellow-
 XVII. heir of the promises of God in Christ.


Were it only to prevent ourselves from acting unworthily of it, should we either ever be required to take the character of a sponsor for an infant on us, or if we have done so already, it would be no unprofitable employment of our time to enquire more particularly into this sacrament of baptism; but as doing so will likewise remind us of the obligations imposed on us by our own entrance into the christian covenant, a serious consideration of it may be of the most important use in rendering us more careful to perform the duties we have so solemnly contracted to discharge.

Opposite are the errors into which men have run with respect to the positive institutions of religion. Some have made all necessary practice to consist in the exact observance of these alone: such, nearly, were the Pharisees among the Jews, who
 taken

taken up with the outward purifications SERM.
commanded in the law, or recommended XVII.
by their traditions, while they carefully 
attended to the washing of the outside of
the cup and the platter, neglected that
purity of heart, and cleanness from the con-
tamination of iniquity, to remind them of
the necessity of preserving which, these
symbols were ordained. Others, on the
contrary, with but little less absurdity, be-
cause the virtue of these things doth not
arise merely from themselves, but consisteth
in their relation to something further, have
conceived that they are not to be at all re-
tained: such is the extravagant opinion of
the people among us commonly denomi-
nated Quakers, with the regard to the two
sacraments of the christian church.

We shall, in the case before us, be well
guarded against either of the absurdities I
have now particularized, if we examine
into the nature of the rite of baptism, and
consider what necessity there is for the ob-
servance of it.

SERM. Now for the first enquiry, it is a position
 XVII. which will sufficiently approve itself to
 every man's understanding, that for men to
 be received into the favour of God, and be-
 come proper objects for His protection and
 patronage, it is fit, that their minds be
 cleansed from evil inclinations and wicked
 dispositions. Of such purification, the ex-
 ternal washing with water is an apt and
 significant symbol. For the body alone
 being that which we can sensibly reach, and
 itself partaking in the acts of iniquity and
 pollutions of sin, and being first the corrup-
 ter, and afterwards the instrument through
 which the depraved soul practises her evil
 imaginations, nature itself might lead, and
 perhaps, in many instances, has led men,
 who have become sensible of the vileness of
 sensual gratifications, to begin their entrance
 on a life of purity, with ablution of the
 body; testifying, by this act, their eager-
 ness to deliver themselves from the unclean-
 ness which they had contracted. Among
 the Jews, it was customary, when one of
 another nation became a profelyte to the
 law

law of Moses, before he was admitted to SERM.
circumcision, by baptism to cleanse him, as XVII.
it were, from the defilement of his former 
idolatry : this usage the great herald of the
Gospel, John, (surnamed from the very
circumstance the Baptist) embraced with
respect to the Jews themselves, reminding
them of their guilt, and exhorting them to
repent, and be baptized ; and it was at
length solemnly ordained, by our blessed
Lord, to be the mean of admission into the
new covenant of which He is the Medi-
atour.

If baptism, then, be but considered
merely as significant of purification from
past pollutions, no one can properly come
to it who is not sincerely desirous of being
cleansed from such : and those who main-
tain not the purity thus obtained, but return
again to the practice of vice, forgetting that
they were purged from their old sins, render
it useless and nugatory. For the baptism
which “ doth now save us, is not (as St.
Peter declares) the putting away the filth

SERM. of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

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If viewed farther, as ordained by Christ to be the rite by which all who are persuaded of the truth of His religion shall be received into the covenant made between God and man, through His mediation; thus connected its efficacy, and all the benefits to be derived from it, must depend on the terms of that covenant, and the manner in which the person baptized performs the conditions which are required of him: and thus error on that side, on which the observance of the externals of religion is substituted for the whole practice of it, is, in this case, excluded. While the necessity of the thing itself, and the presumptuous absurdity of neglecting it, is made sufficiently apparent by the mention of its being commanded by our Lord Himself. The being born of Water, is as expressly insisted on in the text, as the being born of the Spirit: and however attached men may be to their
own

own reasonings, and to the ends and purposes discernible through them, when God appoints, it is clearly theirs to obey without hesitation or reply. Neither have those, who will not make themselves partakers of the covenant in the manner He hath been pleased to prescribe, any ground of complaint, if they be excluded from the benefits of it. In the covenant of circumcision it was said, "The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant." In the covenant of baptism it is said, "Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Let those, then, who neglect the last, consider, as earnestly as the importance of obtaining an inheritance into the kingdom of heaven demands, Where is the difference between these denunciations?

How necessary the apostles thought the compliance with that part of their Lord's instructions, which directed them to baptize as well as to teach, we may learn from

SERM. their constant practice, and especially from
 XVII. the very strong instance afforded us by St.
 Peter's conduct with respect to the Centu-
 rion Cornelius, and his household, when,
 even after the Holy Ghost had fallen on
 them, he first signified, that there was
 something yet undone, when he asked,
 " Can any man forbid water, that these
 should not be baptized, which have received
 the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts x.
 47.) And then commanded them to be
 baptized in the name of the Lord; thereby
 manifesting, that he esteemed this to be the
 full and solemn reception of them into the
 church of God, and into the number of
 that people to whom belong all the promises
 of salvation sent from the Father by the
 Son, and the inheritance of which is made
 sure by the operation of the Holy Ghost.
 The same, then, ought we to think of this
 holy baptism; and reflecting, that men
 were, from the first, called to it, as to the
 baptism of repentance for remission of sins
 to all that believe, hold our coming unto
 it to be the most solemn assurance we can
 give

give of our unfeigned sense and repentance of our sins past, the strongest profession we can make of our faith in those sacred Three, in whose names we are baptized, and the most avowed engagement of ourselves, to live that holy life commanded in the Gospel, into the fellowship of which we are hereby associated.

And, indeed, on ground similar to this, we find St. Paul repeatedly urging his converts to the exercise of all the christian virtues. Thus, in his epistle to the Romans : “ How shall we who are dead unto sin, live any longer therein ? Know ye not, that so many as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death ? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” In which words ye may observe, the apostle makes an allusion to the manner in which baptism was originally administered, which was by immersing, and thus burying, as it were,

SERM. were, the whole body in water; from
 XVII. whence it arose again washed, and meet to
 enter on a new life of holy conversation. Difference of climate, and the tender age of those now brought to the sacred font, have made relaxation in this particular necessary, whence to those who do not look back to the ancient mode, the strength and justice of this allusion of the apostle is not so apparent.

But if we should be here asked, What are the reasons for admitting infants to baptism, when they neither have any actual sins to repent of, nor can be sensible of the need in which, from the corruption of their nature, they stand of the divine mercy and assistance, nor can understand the terms required? We have to answer, That from the institution itself of the covenant of circumcision, it is manifest, that infancy was no bar to the admission to all the benefits of that: we have no reason to doubt, then, but as under the law, a strict, so under the Gospel, a milder dispensation, we may, in
 the

the earliest childhood, be received among those to whom God hath promised His especial patronage: and although we read not expressly in any of the apostolick writings, that the first preachers of the Gospel baptized infants, yet we often read that they baptized whole families, in which, as Christ had before said, “ Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me,” we may presume, such were included.

The curse once pronounced on Adam, occasioned all his seed to be born in a state of reprobation; and, although the redemption by Christ has, from the beginning of the world, extended to all in every age, and there could be no sign of God’s giving, or man’s accepting this redemption, until it was made manifest, now it is so, and a sign of it has been instituted in the rite of baptism, to bring our children to be sealed among those who are justified through Christ, is, surely, a work not to be condemned. By this, like the parents of Samuel, we introduce our children into the temple,

SERM. temple, and offer them to the service of
 XVII. God: by this we place them among those
 who, if they afterwards sin, have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and although they can neither confess the faith, nor promise to keep it, yet being brought to baptism by such as are already believers, and who undertake to instruct them in what they are to believe, and what they are to practise, as soon as they shall be capable of learning, they are received under the consideration, that when arrived at a riper age, they will take upon themselves the obligations into which their sureties entered for them, and renew, with their own mouths, the confession of that faith in which others have engaged to see that they are brought up.

On these grounds is the baptismal office of our own church formed; and it is required by it, that for every child, two persons of its own sex, and one of the other, become sureties: of these, a promise of an holy life, and an acknowledgement of the

christian faith in its name, are demanded ; SERM.
prayers are offered unto God, that He will XVII.
vouchsafe to counteract, by the operation of
His blessed Spirit, those evil and corrupt
affections which, from the depraved state
of human nature, spring up very early in
our minds, and that He will, through life,
so assist, direct, and govern the child now
presented before Him, that it may, at length,
attain to an inheritance in the kingdom of
Heaven. The child is baptized in the form
commanded by our Lord, and solemnly re-
ceived as a member of the church ; and his
sureties are exhorted to remember what they
have undertaken, and perform it, by seeing
that the child be virtuously brought up to
lead a godly and a christian life, and in-
structed in the principles and precepts of
the Gospel, and, when old enough, to be
made sensible of what has been, in its in-
fancy, promised for it, called to take on it-
self the vows made in its name, and re-
ceiving confirmation at the hands of the
bishop, declare his own acceptance of God's
merciful offer of salvation.

In

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XVII.

In thus repeating merely what every one may read in his Common Prayer Book, I am not unnecessarily employing that time which might be applied to speaking on subjects not so apposite to all: for although much pains have been taken to make the proper manner of performing and attending every office of our church clear to all concerned, by the plainest directions inserted throughout their forms, ye must be sensible, that these directions are in general either not read, or not obeyed; and as it is the earnest wish of my heart to impress on your minds every duty to which ye may be called, I have, by the foregoing deduction, sought occasion to recommend to your serious recollection the following truths: 1st. That that of a surety for a child in baptism being a sacred and very important office, it highly behoveth the parents to invite none to it, who are not of an age sufficiently considerate to be duly sensible of the charge which they take on themselves, or of principles and a disposition to discharge it with integrity; and that when they have found such, they do not
impede


impede them in performing the promise SERM.
they have made, to see that the child be XVII.
virtuously and religiously brought up: For
is it not highly absurd, first to request men
to enter into an engagement, and then to
oppose their fulfilling it? 2dly. That when
called to take this office on you, ye consider
the meaning and importance of it, and not
assume it, unless ye be resolved with sin-
cerity to perform it. It is now too generally
viewed in the false light of merely accom-
modating a friend with one's name, and the
ceremonial over, is scarcely thought of
more, not even when the parents die during
the child's infancy, in which case the obli-
gation into which the sponsors have so so-
lemnly entered with the church, and con-
sequently with Him Who is the Head of
the church, our Lord Jesus Christ, is in-
cumbent on them in its fullest force. And
that, lastly, when appearing at the font to
be admitted into the christian covenant in
a child's name, ye should recollect, that the
questions put to you, concerning the faith
ye hold, and the vows ye make, are not
repeated

SERM. repeated for form's sake only, and to be answered with a nod or a bow, but by express declaration and word of mouth; it being essentially necessary, that sin be renounced, and Christ acknowledged, before this sacrament be administered.

XVII.

There is yet, in the administration of this sacrament, one particular, which, although no part of the original institution, was very early adopted, that of giving a new name to the person baptized.

Now if this were done merely in reference and conformity to the usage of taking that of our parents at our natural birth, it would, as baptism is considered, and in its spiritual effects really is a regeneration or new birth, be an highly reasonable and significant custom. But it was, too, a custom in the ancient world, for slaves, when taken into the service of a new master, to receive a new name, which, therefore, became a sign of their new relation. And, indeed, the biblical history proves, that important

portant events taking place in a man's life, SERM.
was often the occasion of imposing on him XVII.
a new name: as when Abram received the 
promises, his name was, by the Almighty,
changed to that of Abraham, in testimony
that he should be the father of many people,
as it is this day. From all which, the
purpose and use of a name being given to
us on our admision into the christian cove-
nant, is sufficiently apparent. It is that we
may be provided with a perpetual admoni-
tion to us of the engagements we have con-
tracted, of the service into which we have
entered; with a constant badge of the pro-
fession we have taken on ourselves, "to
follow (as it is expressed in the very words
of our baptismal office) the example of our
Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto
Him, that as He died, and rose again for
us, so should we, who are baptized, die
from sin, and rise again unto righteousness,
continually mortifying all our evil and
corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in
all virtue and godliness of living."

SERM. Let this mind, therefore, be in you, that
 XVII. your christian names may henceforth serve
 as an effectual remembrance, that ye are
 Christ's, and solemnly engaged to fight
 manfully under His banner against the
 world, the flesh, and the devil; as an affu-
 rance, which can be weakened only by your
 own desertion of your engagements; that
 there is " reserved for you in the Heavens,
 an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled,
 and that fadeth not away." Let the great-
 ness of Him to whom this name, as long
 as ye adhere to His service, is a perpetual
 sign of your belonging, counteract both the
 threats and arts of those who would either
 terrify or seduce you from the faith and
 practice of His Gospel. And let the glories
 promised to that assembly, of which ye
 became members when ye received these
 names, be kept so present to your minds,
 by the constant repetition of them, as to
 carry you so triumphantly through all the
 suffering, and all the self-denial, which ye
 may now have to encounter, that ye may
 contract no pollution on earth that may

render you unfit to be admitted into SERM.
Heaven. XVII.



I observed, in the beginning of this discourse, that the words of the text noticed two parts in the sacrament of baptism, the ritual, (to which I have now spoken) and the spiritual: but what might be said of this last, I have already anticipated, when I addressed you on the operations of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, shall here add no more, than that it is not to be expected that so great a gift as that of the divine illumination and assistance, should be vouchsafed to any who manifest so little concern for the privileges to which they were, by baptism, admitted, as never to call to mind the vows that were then made for them, or, which is nearly the same thing, never seriously consider, what manner of conversation they are bound, by the engagements then made for them to maintain. In that excellent little compendium of a christian's duty, which the church of England hath had drawn up for the instruction of her

SERM. catechumens, we are reminded, that our
 XVII. godfathers and godmothers promised for
 us, “ that we should renounce the devil
 and all his works; the pomps and vanity
 of this wicked world, and all the sinful
 lusts of the flesh.” Now what meaning
 can we suppose is attached to these words,
 by either those who breed up their children
 in mere lessons of worldly prudence, con-
 stantly setting before them the benefits of
 gain, and most carefully instructing them
 in the means of it; those who introduce
 them to scenes of voluptuousness and dissi-
 pation, corrupt their minds with images of
 worldly grandeur, and advise them to con-
 sider the obtaining the power of indulging
 in these as their great object in life; or
 those who send them for education to femi-
 naries, where they are in an almost stated
 course led to, and taught, that there is no
 crime in those indulgences of carnal lusts,
 which the Gospel most positively and re-
 peatedly declares, will exclude the guilty
 from any inheritance in the kingdom of
 God? In what sense can we suppose these
 words

words are understood by those who, when they come to years of reflection, never consider their baptismal vow as a rule of conduct ; and however enslaving themselves to avarice, pride, vanity, pleasure, or lust, appear totally unconscious of living in perpetual breach of the first and most solemn engagement into which they ever entered ? Many, who are guilty of these things, profess themselves to be disciples of the Gospel, expect a day of future account, and acknowledge, that their only hope of mercy then rests in Christ their Saviour. But when it is considered, that the pleas which such are wont to urge in defence of their conduct, are the general practise of the world, and the opinions of those whom they call “ acquainted with life,” may it not be feared, that these will be answered, as the Lord formerly replied to a generation whose righteousness consisted, too, only in professions, “ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship

SERM.
XVII.

SERM. me, teaching for doctrines the command-
 XVII. ments of men?"

Indeed, if I mistake not, the parts of the earth nearest to ourselves, have, of late, exhibited a most dreadful scene of judicial consequences flowing from those who have taken on themselves the engagements of christians neglecting to perform them: judicial consequences, I mean, in the desertions of that Holy Spirit, without whose powerful assistance we cannot stand against the wiles of the devil, and without whose blessed influence the washing of the body with water will be of no avail towards purifying the whole man. For to what but a judicial dereliction, and a delivery unto Satan, can be ascribed that fury of irreligion, which would destroy from among men not only every vestige of faith and piety, but those social manners, and all the effects of mutual benevolence, and common exertions, to which religion gives rise. Yet, mark how this curse hath spread in Europe, and infected nearly every country
 of

of Christendom, and particularly most of those that have continued in the papal apostacy !

S E R M.
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Had it been a reformation proceeding from reason that was sought, had it been an exertion of wisdom and of virtue, to deliver men from the shackles of superstition, or the bondage of tyranny, it would have proceeded with moderation, and have stopped when superstition and tyranny were driven away. But its progress has been deeply marked by the virulence of inveterate malice ; and the eradication of the christian faith, and the destruction of all performance of duty by man to his Creatour, are the avowed objects of its leaders : nay, the overthrow of all social order, the dissolution of every bond by which we are holden together, and made to contribute to each other's preservation or comfort. Subjects are excited against their sovereign, soldiers against their commanders, servants against their masters, children against their parents : and even the common usages which pre-

SERM. served nations from behaving like savages
 XVII. to each other, are fought to be abolished.

~ The junction of which total wreck of every thing prizeable in human life, with the destruction of the christian faith, prove how closely connected this latter is with the happiness of man. While the eager pursuit of objects, an attachment to which is no more natural to man than the love of murder, or of any other crime at which our hearts most generally revolt, as plainly indicates, that the wretches thus employed are led by a spirit worse than human, as the goodness and righteous conduct of the earliest christians manifested, that they were guided by One better than human.

Behold, then, the alternative set before yourselves ! Ye are already engaged in covenant with God and Christ : if ye do according to the words of this covenant, your's is the promise of the Spirit to help your infirmities, to guide you through the temptations, and to support you under the difficulties of life ; your's the assurance of an

an everlasting rest, where, to the natural triumph of conquerours, will be added the glory of being approved by the Sovereign of the universe, the unspeakable gratification of hearing, before men and angels, from the throne of perfection, a solemn sentence of approbation pronounced on your conduct, “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” followed, too, by the award of a recompence, worthy of Him who will give it, “ Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ;” words which mark the happiness of those, to whom they will be addressed, more strongly than any description which could be used: Since what can so well express supreme happiness as the mention of that in which God His self for ever dwells? Such, then, if ye behave faithfully as servants, and if ye serve with firmness, as soldiers of Christ, is the portion that awaits you. But, in proportion as the reward thus offered you is great, as the love and mercy proffered you are abundant, if ye continue in the faith ; heavy, on the other hand, is the penalty on your breach of
covenant,

SERM.

XVII.



SERM. covenant, if, now ye have been “enlight-
 XVII. ened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift,
 and have been partakers of the Holy Ghost,
 and have tasted of the good word of God,
 and of the powers of the world to come,
 ye fall away:” for the despite ye thus do to
 the Spirit of Grace, He will forsake you;
 and being then left unassisted, to wrestle
 not only against the world and the flesh, but
 against the wiles of the devil; What, after
 ye have thus crucified to yourselves the Son
 of God afresh, and put him to open shame,
 shall secure you from proceeding, as myriads
 have lately done, to tread Him under foot,
 and count the blood of the covenant, where-
 with ye have been sanctified, an unholy
 thing? But if ye be thus reprobate and apos-
 tate, there remaineth no more sacrifice for
 sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of
 judgment, and fiery indignation, which
 shall devour the adversaries: all their dread
 forebodings of which will come far short
 of what they will suffer, when, being de-
 nied before His Father, which is in Heaven,
 by Him whom they denied on earth, they
 receive

receive from His mouth the indignant sentence, “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ;” and find it followed by banishment to the worm which never dieth, and to the fire which never goeth out. SERM.
XVII.

This, then, is the alternative which awaits your choice ; but awaits it in such a manner, that if ye decide not for the better part, the worse will necessarily be assigned unto you ; and that name, which was given you at baptism, and which might have been for your honour, your glory, and your salvation, will be to you for a reproach and everlasting astonishment ; since, although heaven and earth pass away, the word of the Lord shall not pass away. “ Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of Water, *and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE CONDUCT CONSISTENT WITH OUR
FAITH.

COL. III. 1.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

SO palpable is the absurdity of a man's SERM. XVIII.
acting inconsistently with the situation XVIII.
in which he is placed, or the character he
professes, that in the reproof of such con-
duct, there almost naturally intermingles
itself a portion of contempt. To a sense
of the justice of this, rather than to the
mere ill-nature of mankind in being pleased
at seeing others reduced below their own
level, I would ascribe the favourable recep-
tion,

SERM. tion, which the works of satyrist have met
 XVIII. with in all ages; and, to the same, must
 be attributed those instances of satirical re-
 buke with which we meet in the sacred
 writings; as that fine piece of irony of the
 prophet Elijah on the priests of Baal,
 (1 Kings xviii. 27.); and Isaiah's descrip-
 tion of the brutish stupidity of the makers
 and worshippers of idols. (Is. xliv. 13.)

Indeed, these applications to the feeling
 of shame, will sometimes take effect, when
 all other arguments fail; and men, too
 proud to accept instruction, or too obstinate
 to yield to exhortation, are unable to with-
 stand the poignancy of a reproof, which
 places them in a despicable light. It is,
 therefore, no matter of surprize, that in the
 writings of so great a master of reasoning
 as St. Paul, we should find frequent use of
 this appeal to the common feelings of the
 human mind: as in his censure on the
 heathen sophists, in his epistle to the Ro-
 mans, who, he says, "professing them-
 selves to be wise, they became fools." And
 in

in his reproof to the Galatians, for seeking to be justified by the works of the law, when they had Christ for their hope; “ Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” Neither are the words of the text entirely free from a mixture of the same species of rebuke: “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” For does he not herein say, “ If ye are, indeed, awaked from that death of sin, in which ye formerly lay; if ye are now alive to the hopes of another world, to the prospect of future glory and happiness, under the patronage of Him Who has ascended into Heaven to prepare a place for His disciples, let your conduct prove your faith, and exhibit not the disgraceful spectacle of entering on an arduous pursuit, and permitting your attention to be diverted from it, and your exertions in it abated by occurrences, which, in comparison with the prize at which ye should be aiming, are, beyond expression, trifling?”

Happy

SERM.

XVIII.



SERM. Happy are the few who are not partakers
 XVIII. with the Colossians in meriting this reproof.
 The few, I say, because how is the behaviour of the generality of us consistent with the hopes to which, as christians, we pretend, or with the prospects which the Gospel holds out to all who are truly such? How do we prepare ourselves for entrance into a state of righteousness? How fit ourselves for admission into the society of the blessed and holy?

Very excellent things are spoken of that kingdom: out of it, we are told, shall be gathered all things that offend, and they which do iniquity. It is to be the residence of purity, piety, peace, and charity; and accordingly, as they have proved themselves faithful here, shall the servants of the Lord be rewarded there.

Such is the kingdom of which we boast ourselves to be the inheritors! And hence might not any one, ignorant of the fact, naturally suppose, that as candidates for
 such


such an inheritance, we now earnestly cultivated those virtues, the exercise of which, we know, will there be necessary? Might it not be presumed, that our time was employed in gaining habits suitable to the state after which we aspire? Or would it be expecting too much from beings, under these circumstances, to think that their hearts were firmly fixed on a life, in which alone they know true happiness is to be found, that they looked with jealousy upon every thing that might defeat their claim to it; avoided, with abhorrence, every defilement which would prevent their admission into it, and were constantly striving so to rectify their dispositions, and to make themselves such characters, as should be meet to be partakers of this inheritance of the saints in light? Would it be requiring too much of them, to expect that they should consider themselves in this world as only on a journey; and, consequently, pay the things of it no more than a transitory regard? Or, that ruled by these principles of action, they should teach their children

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SERM. the same, be anxious, above all things, to
 XVIII. preserve them from corruption, and deem
 no advantages of education fit to be put in
 the balance against the loss of innocence and
 purity?

Such conduct, it must be acknowledged, might be expected from beings having these prospects, and sensible of their situation; especially if they knew, as we do, that the time of their probation for the future state of happiness, is both limited and very uncertain. But how far these expectations might be answered, or disappointed, on a particular examination of the life and conversation of each of us, is best known to every individual for himself. I stand not here to accuse, but to admonish you, that the kingdom of God consisteth not in words; but in holiness, in righteousness, and in peace; and to remind you, that the heralds of this kingdom have been most explicit in their declarations of what characters shall not be suffered to enter therein.

That

That something is more requisite than SERM.
the merely not being very vicious, we are XVIII.
instructed by St. Paul, in his epistle to the 
Hebrews, where he tells us, that “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”
For as holiness consists specifically in a separation from defilement, and our blessed Saviour hath informed us, that the things which defile a man, are “ evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness;” if there be meaning in words, unless we cleanse ourselves from all these, we can have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

That men, desirous of retaining their present indulgences, yet unwilling to relinquish their future hopes, would wish to explain away these doctrines of holiness, was foreseen; and therefore the same apostle, after enumerating to the Ephesians nearly the same list of vices, adds, “ Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because

SERM. of these things cometh the wrath of God
 XVIII. upon the children of disobedience.”

Nay, without recurring to the infallibility of the divine word, or the express will of God, reflection itself will evince, that these things must be so. Put the case of a man whose evil habits are not subdued, from whose breast all vicious inclinations are not eradicated; suppose such a man placed in a state of the utmost prosperity and ease; where no dread of change, no fear of suffering hung over him, what would be the natural consequence of such freedom from a restraint on a mind not yet purified from evil, not yet habituated to holiness? Would it not be the further growth of evil propensities, and a confirmation of his bad habits? If ye imagine, that awe of the pure and venerable characters with which he would be surrounded, would, in another state, repress the evil tendencies of such a man, till gradually growing weaker and weaker, they at length became quite extinct—Ye still suppose *re-*
straint,

fraint, which is incompatible with perfect happiness; and ye forget, too, that if one man of this imperfect state of soul, be admitted into that kingdom, on the same ground many must, when they would serve as companions and for encouragement one to another. If ye think, that in that state there can be no temptations of evil, nothing that would prompt a man to offend, Do ye not overlook the fact? That there will be difference of degrees, we know; for we read of one's being appointed to rule over ten cities, and another over five, here then is room for envy; and if that be once introduced, What evil work might not follow?

But God, ye conceive, will provide that no such "consequences shall be produced." True; But how? not, we may be sure, by restraining or correcting those who are about to give birth to them, for thus would pain be introduced, and of that, we are told, there shall be no more; nor yet by the removal of those who are inclined to disturb

SERM. XVIII. the general tranquillity, for this would be again to bring in death. No, ye would say, but by making every spirit therein perfect. Certainly, and so He will; but the spirits of whom? of those who have endeavoured themselves to become so! or of those who would impose on His mercy, by continuing in sin until the last moment they think they may venture, that grace may abound? They are the spirits of just men, which we read shall be made perfect; and who will be esteemed as such, St. John has taught us, in saying, “He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous.” So that as by the doctrine of the Gospel, there is no entrance into the kingdom of Christ but for those who are redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto Him: reflection on the nature of man, testifies that perfect happiness cannot exist in any society into which those who are not thus purified are admitted.

And thus may we correct those vague ideas of the salvation ready to be revealed, under which christians form to themselves
such

such hopes as only prevent them from earnestly endeavouring to make themselves the choice characters, which alone can partake in it. For it consisteth not in the promiscuous dole of reward, nor in an unintelligible exaltation to happiness; but, as your Lord has told you, that “the kingdom of God is within you,” it must begin in ourselves, by repentance and amendment; and to these, though in themselves absolutely necessary to our happiness, and though He might have most justly insisted on them by His rightful authority over us, merely on the penalty of destruction, our Creatour hath, of His infinite mercy, affixed the recompence of everlasting life; offering, through His own Son, to every man who will accept it, spiritual assistance to break off his evil habits, and acquire these good ones, which he may exercise in that life for ever and ever, surrounded with the blessings which the divine goodness will shower down on those who are approved.

SERM. XVIII. It is to prevent your losing this gift, by depending on the sinful christian's broken reed, a death-bed repentance, that ye are called on, while ye are yet in health and vigour to turn unto the Lord, and set your affection on things above; that ye are exhorted, while ye have something to renounce, to prove that the love of God prevails in your hearts more than the love of the world, by seeking those things which belong unto His kingdom. What these are, in part, I have already reminded you, by shewing the necessity of our qualifying ourselves to be members of that glorious assembly, by striving to obtain dispositions and habits as unaffectedly pure, as sincerely good, as truly amiable as must be possessed by those with whom we would wish for ever to consort: and for the rest, though indeed the heart of man be unable to conceive them all, yet is such a portion of them revealed, that if the information were properly attended to, and men were to make it oftener the subject of their thoughts, the prospect of
future

future happiness thus disclosed to them, could scarcely fail of producing the effect the apostle seems to have expected from christians recollecting their real situation, that of making them ashamed of letting any thing this world can yield, impede their pursuit of what is thus offered them in the next.

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Nor need our views of these things be either presumptuous or fanciful; not the first, because the particulars which the Scriptures set before us would not have been mentioned, if it were not intended we should contemplate them with our freest will and utmost power; not the other, because they are sufficiently ample to employ all the thought we can bestow on them. We have only to take the declarations of the sacred writings for our guide, and we shall descry such a picture of that state, as will, if our taste can yet discern real happiness, excite us with fervour to labour for this high prize of our calling in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We

SERM. We have frequently to lament in this  
 XVIII. life, not only the obstinate perverseness  
 which ruffles the tempers, and defeats the  
 designs of those who are embarked in a  
 good course, but the mischievous folly of  
 fools, which delights in introducing the in-  
 nocent to the walks of sin, and drawing  
 those who have made resolutions of righte-  
 ousness to a breach of them. To those  
 who have suffered from such companions,  
 (and there are many who have most severely)  
 the first particular we have been made ac-  
 quainted with of the kingdom of Christ,  
 that out of it shall be taken all things that  
 cause to offend, will appear to promise con-  
 solation of no small moment, in their being  
 hidden, by the presence of God, from the  
 provoking of men, and the gathering toge-  
 ther of the froward. Neither will the  
 second, “that from it shall be driven all  
 that do iniquity,” insure less relief to others  
 who are now perpetually suffering from the  
 various crimes of those by whom they are  
 surrounded. When the fury of the oppres-  
 sor shall cease, the evil tongue shall be put  
 to

to silence, and the robber be destroyed from  
among the people.


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Nor while the moral evil of the present world, thus tends to the perpetual vexation of its members, are those afflictions trifling which flow from what we most especially call the natural. Tempests and earthquakes, droughts and inundations, seasons of sickness, and times of scarcity, even without amounting to pestilence and famine, make cruel inroads on human comfort. The promised security from these, therefore, in that land where we are assured, “there shall be no more curse,” is another particular within our own comprehension, productive of substantial comfort.

And now, putting these particulars together, consider with yourselves, whether the several points of relief I have already enumerated, would not actually make the present world a very desirable scene; that is, take away sickness, scarcity, strife, calumny, oppression, robbery, and unfair deal-

**SERM.** ing of every kind, together with the per-  
**XVIII.**  verseness of fools, and the seduction of the  
vicious, and what would there yet be to  
cause us to complain of this world? Weigh  
what ye have suffered, and do yet suffer,  
from the evils I have mentioned, with per-  
fect freedom from them, and full security  
against them, and say whether, if ye pos-  
sessed these last, ye should want ought to  
complete your happiness but the certainty  
of continuing to enjoy them? If not, behold  
that certainty reserved for you in the life to  
come, since that will be everlasting. It is  
the observation of St. Paul, that the fear of  
death makes us subject unto bondage all our  
life time. And the more ye ponder on this  
saying, the more ye will be stricken with  
the justice of it. By this fear our very  
best enjoyments are interrupted. For the  
more pure they may be in themselves, the  
more truly worthy of regard, and the fin-  
cerer is the delight we receive from them,  
the more deplorable is the circumstance,  
that the hour is approaching when they  
must be left. Conceive, then, this fear taken  
away


away ; ye whose hours have ever been im- SERM.  
bittered by the thoughts of death advancing XVIII.  
to yourselves ; ye who have ever lamented  
the ravages among your connections, and  
ye who now shudder to think where his  
next stroke may fall, estimate, if ye can,  
the happiness of being secured from what  
is now the source of such perpetual afflic-  
tion. And when ye have formed some idea  
of it, recollect that ye cannot fail of inhe-  
riting this, and all the other blessings that  
I have, or am yet to mention, but through  
your own wilful neglect and obstinate dis-  
obedience !

The points I have hitherto noticed, con-  
sidered as particulars of relief from the evils  
under which we at present groan, may be  
termed negative blessings ; but, in addition  
to these, the same Scriptures in which they  
are promised, hold out also some which are  
positive.

Of these stands first that crown of glory,  
which all who are chosen shall receive in  
the

SERM. the approbation of their God and their  
 XVIII. Saviour: for when once these words, “ Well  
 done, thou good and faithful servant, enter  
 thou into the joy of the Lord,” are pro-  
 nounced, your characters will be stamped  
 with honour for ever ; the conscioufness of  
 which will give you, in yourselves, un-  
 speakable rejoicing ; while the publick  
 award of applaufe from a Judge who can-  
 not err, will assure to you the veneration  
 and the love of every individual of that  
 blessed fociety to which ye have attained.

But of the felicity of being placed in  
 fuch a fociety, and of the purfuits and em-  
 ployments to which ye may therein apply,  
 What fhall be faid ? Picture to yourfelves  
 whatever enjoyments ye please ; as long as  
 they be pure, as long as they be holy, as  
 long as they be worthy the fervants of  
 God, and the followers of Chrift, and there  
 is no reason to think, but that ye will have  
 full fcope for them on the new earth.  
 Whether the converfation of angels delight  
 you, or that of the fpirits of juft men made  
 perfect,

perfect, or meeting again all ye knew here, SERM.  
worth knowing, ye with them trace the XVIII.  
wondrous steps by which God hath brought   
you to His rest, discover numberless dangers ye have escaped, and the unthought of mercies ye have received: or whether, with more extensive range of enquiry, ye examine with the enlarged powers ye shall then possess, the admirable works of your Creatour, and the still more admirable judgements of His mouth; or contemplating, with delight, the scene of interminable happiness, with which ye will then be surrounded, draw an encrease of enjoyment from the unmixed felicity ye see others possessing; or whether, with sublimer mind, raising your attention from the creation to the Creatour Himself, ye have, through Jesus, the Mediatour of the new covenant, the Father fully revealed unto you, see God as He is, and know, even as ye are known.

Such then being the prospects, which, by the covenant of baptism, are made your own; such being the objects in pursuit of  
\_ which

SERM. which ye have by that engaged; consider  
 XVIII. with yourselves, with how much earnestness the former deserve to be retained; with how much sincerity the latter ought to be preserved! Most powerful provision hath been made that, as long as we keep up even the semblance of christians, by appearing in the congregations of the church, we shall not become unmindful of either the one or the other, not only through an established ministry of the word, perpetually reminding us of the grounds of our faith, and of the rewards waiting those who faint not in their course; but by the institution of another sacrament, the existence of which serves, in a most admirable manner, to hand down to all the successive generations of christians, an irrefragable testimony of the death and resurrection of their Saviour. For when was this communion of bread and wine introduced into the church? The writers, we know, of every preceding age, mention it as already practised till the time of the apostles themselves; and they declare, that they received it from that Jesus  
 of



of Nazareth, whom they acknowledged for  
the Son of God, because they had the testi-  
mony of their own eyes and hands, that He  
was risen from the dead. It was on the  
authority of the miraculous gifts given them  
from Heaven, that they prevailed with the  
nations to receive the Gospel, and with it  
this distinguishing rite of christianity : had  
not, then, those who first embraced chris-  
tianity, had the evidence which the apostles  
asserted they could give of the truth of their  
testimony, that, I mean, of miracles, they  
would not have received this institution of  
the Supper of the Lord ; and had they not  
done so, it could, in no later time, have  
been introduced as always practised in the  
church ; because every member, in any age,  
would have known, he never heard of it  
before ; so that it remains with us an in-  
controvertible pledge of the death of Christ,  
and of the glory that did follow ; and becomes,  
by our participation in it, a testimony, that  
we continue in the doctrine and fellowship  
of the apostles ; expecting, with them, that

SERM.  
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SERM. the same Jesus, whom they saw ascend into
 XVIII. Heaven, will, in like manner, come again.



With such hopes, then, with such evidence, with such engagements, with such admonitions, What manner of men ought we to be? Put this question to yourselves in private, and, if ye find, what a little reflection will assuredly manifest to you, that there is neither consistency, nor safety, nor common sense, in calling Christ your Lord and Master, without obeying His commandments, and following His example, take up the cross at once, and earnestly seek the things which are above, where He sitteth on the right hand of God; and then, when He, Who is your life, shall appear, ye shall also appear with Him in glory. Which, that we may all do, &c.

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